

Gender Mainstreaming in Recruitment and Selection in a Selected Manufacturing Firm in Zimbabwe.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated gender mainstreaming in recruitment and selection processes within Zimbabwe's manufacturing agricultural sector. The study used the intersectionality theory that recognises how gender bias interacts with other social identities. Adopting a positivist research philosophy, a quantitative research approach was employed. From a population of 512, stratified sampling and simple random sampling methods were used to select a sample size of 473 employees. A 15-item questionnaire measuring gender mainstreaming practices, challenges, and recruitment effectiveness was used to collect data. Data were analysed using SPSS Version 30, employing descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Results revealed that gender mainstreaming positively and significantly affects recruitment and selection effectiveness, while organisational, structural, and cultural barriers exert a negative significant effect. Findings underscored the necessity of moving beyond policy existence to active implementation of standardised competency-based selection, gender-balanced interview panels, mandatory unconscious bias training, and accountability mechanisms linking managerial performance to diverse business outcomes.

Keywords: Gender-bias, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, manufacturing sector, recruitment and selection, women empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality, exploitation, discrimination, and injustice in the manufacturing sector remain pervasive challenges affecting women globally and regionally, including in Zimbabwe (Jeche, 2024). In the recruitment and selection processes, gender mainstreaming entails embedding gender-sensitive principles to eliminate bias and ensure equal opportunity regardless of gender (Mwango et al., 2024). While gender mainstreaming has been widely adopted as a global strategy since the Beijing Platform for Action, its application within specific industrial contexts particularly manufacturing remains uneven and insufficiently examined.

The 1995 Platform for Action at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing defined gender mainstreaming as a method for gender equality. The African Union member states have identified "full gender equality in all spheres of life" as a top priority goal (Goal 17) towards the realisation of "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want" (African Union, 2015) to scale up Africa's development efforts. Zimbabwe has signed many international and continental treaties and declarations supporting the empowerment of women and gender equality. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1993 Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 1995 Beijing Declaration and Call to Action, Millennium Development Goals, and 2013 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) consensus adopted Sustainable Development Goals, 2010 formation of UN WOMEN, new UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Globally, women remain underrepresented in the manufacturing sector, especially in leadership and technical roles, reinforcing persistent stereotypes that women are unsuited for such positions (Smith et al., 2022). Research across sectors demonstrates that structured gender mainstreaming interventions can produce measurable

improvements. For instance, in the education sector, reforms in India and Jordan that removed gender stereotypes from curricula and trained teachers in gender-sensitive pedagogy improved participation outcomes (Miralles-Cardona, 2025). In the health sector, studies in South Africa and Ghana show that gender mainstreaming enhanced responsiveness to gender-based violence and corrected male-biased research protocols, influencing policy and funding priorities (Bazaanah & Ngcobo, 2024). Similarly, research in Kenyan county governments found that gender equality initiatives positively influenced recruitment and selection processes (Ndiso, 2024).

However, despite this cross-sectoral evidence, there is limited empirical research examining how gender mainstreaming operates within recruitment and selection processes in the manufacturing sector, particularly in developing economies. Existing scholarship has largely concentrated on either broad gender inequality in manufacturing or sector-specific gender mainstreaming outside industrial production contexts (Caywood et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the Zimbabwean context remains significantly underexplored. Although Zimbabwe has adopted progressive gender equality policies aligned with Agenda 2030 and constitutional guarantees (Mutsikiwa et al., 2023), scholarly attention has predominantly examined policy frameworks rather than organisational implementation. There is insufficient evidence on how national gender equality commitments translate into recruitment and selection practices within private-sector manufacturing firms. Additionally, much of the literature problematises gender inequality but inadequately evaluates the organisational and strategic benefits of embedding gender mainstreaming in recruitment systems. Without understanding the institutional, structural, and cultural barriers embedded within these processes, policy commitments to gender equality risk remaining symbolic rather than transformative.

This research contributes to the literature in three significant ways. First, it extends gender mainstreaming scholarship into an underexamined industrial domain. Second, it situates Zimbabwe within broader Global South debates on policy implementation gaps. Third, it reframes gender mainstreaming in recruitment not merely as a normative obligation, but as a strategic organisational imperative. Hence the study seeks to respond to the following objective:

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- (i) To investigate the challenges of gender mainstreaming in recruitment and selection processes in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe,
- (ii) To assess the relationship between gender mainstreaming and these processes.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are developed based on the above objectives:

H1: Organisational, structural, and cultural barriers hinder gender mainstreaming in recruitment and selection.

H2: There is a significant relationship between the extent of gender mainstreaming and recruitment and selection processes.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by the Intersectionality Framework, originally articulated by Crenshaw (1989). This paradigm addresses the multiple dimensions of identity and social systems as they intersect to relate to inequality, such as racism, genderism, and classism. Crenshaw's foundational work identified the conceptual limitations of "single-axis" analyses, which rendered the experiences of individuals with multiple marginalized identities (such as Black women) invisible (Crenshaw, 1989). The framework recognizes that identities like race, sex, and age intersect to create unique experiences of discrimination and disadvantage (Wickenden et al., 2023). In the context of recruitment and selection, intersectionality mandates an analysis that moves beyond binary gender

considerations to examine how gender bias interacts with other social, educational, and professional structures to affect various groups of candidates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a strategic, systematic approach to policy-making that integrates a gender equality perspective into all stages of a policy or program cycle design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Board, 2022; Kalpazidou et al., 2019). Formally established as a global strategy by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (Greavs, 2024), the concept involves the reorganization and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender perspective is incorporated at every stage by all actors involved (Council of Europe, 2005). The goal is to transform systems and structures, not simply to "add women" (Rees, 2000).

The importance of this approach is evident in its potential to enhance policy effectiveness, drive organizational excellence, and advance social justice (Gartzia, 2021). Conversely, failures in mainstreaming gender within processes like recruitment and selection lead to the perpetuation of unconscious biases, underutilization of talent, and diminished organizational performance (Khan et al., 2024).

Recruitment and Selection Processes

Recruitment and selection form the core of talent management, aiming to secure the required number and quality of employees at minimum cost (Armstrong, 2006). Recruitment involves identifying, attracting, and encouraging qualified candidates, while selection is the subsequent process of evaluating and choosing the most suitable applicant (Gomathy et al., 2022).

Recruitment and selection are critical processes that require careful planning and meticulous execution to attract and hire skilled individuals (Hamza et al., 2021). The key considerations are clearly defined job roles and responsibilities, utilisation of various recruitment channels: employment of a comprehensive selection process, and the provision of ongoing training and development opportunities (Lussier et al., 2025). The process is strategic and requires meticulous execution, balancing efficiency with thoroughness to ensure the right person is placed in the right role (Hamza et al., 2021; Ngoye, 2024). Key considerations include clearly defined job roles, utilization of diverse recruitment channels, and a comprehensive selection process (Lussier et al., 2025). However, these imperatives are challenged by factors like bias, skill shortages, and technological changes (Dos Santos et al., 2020).

Gender mainstreaming and recruitment and selection

The connection between gender mainstreaming and recruitment and selection is critical for achieving workplace equality (Cele, 2021). Empirical evidence from various contexts demonstrates a positive relationship. Studies in Kenya and Canada have shown that implementing gender-balanced selection practices and diversity programs results in increased gender diversity and the elimination of systemic barriers in appointment systems (Dover et al., 2020; Mwangi et al., 2024).

Conversely, research in South Africa revealed that even where gender policies existed, strategic positions remained male-dominated because the policies were unknown or unimplemented by management (Thobejane et al., 2017). This suggests that gender mainstreaming must move beyond policy existence to active, visible implementation to affect hiring outcomes.

Challenges hindering gender mainstreaming in recruitment and selection

The literature identifies consistent, multi-level barriers that impede the effective mainstreaming of gender in hiring as indicated below.

Conceptual ambiguity and policy gaps

Even while 'Women in Development' has given way to 'Gender and Development,' policies and programs that affect men are sometimes disregarded. Preconceived assumptions regarding gender mainstreaming's players and benefactors neglect allies and exclude new allies and organisations (Howard, 2002). Despite 75 percent of enterprises worldwide adopting the same opportunities, diversity, and inclusion policies, gender biases persist in selection (ILO, 2019). A lack of conceptual clarity can hinder effective action (Ravindran et al., 2022; Caywood & Darmstadt, 2024; O'Shea et al. (2014).

Research discovered that in Australian sports workplaces, these strategies can ironically "reify" gendered imbalances by perpetuating the notion that women must be "raised" to meet a male standard, instead of confronting the male-centric structure of the sport organisations itself. Furthermore, equity initiatives are often limited to the "technical agenda" (e.g., job descriptions) with scant effort dedicated to managing the underlying political and cultural dimensions (Lee-Gosselin et al., 2013). Policymakers have typically used the mainstreaming of gender in reference to women (Payne, 2014).

The maternal wall and risks of caregiving

The "maternal wall" is one of the biggest social and economic hurdles. This relates to the idea that women are more committed to their family than to their jobs. Selectors frequently link female candidates to a "caregiving risk," prompting concerns about possible future disruptions related to pregnancy or childcare (Avella et al., 2024). Studies at law companies indicate that women are often regarded as less dedicated, although exhibiting an equivalent work ethic to their male counterparts (Herschberg et al., 2018). This bias is infrequently directed toward men, whose paternal obligations are typically regarded as indicators of stability rather than professional jeopardy (Heilman et al., 2024).

Organisational culture and resistance

Studies found that the culture of the organization, structures, and leadership hinder gender mainstreaming (Longwe, 1997; Lee-Gosselin et al., 2013). Entrenched traditional gender stereotypes, managerial resistance, and organizational culture can undermine change efforts (Lee-Gosselin et al., 2013). Progress is often slow because gender mainstreaming targets the deep-seated norms and practices that govern organizational relations (Ravindran et al., 2022). In the absence of widespread support, gender programs may be viewed as externally mandated, resulting in opposition and fostering docile implementation (Clover, 2015; Tandon & Farrell, 2007). The bureaucratic management of gender mainstreaming and the dominance of 'management by outcomes' may diminish its transformative capacity (Lokot, 2021; Debusscher, 2010).

Social expectations and career persistence

Wider social standards say that women should do most of the housework and care for others. These expectations make it hard to hire people because companies generally want people with "linear" career paths and no gaps in their work history (Herschberg et al., 2019). Women, who are more likely to take time from work for family reasons, are punished by hiring processes that think that being consistent means being good at your job. This "ideal worker" standard, which says that an ideal worker is always accessible and has no family responsibilities, is a major reason why there aren't more women in senior leadership positions (Källman, 2015; Tricco et al., 2024).

The gap between guidance and enforcement

A lot of organisations have made detailed rules for employing people from all backgrounds, but these rules are not always enforced. In the public sector, managers may be well aware of gender equality goals, but they may only have a "rudimentary" understanding of how to use the merit principle in a way that takes gender bias into consideration (Williamson et al., 2018). Because there is no clear accountability, these rules are often not followed in favour of old, biased ways of doing things (Freitas et al., 2026).

The literature confirms that gender mainstreaming is essential for equitable recruitment but faces significant implementation hurdles rooted in culture, politics, and resources. While existing studies show the what (e.g., policies are ineffective), this research used the intersectionality theory to explore the how and why these barriers manifest in a specific industrial context, linking organizational policy challenges (H1) directly to observable recruitment and selection outcomes (H2). The evidence suggests that effective interventions must address both the formal rules and the informal culture i.e. managerial buy-in, awareness to achieve transformative change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was guided by the positivist research philosophy, which assumes that social phenomena can be measured objectively and analysed using statistical techniques to test theoretically derived hypotheses (Saunders & Horne, 2021). Consistent with this epistemological stance, a quantitative research design was adopted. Quantitative research approach enables the systematic measurement of variables and the examination of relationships through statistical analysis (Ghanad, 2023).

The quantitative research approach was appropriate to facilitate the collection of standardised data from a large employee population, thereby enhancing generalisability within the selected manufacturing context (Subbarayudu & Singh, 2024).

Population and sampling

The target population comprised 512 employees from a selected agricultural manufacturing company in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Given the heterogeneity of departments within the organisation, a stratified sampling and simple random sampling methods were employed to minimise sampling bias and to ensure proportional representation across functional units (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The sample size was determined using the Raosoft online sample size calculator. The sample size consisted of 473 respondents distributed in the following strata administration (113), maintenance (28), operations (211), Finance (54), Sales (67). The achieved response rate was 92.4%, which exceeds commonly accepted thresholds for organisational research and strengthens the reliability and representativeness of the findings.

Research instruments

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising 15 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Likert scales are widely used in organisational research due to their reliability in capturing attitudes and perceptions (Fadele & Rocha, 2025). The instrument consisted of two sections; the Demographic variables like age, gender, marital status, education level, job category, and work experience. The questionnaire also had the construct measures assessing gender mainstreaming practices, organisational barriers and recruitment and selection processes

To enhance measurement validity, questionnaire items were developed based on established theoretical constructs from gender mainstreaming and HRM literature. Additionally, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 30. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were applied. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were used to summarise demographic characteristics and identify general trends. Inferential statistics were employed to test the study hypotheses-H2. Regression analysis was used to assess the predictive effect of gender mainstreaming on recruitment and selection outcomes. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were

guaranteed to protect participants' identities. The study ensured that responses were used solely for academic purposes and that no individual-level data were disclosed to management.

FINDINGS

Table 1 - Demographic Profiles

| Demographic Category | Sub-Category | Participants | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Age Distribution | 20-25 years | 296 | 62.58 |
| | 25-35 years | 111 | 23.47 |
| | 35-45 years | 44 | 9.30 |
| | 45-60 years | 22 | 4.65 |
| Sex Distribution | Male | 321 | 67.86 |
| | Female | 152 | 32.14 |
| Marital Status | Married | 63 | 13.32 |
| | Single | 326 | 68.92 |
| | Widowed | 37 | 7.82 |
| | Divorced | 47 | 9.94 |
| Work Experience | Less than 1 year | 211 | 44.61 |
| | 1-5 years | 98 | 20.72 |
| | 5-10 years | 97 | 20.51 |
| | More than 10 years | 67 | 14.16 |
| Employee Class | Non-managerial | 436 | 92.18 |
| | Management | 37 | 7.82 |
| Education Level | None | 326 | 68.92 |
| | Low | 83 | 17.55 |
| | High | 64 | 13.53 |

Source: Survey data (2025)

Total Participants (N) = 473

The demographic analysis of the workforce reveals the following insights:

Age Distribution: Overall, the workforce exhibits significant age diversity, characterised by a pronounced concentration of younger employees who are likely in their early career trajectory. This demography suggests heavy recruitment from entry-point level positions. Individuals aged 20-25 years constitute the largest cohort, at 62.58% of the workforce. The percentage of employees drops sharply with each successive age group (23.47% → 9.3% → 4.65%), pattern which is atypical of balanced, mature company and points to specific operational hiring or hiring characteristics. The small proportion of the 25-35 cohort may indicate challenges in retention or

a “missing middle” of early-career professionals with 5-15 years. Regarding employee disengagement or turnover intentions, age plays a role, younger employees might express dissatisfaction more openly, while the older employees might be more inclined to stay due to stability needs (Saraiva & Nogueiro, 2025).

Gender Distribution: The workforce demonstrates a notable gender disparity, with male employees constituting a significant majority which is a classic profile for the traditional manufacturing sector. Specifically, males make up 67.86% of the total workforce while females represent 32.14% which strongly suggests that core production, maintenance, warehouse and logistics roles, which form the bulk of manufacturing headcount, are predominantly held by men. Female employees are likely concentrated in departments such as Finance and Administration, rather than being evenly distributed across all operations and seniority levels. This high percentage of men can represent systemic barriers, limiting diversity and inclusive growth within organisations (Bhakuni, 2025).

Marital Status: The workforce is predominantly single, making up over two-thirds of the sampled group at 68.92% while married persons stand at 13.32%. The divorced and widowed are represented by 9.94% and 7.82% respectively. This finding indicates that single individuals often have greater geographic and occupational mobility, which can correlate with higher labour force participation. (Graham & Pinto, 2021). The pronounced gap between single and married participants, may also reflect specific industry or generational sampling within the data, a factor noted in studies of demographic employment patterns (Li & Tang, 2024). Married employees form a significant minority, while widowed and divorced employees represent less than 20% of the workforce. This suggests a relatively young workforce or one with a lower rate of marriage compared to the general adult population.

Work Experience: The data reveals a bimodal distribution with a pronounced skew toward new employees. With 44.61% of employees having less than one year of experience, the company demonstrates characteristics of what organisational researchers term a “a high-churn” or “revolving door” employment model. This pattern is particularly notable in manufacturing sectors characterised by high physical demands, repetitive tasks, or seasonal fluctuations (Overstreet et al., 2019). The dominance of short-tenure employees (44.61% with less than 1 year experience) suggests several organisational realities like, extensive onboarding burden, knowledge retention, and quality & safety considerations (Raimundo 2025). The 14.16% with more than 10 years’ experience constitute a critical institutional anchor who typically hold key technical, supervisory, or mentorship roles and serve as the primary carriers of organisational culture and specialised knowledge (Garton, 2021).

Employee Class: Non-managerial roles comprise the overwhelming majority of the workforce, at 92.18%, whereas managerial positions constitute a distinct minority, representing merely 7.82%. As noted in foundational texts, the “typical organisation has a pyramidal shape, with many employees at the bottom and fewer managers at each ascending level” (Brand & Walker 2021). This piece of data brings the entire demographic profile into sharp, critical focus. The fact that 92.18% of the employee are non-managerial is the core organisational reality indicating an extremely flat structure with a vast base of individual contributors and a tiny sliver of formal leadership.

Education Level: Of the population studied, individuals without formal education constitute the predominant demographic, representing 68.92% of the total. This is followed by those with a low level of education, who comprise 17.55%. Conversely, the proportion of highly educated individuals is notably small at a mere 13.57%. This pattern reveals a pronounced educational disparity within the sample, with the vast majority lacking formal educational attainment. This distribution aligns with literature examining barriers to human capital development in resource-constrained settings. The overwhelming majority falling into the “non-educated” category reflects what scholars like Mwanika (2022), identify as a “capability deprivation”, where large segments of a population are denied the fundamental instrumental freedom that education provides for economic and social advancement.

5.2 Reliability Analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha)

Reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the measurement constructs using Cronbach’s alpha. The results indicate that all constructs exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60, suggesting that the questionnaire items reliably measure the intended variables of gender mainstreaming practices, challenges of gender mainstreaming and recruitment and selection effectiveness.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

| Construct | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|-----------------|------------------|
| Gender Mainstreaming Practices | 7 | 0.88 |
| Challenges of Gender Mainstreaming | 6 | 0.71 |
| Recruitment and Selection Effectiveness | 2 | 0.73 |

Source: Survey data (2025)

The Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.75 to 0.87, indicating satisfactory to good internal consistency (Pallant, 2020). This confirms that the scales used in the study are reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 below presents descriptive statistics of the variables. Descriptive statistics were computed to examine respondents' perceptions of gender mainstreaming in recruitment and selection within the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe. Means and standard deviations were used to determine the general level of agreement and variability of responses.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

| Item | Statement (Abbreviated) | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------|--|------|----------------|
| GM1 | Gender equality integrated in recruitment policies | 3.62 | 0.89 |
| GM2 | Job adverts attract both genders equally | 3.55 | 0.93 |
| GM3 | Recruitment criteria free from gender bias | 3.40 | 0.96 |
| GM4 | Selection based on merit, not gender | 3.78 | 0.84 |
| GM5 | Equal opportunity to apply and be shortlisted | 3.69 | 0.88 |
| GM6 | Interview panels are gender-balanced | 3.22 | 1.02 |
| GM7 | Gender sensitivity considered in procedures | 3.47 | 0.91 |
| CH1 | Gender stereotypes influence decisions | 3.85 | 0.87 |
| CH2 | Management resistance limits implementation | 3.71 | 0.90 |
| CH3 | Inadequate gender mainstreaming training | 3.94 | 0.81 |
| CH4 | Organisational culture hinders equality | 3.88 | 0.86 |
| CH5 | Limited awareness of gender policies | 3.76 | 0.89 |
| CH6 | Societal norms affect gender balance | 4.02 | 0.78 |
| RS1 | Gender mainstreaming improves fairness | 3.81 | 0.85 |
| RS2 | Gender mainstreaming enhances performance | 3.67 | 0.88 |

Source: Survey data (2025)

The mean scores generally exceed the midpoint of 3.00, indicating that respondents moderately to strongly agree that gender mainstreaming exist, though challenges remain significant. Higher mean values for challenge-related items suggest that structural, cultural, and societal barriers continue to affect effective gender mainstreaming in recruitment and selection within the manufacturing sector.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the effect of gender mainstreaming and challenges on recruitment and selection effectiveness.

Model Summary

Table 4: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.63 | 0.40 | 0.38 | 0.56 |

Dependent: recruitment and selection

Predictor: Gender mainstreaming

Source: Survey data (2025)

The model explains 40% of the variance in recruitment and selection effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.40$), indicating a moderately strong explanatory power. This suggests that gender mainstreaming practices and associated challenges significantly contribute to explaining recruitment and selection outcomes in the manufacturing sector.

ANOVA

Table 5: ANOVA Results

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Regression | 28.74 | 2 | 14.37 | 45.81 | 0.000 |
| Residual | 42.98 | 137 | 0.31 | | |
| Total | 71.72 | 139 | | | |

Dependent: recruitment and selection

Predictor: Gender mainstreaming

Source: Survey data (2025)

The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 45.81, p < 0.001$), confirming that the independent variables collectively have a significant effect on recruitment and selection effectiveness.

Regression Coefficients

Table 6: Coefficients

| Predictor | Unstandardized B | Std. Error | Standardized Beta | t | Sig. |
|-----------|------------------|------------|-------------------|------|-------|
| Constant | 1.12 | 0.29 | | 3.86 | 0.000 |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Gender Mainstreaming | 0.46 | 0.07 | 0.52 | 6.57 | 0.000 |
| Challenges of Gender Mainstreaming | -0.31 | 0.06 | -0.38 | -5.17 | 0.000 |

Dependent: recruitment and selection

Predictor: Gender mainstreaming

Source: Survey data (2025)

Table 5 above shows information on the unstandardized coefficients, standardized coefficients (β), t-values for the dependent variable recruitment and selection and the independent variable gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming has a positive and statistically significant effect on recruitment and selection effectiveness ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). Conversely, challenges of gender mainstreaming have a negative and significant effect ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$).

DISCUSSION

The study sought to test these two hypotheses H1: Organisational, structural, and cultural barriers hinder gender mainstreaming in recruitment and selection. The findings indicate that, the challenges of gender mainstreaming have a negative and significant effect ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$). This is consistent with findings by (Ravindran et al., 2022; Lee-Gosselin et al., 2013). Visible hurdles encompass discriminatory employment criteria and the absence of maternity leave legislation, whereas invisible barriers are entrenched in unconscious bias, gendered organisational frameworks, and nuanced social signals (Herschberg et al., 2018; Tatár-Kiss, 2021).

The second hypothesis was H2: There is a significant relationship between the extent of gender mainstreaming and recruitment and selection processes. Conversely, the study findings indicate that gender mainstreaming has a positive and statistically significant effect on recruitment and selection effectiveness ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that while effective gender mainstreaming enhances recruitment outcomes, existing challenges undermine these processes in the manufacturing sector. These findings align with previous research conducted by Dover et al., (2020) and Mwangi et al., (2024) reinforcing the argument that there is a relationship between GM in recruitment and selection which is imperative to achieve workplace equality. However, a study by Thobejane et al., (2017) indicated that the presence of gender policies does not mean that strategic positions will be dominated by women. Consequently, policies must be implemented; implementers should be monitored; managers should be held accountable through various forms of top-down administrative procedures (Berg, 1993).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of gender mainstreaming on recruitment and selection at a selected manufacturing company. The two hypotheses formulated for the study were both supported. The study concludes that gender mainstreaming plays an important role in the recruitment and selection process in the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe. Gender mainstreaming in recruitment and selection in Zimbabwe's manufacturing industry is a continuous attempt to find and eliminate many obstacles that keep women from getting equal pay and benefits in the workplace.

The problems identified are both structural and psychological, from the basic socioeconomic problems of resume screening to the deeply rooted cultural ideals that define the "ideal worker." These things nevertheless make it hard to have a fair workplace. The research suggests that successful gender mainstreaming necessitates a transition to "equality by design," employing structural interventions, public oversight, and standardised competency models to reduce bias and cultivate a genuinely inclusive recruitment atmosphere. This means making hiring processes the same for everyone, encouraging gender education that incorporates everyone to get rid of opposition, making sure that policies are followed, being more open about pay and incentives, and actively questioning the male-coded thinking that supports old hiring practices.

The study acknowledges certain limitations including the methodology where qualitative aspect would have incorporated to enhance the quantitative findings. Also mixed methods designs are recommended for future studies to capture informal norms and power relations. The sample size was limited to the agricultural manufacturing sector. Research should further investigate the interplay of gender with race, handicap, and gender identity in the recruitment process.

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