

# Recruitment in the Bureau of Fire Protection: A Descriptive Inquiry

Ms. Kristine Marvic Osnan Damoslog<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Mr. Nestor Nabe<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student Professional School University of Mindanao

<sup>2</sup>Professor Professional School University of Mindanao

## Abstract:

This study explored the lived experiences of the recruitment committee in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) Region 11 including their roles and responsibilities. The study used the single holistic case study design. The study involved six (6) members of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment committee for the In-Depth Interview (IDI) and five (5) members for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), selected through purposeful sampling. Findings revealed that the committee members perceive their role as crucial in upholding the integrity and fairness by carefully assessing candidates based on qualifications and skills. Their work reflects a strong commitment to excellence and accountability in maintaining high recruitment standards. Moreover, experiences in recruiting personnel for the BFP included memorable and unique experiences at the same time balancing objectivity with subjectivity required of the challenging and meticulous process of the BFP recruitment process. Challenges in BFP recruitment include evaluating documents, resolving logistical issues, and upholding fairness while managing a high applicant volume. The lengthy selection process also discourages some applicants. Despite these challenges, the committee utilized strategic approaches such as the application of digitalizing processes, expanding outreach for inclusivity, partnering with agencies, and promoting fairness in selection. The Insights of the recruitment officers on their roles and responsibilities highlight the importance of a holistic selection approach through strategic and objective evaluation that goes beyond paper qualifications. Hence, successful recruitment requires flexibility, continuous improvement, and teamwork in decision-making.

## INTRODUCTION

In the Davao Region (Region 11), the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) faces significant challenges in its recruitment process despite adhering to national directives. The BFP customizes its recruitment strategies to meet local requirements through targeted campaigns and community engagement initiatives. However, recruitment officers encounter several issues, including the limited pool of qualified applicants for specialized roles such as mechanics, licensed psychologists/psychometricians, architects, doctors, and engineers (BFP Report, 2023). The region's rapid urbanization and expanding industrial sector have increased the demand for highly skilled professionals, making attracting and retaining top talent challenging (Philippine News Agency, 2023). The region's vulnerability to natural disasters also heightens the need for a well-trained and adaptable workforce. Logistical difficulties, such as managing last-minute bulk applications and ensuring transparency and fairness in the selection process, further complicate recruitment efforts. Insights from several fire marshals during command conferences over the past five years underscore the urgency of addressing these gaps to strengthen the BFP's operational capacity and emergency response readiness (BFP Report, 2023).

Unfortunately, there seems to be an insufficient number of applicants from these preferred professional categories. Given that BFP recruitment is open to all graduates, many struggle to successfully navigate the various stages of the selection process. In year 2021, BFP 11 received six hundred seventy-eight (678) applications, but only sixteen (16) completed all recruitment stages based on the mentioned courses in the preceding paragraph. Despite the high salary and benefits being given to government employees, still the BFP has a lower rate of applicants possessing highly technical and special skills. While this system promotes a balanced and diverse workforce across the nation, it also presents challenges in maintaining consistent recruitment standards and meeting the diverse needs of different regions (BFP Recruitment and Selection Division, 2022).

Recruitment in public sector organizations refers to attracting, selecting, and appointing qualified individuals for vacant positions within government agencies and departments. According to Smith (2020), recruitment is a strategic HRM function that involves identifying an organization's staffing needs and attracting potential candidates to apply for available positions. It plays a crucial role in the success and effectiveness of public sector organizations. One key importance is that it helps ensure the organization has the right people with the necessary skills and qualifications to perform their duties effectively (Smith, 2021). Additionally, recruitment in the public sector is essential for promoting diversity and inclusivity, ensuring that the organization reflects the demographics of the community it serves (Brown, 2022).

The recruitment process undertaken by the Bureau of Fire Protection is integral to establishing a workforce that is both skilled and committed to the principles of public safety and emergency response (BFP Recruitment and Selection Division, 2022). Through the adherence to strict guidelines and the engagement of diverse stakeholders, the BFP ensures a selection process that is transparent, equitable, and maintains the highest standards of public service excellence.

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) in the Philippines plays a pivotal role in safeguarding public safety through a comprehensive suite of services, including fire prevention and suppression, emergency medical and rescue operations, among others. To fulfil its mandate, the BFP implements a rigorous recruitment process aimed at selecting candidates who demonstrate both competence and physical aptitude necessary for the bureau's challenging functions. This recruitment methodology encompasses an intricate multi-phase evaluation consisting of initial applications, standardized written examinations, physical fitness assessments, medical evaluations, background verifications, and interviews. Prospective candidates are required to fulfill specific criteria related to age, educational attainment, and physical fitness standards to be considered for recruitment (BFP Report, 2023).

The legal and regulatory framework governing the BFP's recruitment policies and guidelines is largely constituted by Republic Act No. 9263, known as the Bureau of Fire Protection and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology Professionalization Act of 2004. This legislation mandates that aspirants possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree and achieve civil service eligibility. Additionally, adherence to the standards set forth by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for physical fitness and medical examinations is imperative to ensure candidates' capability in managing the strenuous demands of firefighting and emergency response activities (Johnson, 2022).

The recruitment process within the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) represents a comprehensive mechanism characterized by multifarious stages and participants, aimed at the selection of proficient and committed personnel. The fundamental essence of this process lies in its periodic assessment and refinement, which are pivotal in safeguarding its effectiveness and integrity. These dynamics are substantiated through empirical research and evaluative feedback, unveiling the critical roles played by

transparency, preparatory measures, and inclusivity in augmenting the recruitment methodologies of the BFP. The intricacies of the BFP's recruitment protocol have been the focal point of scholarly inquiry, dissecting its efficacy, the challenges it encounters, and suggesting avenues for enhancement. These scholarly endeavors yield invaluable insights pertaining to the optimization of the recruitment framework to facilitate a streamlined and equitable selection mechanism (BFP Recruitment and Selection Division, 2022).

A noteworthy investigation by Khan and Ahmed (2021) delved into the overarching efficacy of the recruitment and selection modalities within the BFP. This analysis pinpointed several areas necessitating improvement, with a pronounced emphasis on bolstering the transparency and efficiency of the recruitment process. Dela Cruz (2021) advocated for the integration of sophisticated technological solutions to refine the application and communication processes with candidates. This proposal aims to mitigate delays and ensure comprehensive information dissemination throughout the recruitment phases, thereby achieving a more seamless and effective procedure.

Furthermore, research scrutinized the physical fitness requisites of the BFP's recruitment schema. Acknowledging the stringent and essential nature of these physical evaluations in selecting candidates apt for the arduous tasks of firefighting and emergency response, Santos identified a critical necessity for enhanced preparatory initiatives for prospective applicants. Proposing the implementation of exhaustive preparatory courses, the BFP could significantly ameliorate candidates' physical readiness, subsequently augmenting their likelihood of triumphing over the physical assessments and diminishing the attrition rates prevalent in the recruitment stages (Santos, 2020).

Another extensive assessment examined the influences exerted by recruitment policies on the dimension of diversity and inclusivity within the BFP. Reyes's examination revealed that albeit the BFP has enacted commendable efforts in championing gender diversity, impediments persist towards achieving a more expansively inclusive workforce, especially regarding individuals hailing from marginalized cohorts. Reyes posited that the BFP ought to enact specialized recruitment strategies to summon a diverse array of candidates. Moreover, Reyes emphasized the imperative of consistent monitoring and evaluation of recruitment policies to assure their alignment with the objective of cultivating a workforce reflective of broader inclusivity (Reyes, 2021).

A closer examination of the Bureau of Fire Protection's (BFP) recruitment endeavors provides a practical illustration of these principles in action. The BFP's commitment to a transparent, equitable selection process exemplifies commendable practices. Such rigor, supported by a legal framework like the Republic Act No. 9263 and standards from the National Fire Protection Association, underscores a commitment to meritocracy and fitness for purpose, crucial in roles closely tied to public safety and emergency responses. The process of recruitment within the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) is significantly influenced by a multitude of determinants, encompassing alterations in policies, organizational necessities, and the prevailing socio-economic conditions (Lee & Santos, 2020). The essential role played by firefighters in safeguarding public safety necessitates that the recruitment framework not only excels in efficiency but also in its efficacy to allure superior candidates (Brown, 2022).

The recruitment mechanism is rigorously guided by the stipulations set forth by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) rules, alongside the mandates of Republic Act 9263, also known as the BFP and the BJMP Professionalization Act of 2004. This framework's primary objective is to ascertain the cultivation of a workforce that is both professional and competent (Republic Act 9263). In a bid to rectify prevalent issues, recent amendments have been instituted, streamlining procedures and curtailing bureaucratic

inertia, with the ultimate goal of bolstering overall procedural efficiency (Civil Service Commission, 2022). Notably, the BFP's holistic approach to recruitment, involving multiple stakeholders to ensure the process's integrity and effectiveness—from the Recruitment Committee's oversight to the Civil Service Commission's execution of civil service eligibility exams—demonstrates a crucial balance between regulatory compliance and the pursuit of operational excellence.

Reflecting on these discussions, the inherent complexities and undeniable importance of recruitment in public sector organizations are highlighted. It is elucidated that recruitment is not simply about filling vacancies but about building a workforce that reflects and is capable of serving the community's diverse needs with unwavering commitment and professionalism. This synthesis of insights brings to light the nuances of public sector recruitment and the essential values that underpin successful hiring processes in such pivotal institutions, enriching the understanding of recruitment's critical role within the public sector. Notwithstanding these initiatives, the recruitment committee continues to confront challenges in executing its duties effectively. During its Command Conference, which sees participation from Municipal/City Fire Marshals and their respective Provincial/District Fire Marshals, a discernible shortfall in personnel possessing necessary technical expertise has been highlighted (BFP Report, 2023). This deficiency is particularly sad in the context of implementing the Fire Code of the Philippines, thus signaling a pressing need for strategies aimed at ameliorating the current recruitment landscape. This situation underscores an evident lack of scholarly investigation into this specific aspect of BFP operations. There is a clear requirement for research aimed at elucidating the perspectives and experiences of those integral to the recruitment process within the BFP. Such scholarly inquiries could serve as a pivotal lever in reforming and refining the recruitment mechanisms.

Therefore, this qualitative research study aimed to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the recruitment process in the BFP-XI focusing on the perspectives of the recruitment officers on their roles and responsibilities; their experiences; strategies they pursued, which may impact current recruitment policies and practices. This investigation will contribute to more streamline and equitable recruitment strategies, ultimately improving the readiness and effectiveness of the fire protection workforce.

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment process can be explained through applying key theories in human resource management and organizational behavior. The Equity Theory by Adams (1965), serves as the anchor theory for this study. According to Dallo (2024), it underscores the importance of fairness and transparency in recruitment processes. Equity Theory posits that individuals are motivated when they perceive that they are treated fairly compared to others (McNamee, 2021). In the context of BFP recruitment, this translates to the need for unbiased evaluation criteria, inclusive candidate pools, and equitable treatment throughout the selection process. Modern trends, such as anonymized hiring and AI-based evaluation, reflect efforts to reduce implicit biases and promote fair competition based on skills and qualifications (McNamee, 2021). Applying Equity Theory within BFP recruitment ensures that candidates feel valued and motivated, ultimately enhancing organizational commitment and performance.

Two supporting theories strengthen the theoretical foundation. First, Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) emphasizes that an organization's success is linked to the quality of its workforce. Investing in recruiting and selecting highly skilled professionals—such as engineers, psychologists, and doctors—aligns with this theory, as these competencies enhance BFP's operational capacity and preparedness for emergencies (Tian & Tóth, 2024). Second, the Expectancy Theory, formulated by Victor Vroom in 1964, highlights how candidates' motivation to apply and perform during recruitment is influenced by their belief that effort will lead to performance and reward (Sutton, 2024). Ensuring transparent communication

of qualifications, selection criteria, and career advancement opportunities within BFP's recruitment process fosters candidates' trust and motivation, improving performance throughout the hiring stages. These interconnected theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and improving BFP's recruitment process by emphasizing fairness, human capital development, and motivational alignment.

The study on the Bureau of Fire Protection's (BFP) recruitment process holds significant value at institutional, societal, and global levels. It contributes to human resource management in high-stakes public service sectors by identifying effective recruitment strategies and addressing everyday challenges. The findings will enrich the global literature on public safety recruitment, offering insights that other fire protection agencies can adopt to enhance their recruitment outcomes. Moreover, the study is a benchmark for comparative studies, fostering the exchange of best practices and innovations. By improving the understanding of recruitment dynamics in high-pressure environments, the study can strengthen the selection and training of public safety personnel, ultimately enhancing global emergency response systems.

The study provides valuable insights into recruitment challenges and strategies, benefiting multiple stakeholders. Policymakers can use the findings to improve public safety recruitment policies, training programs, and resource allocation, enhancing fire protection services. The BFP will gain data-driven recommendations to attract skilled applicants and refine recruitment processes, leading to more effective emergency response. Applicants will benefit from a clearer understanding of the recruitment process, improving the quality of the applicant pool. Academic institutions can integrate the findings into fire safety curricula, better preparing future professionals. Communities will experience enhanced emergency response and greater public trust in the BFP. On a global scale, the study can guide other fire protection agencies in adopting best practices and supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 by promoting strong, accountable institutions.

## METHOD

This section provides a description of the study's participants alongside the materials and instruments used for the purpose of data collection. Additionally, it elaborates on the research design and the procedural dimensions adopted for the systematic collection of relevant data including ethical considerations.

### Study Participants

The research participants consisted of six (6) members of the recruitment committee for the In-Depth Interview and five (5) members for the Focus Group Discussion within the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP).

The participants for this study were chosen through purposeful sampling. The use of purposeful sampling is justified in this study as it enables the selection of participants who possess specific knowledge and experience relevant to the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment process. Purposeful sampling allows researchers to target individuals directly involved in recruitment, such as recruitment officers and decision-makers, ensuring that the data collected is rich, relevant, and directly aligned with the research objectives (Nikolopoulou, 2022). This method is particularly effective for exploring complex phenomena, as it ensures that the participants have the expertise and insights needed to provide meaningful contributions to the study (Hassan, 2024). By focusing on knowledgeable respondents, the study can generate in-depth and targeted findings that accurately reflect the challenges, strategies, and best practices in BFP recruitment.

The following factors were used to select the participants to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the recruitment process: First, the participants must have a minimum of two years of service in the BFP; and Second, the participants must be a current or former member in the BFP recruitment committee. The selection process was conducted with specific details to guarantee transparency and fairness. This focus ensures that the participants possess direct experience and involvement in the recruitment process, providing valuable insights into the procedures, challenges, and dynamics of recruiting personnel.

The following are excluded from participating in the study: 1) BFP members with less than two years of service in the Bureau, as they may lack sufficient experience in recruitment; 2) Individuals with no direct experience or involvement in the recruitment process within the BFP; 3) BFP members not part of the recruitment committee, since they may need more detailed insights into the process; 4) Current or former BFP members who have faced disciplinary actions related to recruitment, as this could bias their perspective; and, 5) Contractual or auxiliary staff who may have participated in recruitment but are not formally part of the BFP structure.

Participation in the study is voluntary, with participants providing informed consent. The researcher encouraged voluntary participation as it allows for a more diverse range of perspectives, enriching the insights gathered. This ensures that ethical standards are upheld, and participants are willingly sharing their experiences and insights.

### **Materials and Instrument**

The primary instrument used in the study is the semi-structured interview guide. This guide consists of a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed and comprehensive responses from participants. Part 1. Will cover the questions on the recruitment committee's perception regarding their role and responsibilities in the recruitment process; Part 2, consists of questions on the recruitment committee's experiences encountered in recruiting personnel for the BFP; Part 3, will include questions on the challenges faced by the recruitment committee in attracting and selecting qualified candidates; and Part 4, consists of questions on strategies employed and insights to overcome challenges and ensure successful personnel recruitment in the BFP.

The questions are structured to explore specific themes or topics related to the research study, while also allowing for flexibility to probe deeper into interesting or unexpected areas that arise during the conversation.

### **Design and Procedure**

The study utilized a single holistic case study design to describe the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by the recruitment committee members in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP). The single holistic case study design is well-suited for a thorough examination of the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by members of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment committee. This approach facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the intricacies of the recruitment process, capturing the specific dynamics and context within the BFP. By focusing on a single case, the study can delve deeply into the organizational culture, policies, and external pressures affecting the committee's work, providing a nuanced understanding of the underlying factors shaping their experiences and challenges (Yin, 2022). Moreover, this design enables a detailed examination of the intricate recruitment processes and interactions. Through qualitative approaches such as interviews and observations, the study can gather rich data on committee members' personal and collective perspectives, revealing valuable insights into their decision-making and problem-solving strategies. The holistic nature of this case study design also lends itself to identifying patterns and issues contributing to the committee's challenges, ultimately guiding

the development of practical recommendations for enhancing recruitment practices (Yin, 2022; Creswell, 2023).

The data collection procedure commenced with seeking the permission from the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP). The researcher submitted a formal letter addressed to the Regional Director with attached endorsement by the research

adviser and the dean. A copy of the detailed research proposal outlining the study's objectives, significance, and methodologies will be submitted. The researcher waited formal approval from BFP authorities to proceed with the study. Next, the researcher scheduled a meeting with the recruitment committee members to explain the study's purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations. In the spirit of respect for their rights and confidentiality, all participants obtained informed consent, ensuring they fully understand their rights and the study's confidentiality measures.

The researcher conducted an in-depth interview (IDI) with six (6) participants and five (5) participants for the focus group discussion (FGD). The researcher scheduled the In-Depth Interviews with the participants through face-to-face and virtual upon the agreed schedule. An interview guide was used to maintain consistency while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their responses. Permission to record the interviews was obtained from the participants before the interview. On the other hand, audio recordings of the interviews shall be transcribed to aid the data analysis.

The key roles played by the researcher in the study were that of data collector, facilitator, observer, data analyst, and instrument developer. As the primary data collector, the researcher conducts interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) using structured guides to ensure consistency and depth. As a facilitator, the researcher creates a conducive environment for open discussions and manages group dynamics. In the observer role, the researcher takes detailed field notes, capturing non-verbal cues and contextual details to enrich the data. As a data analyst, the researcher transcribes, codes, and interprets the data to identify key themes and patterns.

The researcher utilized thematic analysis, a qualitative research approach, to examine data from transcripts and field notes. Thematic analysis involves identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. This flexible approach allows for detailed data exploration, making it particularly suitable for uncovering complex narratives and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This method involves recognizing, analyzing, and presenting patterns or themes within the data to interpret the collective experiences and perceptions of the recruitment committee members in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) in relation to the research questions.

Initially, the researcher thoroughly reviewed the transcripts and field notes, making initial observations on noteworthy points or patterns. Subsequently, systematically coded the data, tagging segments relevant to the research questions using manual coding.

Following the coding process, the researcher reviewed the coded data to identify patterns and group codes into potential themes, considering how different codes may merge to form overarching themes. They will further refine these themes by cross-referencing them against the coded data extracts and the entire dataset to ensure accuracy, merging, splitting, or discarding themes as necessary.

Once the themes are refined, the researcher defined each theme, articulating what it signifies and how it relates to the research questions, developing comprehensive descriptions that highlight key aspects of the data and underlying patterns. Finally, the researcher integrated the themes into a coherent narrative using direct quotes from the transcripts to illustrate and substantiate each theme, thereby providing evidence for the findings.

In conducting this study, the researcher adhered to the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to uphold the integrity of the study. To establish credibility, the researcher invested significant time in engaging with participants and data to foster strong relationships and gather comprehensive insights. Employed triangulation by utilizing multiple data sources, such as interviews, focus group discussions, and field notes, to corroborate the findings. Member checking will be carried out by sharing the findings with participants to validate the accuracy and interpretation of the data.

To ensure transferability, the researcher provided thorough descriptions of the context, participants, and findings, enabling others to assess the relevance of the results in different settings. Additionally, the research process and context will be meticulously detailed to assist readers in evaluating the potential transferability of the findings. For dependability, the researcher will maintain a comprehensive audit trail, documenting all research decisions, processes, and modifications throughout the study.

Lastly, to guarantee confirmability, the researcher will anchor the findings in the data by establishing clear connections between the data, codes, themes, and conclusions. Proper acknowledgments and credits will be given for all contributions to the research to avoid claims of plagiarism or impropriety.

The researcher has acquired approval from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC) to conduct a study and was given an approved UMERC Certificate on November 18, 2024, with a UMERC Protocol Number: UMERC-2024-442. The researcher ensured that the study was introduced to permit the participants enough time and ability to consider whether or not they wished to participate freely. The participation was purely voluntary as they may or may not engage in the said research without any consequences, and their participation and non-participation will not affect them or their case.

The researcher used technological recording tools such as cellphones, cameras, and other similar audio and video recording tools. Once the audio/video data was put into (transcribed) written form, the recorded audio/video was permanently deleted from the recording tools. To avoid conflict of interest and to ensure of full transparency, I am disclosing and, therefore, confirming that neither I nor any of my relatives have any personal or commercial interest in, or the potential for personal gain from, any of the organizations or individuals associated with my research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the study's findings in four parts: the roles and responsibilities of a member in the recruitment committee in the Bureau of Fire and Protection agency; the lived experiences encountered by the Recruitment Committee in recruiting personnel for the Bureau of Fire Protection; the challenges faced by the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment committee in attracting and selecting qualified candidates; the strategies done by the recruitment committee members to overcome challenges and ensure successful personnel recruitment in the BFP.

**Table 1. Study Participant's Profile**

Pseudonym	Gender	Experience as a Member of the Recruitment Committee
IDI1-A	Male	
IDI2-B	Male	
IDI3-C	Male	



IDI4-D	Female	
IDI5-E	Female	
IDI6-F	Female	
FGD1	Male	
FGD2	Male	
FGD3	Male	
FGD4	Female	
FGD5	Female	

Table 1 presents the study participant’s profile involved in this study. Majority are current members of the recruitment committee and some are assigned in the different stations in BFP Region 11.

**Roles and Responsibilities as Member of the Recruitment Committee**

Table 2 presents the themes and core statements of the participants during the In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), highlighting their perceived roles and responsibilities as a member of the recruitment committee in the Bureau of Fire Protection.

**Table 2. Themes and Core Ideas on the perceived roles and responsibilities as a member of the recruitment committee.**

ESSENTIAL THEMES	IFICANT STATEMENT
<b>Crucial Role in the Recruitment Process</b>	Recruitment is a crucial process that requires strict compliance with policies and thorough verification of documents; role is vital in ensuring that only qualified applicants proceed in the selection process.
<b>Ensuring Fairness and Integrity</b>	The selection process must be fair and transparent and uphold the integrity of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP); serve as a gatekeeper who upholds the organization's standards, ensuring that only individuals with passion and commitment to public service are selected.
<b>Ensure a Meticulous approach to Assessing Candidates</b>	Core responsibilities include assessing applicants’ qualifications, skills, and fitness for the service; decisions impact the final selection process and influence the appointing authority’s decision.
<b>Commitment to Organizational Excellence</b>	Recruitment is not just about filling vacancies; it is about selecting individuals who embody courage, commitment, and professionalism; the recruitment committee plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the organization by selecting the best candidates for the position.
<b>Accountability and Attention to Detail</b>	As a committee member, I must ensure the legitimacy and accuracy of applicants’ data from document submission to final deliberation; Every step, from screening documents to deliberation, requires caution and precision to maintain the credibility of the hiring process.

Recruitment committee members view their roles as vital to the agency's success, emphasizing fairness, thorough evaluation, active participation, and alignment with organizational values. Their responsibilities directly influence organizational performance and public trust in public service sectors.

**Crucial Role in the Recruitment Process**

Recruitment committee members in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) are essential in maintaining

fairness, transparency, and policy adherence, directly influencing organizational effectiveness and credibility. Their role is pivotal in selecting competent personnel who align with the BFP's mission of public safety and service (Yadav & Singh, 2021). One participant emphasized,

"As a recruitment committee member, I play a crucial role in ensuring a fair, transparent, and effective hiring process. By meticulously reviewing each aspect, I maintain the integrity of the selection process." - (IDI\_1)

Committee members are the first line of evaluation, filtering out unqualified candidates and guaranteeing that only the most competent move forward (Behrend et al., 2020). Their responsibilities extend beyond screening; they must also comply with national policies and legal frameworks to maintain process integrity. One member noted,

"Our duty is about following mandated guidelines and policies of the BFP and the Civil Service Commission." - (IDI\_3)

By doing so, the recruitment committee enhances the BFP's reputation by selecting skilled and dedicated individuals who contribute to its mission. The committee's role in maintaining the BFP's workforce integrity is supported by Harris et al. (2024), who argue that selective hiring practices are crucial for public service institutions. This process aligns recruitment with the agency's evolving objectives, ensuring long-term success and sustainability (Kumar, 2023).

### **Ensuring Fairness and Integrity**

Fairness and integrity are core values emphasized by all participants, reflecting the ethical standards required in public service recruitment (Venkateswaran et al., 2023). One participant explained,

"As a recruitment committee member, I serve as a gatekeeper who upholds the organization's standards, ensuring that only individuals with the passion, competence, and commitment to public service are selected." - (IDI\_5)

This highlights the responsibility of maintaining a rigorous and impartial selection process to strengthen the BFP's credibility and foster public trust. The committee's role in ensuring fairness involves evaluating applicants solely on their qualifications, mitigating biases, and maintaining consistent scoring across recruitment phases. One member stated,

"We verify that all scores from assessments are accurately reflected in official records." - (IDI\_3)

This consistency minimizes variability, reinforcing organizational stability and reliability (Meijerink et al., 2021). Confidentiality is another crucial aspect of maintaining integrity. Committee members emphasized the importance of keeping recruitment results private until official release to prevent favoritism or outside influence. One participant shared,

"Maintaining confidentiality ensures that decisions are based solely on qualifications and performance." - (IDI\_5)

By adhering to transparent processes, accurate documentation, and confidentiality, the recruitment committee upholds the integrity of the BFP's selection framework. This approach not only enhances organizational legitimacy but also strengthens workforce morale and public trust (Wong et al., 2022).

### **Ensuring a Meticulous Approach to Assessing Candidates**

Participants emphasized the importance of a meticulous approach in assessing candidates, focusing on qualifications, skills, and overall fitness for service. This aligns with McConnell's (2024) findings that comprehensive evaluations are crucial for organizational effectiveness. One participant noted,

"A meticulous approach is essential for a fair and transparent recruitment process. My core responsibilities include assessing applicants' qualifications, skills, and fitness for the service. Every evaluation must be

thorough, objective, and aligned with the standards of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) to ensure that only the most capable and dedicated individuals are considered ..." - (IDI\_1).

The committee ensures that every applicant is objectively measured against BFP's strict recruitment criteria, maintaining system integrity. Another participant shared,

"I should be cautious about the accuracy of applicants' data—from accepting folders to posting qualified candidates until the final deliberation." - (FGD\_3)

Such rigor guarantees that candidates meet the demanding requirements of firefighting roles, minimizing risks of underperformance in critical situations. This structured assessment process includes document verification, physical fitness tests, and interviews, following a consistent and efficient system that supports the agency's mission (Yang, 2023).

Recruitment within the BFP operates as a self-regulating system, continuously refining itself based on past outcomes and feedback, aligning with the concept of cybernetics in systems theory (Alvarez, 2023). The impact of assessment decisions extends beyond recruitment, influencing the BFP's capability to respond to emergencies with competence and professionalism. One participant emphasized,

"Our decisions determine the future of the organization by selecting individuals entrusted with protecting lives and property." - (IDI\_2).

### **Meticulous Approach to Candidate Assessment**

A meticulous approach to candidate assessment was highlighted as a vital responsibility. This involves comprehensive evaluations to ensure that only the most capable individuals are selected. One member noted,

"A meticulous approach is essential for a fair and transparent recruitment process. My core responsibilities include assessing qualifications, skills, and overall fitness for service." - (IDI\_1)

Committee members are tasked with verifying educational backgrounds, physical fitness, and moral character, ensuring applicants meet the BFP's strict recruitment criteria. One participant emphasized,

"I should be cautious about the accuracy of applicants' data from acceptance to final deliberation." - (FGD\_3)

This vigilance minimizes the risk of underperformance in critical situations. The committee follows a structured assessment process to objectively evaluate applicants' skills and qualifications. One participant explained,

"We follow a structured assessment to ensure that each applicant is fairly evaluated." - (IDI\_4)

This systematic approach aligns with systems theory, ensuring consistency and efficiency in the recruitment process (Yang, 2023). The impact of recruitment decisions extends beyond filling positions, influencing the BFP's operational capacity and public trust. One participant stated,

"Our decisions determine the future of the organization by selecting individuals who will protect lives and property." - (IDI\_2)

This underscores the strategic importance of recruitment in building a strong and reliable public service agency.

### **Commitment to Organizational Excellence**

Recruitment in the BFP is strategic, ensuring that only highly capable and dedicated individuals join the organization. One committee member emphasized,

"Recruitment is about selecting individuals who embody courage, commitment, and professionalism." - (IDI\_1)

This perspective underscores the role of recruitment in enhancing organizational resilience and effecti-

veness (Dulebohn & Werling, 2020). The recruitment committee influences the BFP’s future by shaping its workforce quality, operational capacity, and public trust. As another member noted, "The recruitment committee shapes the organization’s future by selecting the best candidates." - (IDI\_2)

**Lived Experiences of Recruitment Committee Members**

**Table 3. Themes and Core Ideas on the lived experiences of recruitment committee members.**

<b>ESSENTIAL THEMES</b>	<b>IFICANT STATEMENT</b>
<b>A challenging and meticulous process</b>	Recruitment is a challenging and meticulous process requiring patience, accuracy, and a commitment to fairness; redundant meetings can be tedious, strict adherence to policies ensures efficiency and integrity; the process is fulfilling as it contributes to building a competent and reliable workforce.
<b>Balancing objectivity with subjectivity</b>	Balancing objectivity with subjectivity is crucial in evaluating applicants' potential; policy adherence and critical analysis are essential in selecting the best candidates; help shape the next generation of professionals.
<b>Memorable and Unique Recruitment Experiences</b>	The COVID-19 pandemic introduced virtual screening and strict health protocols; exceptional persistence form who repeatedly reapplied despite limited slots; unexpected applicant stories highlight the need for flexibility and consideration in the process; Gender disparities in test results (e.g., more female passers than male) have sparked discussions on workforce diversity; high failure rates in certain exams (e.g., neuro exams) have significantly impacted the final selection pool.
<b>Managing Pressure and Stakeholder Expectations</b>	Pressure is managed by following mandated procedures and recruitment policies; Transparency and professionalism help address concerns from stakeholders and applicants; Applicants who do not meet requirements are encouraged to reapply and prepare better for future opportunities.
<b>Handling high applicant volume</b>	Handling high applicant volume is time-consuming and overwhelming, necessitating structured screening processes; Unexpected cases, such as gender-related inquiries or political endorsements, require careful adherence to established policies (e.g., Equal Opportunity Principles and agency-specific guidelines).

By maintaining rigorous standards, upholding transparency, and adhering to policies, the recruitment committee contributes to the BFP’s mission of public safety and service. Their role is crucial not only in building a capable workforce but also in reinforcing the agency’s integrity and credibility.

**A Challenging and Meticulous Process**

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment process is known for its rigor and complexity, requiring patience, accuracy, and fairness at every stage. A participant emphasized that

"The recruitment process is rigorous and requires patience, accuracy, and fairness." -(FGD\_1)

Each phase, from initial screening to final deliberation, acts as a subsystem contributing to the overall integrity and effectiveness of the organization. Systems theory highlights the interconnectedness of these

elements, suggesting that any error in one part of the process can affect the entire system (Fabris, 2023). As another participant noted,

"Every step, from screening documents to deliberation, requires caution and precision to maintain the credibility of the hiring process." – (IDI\_3)

To ensure a fair and credible selection process, the BFP recruitment committee regularly conducts consultations and cross-checks data, adhering to strict policies and redundant meetings. A participant emphasized,

"Redundant meetings and strict policy adherence ensure a smooth and credible selection process." – (FGD\_5)

This process aligns with systems theory's feedback loops, where continuous evaluation enhances system performance (Serman, 2020). Despite the heavy workload, committee members find fulfillment in shaping a competent workforce. This approach contributes to the BFP's long-term effectiveness by upholding a high level of accountability and ensuring that only the most qualified candidates are selected, which strengthens the organization's credibility and public trust.

### **Balancing Objectivity with Subjectivity**

Balancing objectivity and subjectivity in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment process is crucial for selecting candidates who meet both the technical qualifications and align with the organization's mission and values. One participant stated:

"Balancing objectivity with subjectivity is crucial in evaluating applicants' potential." – (FGD\_4)

This balance is achieved by adhering to objective criteria like educational background, physical qualifications, and test scores, while also assessing subjective qualities such as leadership potential, dedication, and a genuine desire to serve the community. As another participant noted,

"Policy adherence and critical analysis are essential in selecting the best candidates." – (IDI\_1)

This careful approach ensures that the recruitment process remains fair, consistent, and aligned with the BFP's standards and values, with both objective and subjective factors taken into account. The recruitment process at BFP extends beyond filling vacancies, aiming to shape a future workforce that embodies integrity, bravery, and dedication. One participant remarked,

"Through this process, we help shape the next generation of professionals." – (IDI\_6)

This sentiment reflects the broader mission of the recruitment team, which not only evaluates candidates based on strict criteria but also ensures that selected applicants are a good fit for public service. This approach aligns with systems theory, where each part of the recruitment process functions as a subsystem that contributes to the organization's overall success (Portillo & Mancera, 2021). The balance between objective and subjective assessments is key to ensuring fairness, transparency, and the selection of a competent and committed workforce.

### **Memorable and Unique Recruitment Experiences**

Serving on the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment committee offers unique experiences that highlight the importance of integrity, fairness, and adherence to established policies. One such experience involves handling applicants who plead for reconsideration due to ineligibility, a participant noted,

"Applicants pleading for reconsideration due to ineligibility are common but must be handled with fairness and policy compliance." – (IDI\_3)

This scenario underscores the need to maintain the credibility of the recruitment process through strict adherence to policies. Systems theory suggests that each part of an organization influences and is influenced by others, emphasizing the importance of fairness in preserving overall organizational integrity

(OECD, 2020). The committee's commitment to accuracy and transparency, even at the cost of extended work hours, reflects this principle, as emphasized by a participant:

"Ensuring accuracy and transparency in results often leads to extended work hours." – (IDI\_1)

The recruitment committee also faces challenges in managing misinterpretations of eligibility criteria, which can lead to last-minute corrections. As participant shared,

"Misinterpretations of eligibility criteria can lead to last-minute corrections, underscoring the importance of thorough document verification." – (FGD\_3)

This dynamic scenario illustrates the interconnected nature of systems, where adjustments in one component can impact others. By applying systems thinking, the committee ensures that each action and decision contributes to the organization's overall goals, fostering a fair, transparent, and effective recruitment process (Waldo, 2020).

### **Managing Pressure and Stakeholder Expectations**

Participation in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment committee involves managing various pressures and expectations from a range of stakeholders. As a participant shared,

"Pressure is managed by following mandated procedures and recruitment policies" – (FGD\_2)

This aligns with systems theory's perspective that consistent processes help maintain organizational integrity and manage external pressures (OECD, 2020). By adhering to established policies, the recruitment committee ensures fairness and objectivity throughout the selection process. Additionally, transparency and professionalism are emphasized, as one participant noted,

"Transparency and professionalism help address concerns from stakeholders and applicants." - (FGD\_5)

This approach ensures that all stakeholders are informed and helps maintain trust in the recruitment process. Another key aspect of the recruitment process is encouraging applicants who do not meet the requirements to reapply and prepare better for future opportunities, as expressed by a participant:

"Applicants who do not meet requirements are encouraged to reapply and prepare better for future opportunities." – (IDI\_5)

By fostering a culture of growth and development, the BFP recruitment committee ensures a fair, transparent, and effective process that upholds the organization's integrity and strengthens public trust.

### **Handling High Applicant Volume**

Managing a high applicant volume is one of the most significant challenges in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment process. As a participant highlighted,

"Handling high applicant volume is time-consuming and overwhelming, necessitating structured screening processes." –(FGD\_1)

To address this challenge, the team employs a systematic approach, including initial screening for qualifications, detailed document verification, and rigorous assessments. The integration of advanced technologies, such as applicant tracking systems (ATS) and AI-driven chatbots, can streamline these processes by automating the initial screening and minimizing human error. These technologies help maintain consistency, fairness, and accuracy while efficiently managing high volumes of applications (Iprospectcheck, 2023).

Despite the structured system, the committee faces unexpected challenges, such as gender-related inquiries or political endorsements that may influence selection. As participant shared,

"Unexpected cases, such as gender-related inquiries or political endorsements, require careful adherence to established policies." – (IDI\_6)

When conflicts arise, particularly in interpreting complex cases, the recruitment team resolves issues

through open discussions, emergency meetings, and adherence to recruitment policies, as noted by a participant:

"When disagreements arise, conflicts are resolved through discussions, emergency meetings, and adherence to recruitment policies." – (IDI\_3)

This collaborative approach, rooted in systems theory, emphasizes the importance of feedback loops and open communication to ensure unbiased decision-making and adaptability to evolving challenges (Belshaw, 2024; Musheke & Phiri, 2021)

### Challenges Faced by the Recruitment Committee Members

**Table 4. Themes and Core Ideas on the challenges faced by the recruitment committee members in attracting and selecting qualified candidates**

ESSENTIAL THEMES	IFICANT STATEMENT
<b>Evaluating the required documents</b>	Inaccurate, incomplete, and inconsistent documentary submissions cause delays in the recruitment process; Many applicants submit incorrect or incomplete information in their Personal Data Sheets (PDS), leading to inconsistencies and delays; Bulk submissions, particularly on the last day of recruitment, contribute to screening inefficiencies.
<b>Logistical and Venue-Related Issues</b>	The lack of proper facilities for examinations and agility tests hinders an efficient recruitment process; the absence of a dedicated venue for testing at the regional headquarters poses logistical challenges.
<b>Upholding a non-discriminatory stance</b>	Given the nature of firefighting work, there is a preference for more male applicants to ensure operational efficiency; there is concern about the increasing number of female recruits surpassing the bureau’s ideal ratio.
<b>Managing a large number of applicants while maintaining a fair and transparent selection process</b>	The overwhelming number of applicants creates difficulties in ensuring fair evaluations; Political pressures sometimes influence the recruitment process.
<b>Extensive selection process deterring potential applicants</b>	The recruitment process is long and rigorous, discouraging many prospective candidates; There is a need for clear guidelines and better assistance to applicants to ensure compliance with requirements.

### Evaluating the Required Documents

A significant challenge faced by the BFP recruitment committee is the evaluation of applicants' documents, which often contain inaccuracies, incompleteness, and inconsistencies. As a participant explained,

"Inaccurate, incomplete, and inconsistent documentary submissions cause delays in the recruitment process." – (FGD\_2)

Applicants frequently overlook necessary details, miss signatures, or fail to attach required supporting documents, which necessitates additional verification and causes delays. According to systems theory, inefficiencies in one component can disrupt the entire process (Skyttner, 2020), and this is evident in the BFP's document evaluation process. To reduce these issues, research suggests implementing standardized

document templates and utilizing digital submission systems, which can improve accuracy and minimize delays (Iprospectcheck, 2023).

The problem is further compounded by applicants submitting documents in bulk, particularly on the last day of the recruitment period. As a participant noted,

"Bulk submissions, particularly on the last recruitment day, contribute to screening inefficiencies." – (IDI\_6)

This last-minute rush overwhelms the recruitment team, causing workflow bottlenecks and the need for overtime work, increasing the risk of errors. Systems theory stresses the need for balanced workflows to maintain efficiency (Kantabutra, 2022). Research also recommends staggered deadlines or digital queuing systems to distribute the workload more evenly and reduce pressure on screening teams (García-Izquierdo et al., 2020). These measures aim to enhance the accuracy and consistency of document evaluations while improving overall efficiency.

### **Logistical and Venue-Related Issues**

The BFP recruitment team faces significant logistical challenges due to the absence of a dedicated venue at the regional headquarters, often requiring them to rent external locations that meet the needs of various tests. As a participant shared,

"The absence of a dedicated venue for testing at the regional headquarters poses logistical challenges." – (FGD\_4)

This forces the team to adjust testing schedules and extend recruitment timelines, creating additional coordination challenges for transportation and security. Effective resource management and strategic planning are essential to minimize delays and disruptions, as suggested by systems theory (Skyttner, 2020; Woods et al., 2022). The lack of proper facilities not only disrupts the testing process but also negatively impacts applicants' experience, with long waiting times often leading to frustration.

The logistical and venue-related challenges further highlight the need for a systematic and adaptive approach to recruitment. As one participant emphasized,

"The lack of proper facilities for examinations and agility tests hinders an efficient recruitment process." – (IDI\_1)

Research by Bauer et al. (2024) highlights the critical role of maintaining a positive applicant experience to uphold the integrity and fairness of the recruitment system. By using digital coordination platforms, staggered testing schedules, and continuous feedback mechanisms, the BFP can optimize venue arrangements, enhance applicant experiences, and ensure fairness in the selection process while maintaining the integrity of recruitment.

### **Upholding a Non-Discriminatory Stance**

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment process is grounded in non-discriminatory principles, ensuring equal opportunities for all applicants regardless of gender. However, concerns have arisen regarding the increasing number of female recruits surpassing the bureau's ideal gender ratio, which is influenced by the physical demands of firefighting. As a participant explained,

"While the recruitment process remains non-discriminatory, there is concern about the increasing number of female recruits surpassing the bureau's ideal ratio." – (IDI\_2)

This concern is not rooted in bias but is tied to practical considerations firefighting (Sinden et al, 2021), as the operational nature of firefighting often requires a larger proportion of male firefighters.

Although the BFP is committed to non-discriminatory practices, the increasing number of female recruits raises questions about the operational dynamics within fire stations. As a participant noted,



"Given the nature of firefighting work, there is a preference for more male applicants to ensure operational efficiency." – (FGD\_3)

This preference, however, is not driven by gender bias but is instead a response to the practical realities of firefighting, which traditionally requires certain physical capacities and a balance in the workforce to maintain efficiency (Marsh et al., 2024). The growing number of female applicants excelling in physical agility tests reflects women's increasing capability and interest in firefighting, highlighting a shift in the traditionally male-dominated profession.

**Managing a Large Number of Applicants While Maintaining Fairness**

Managing a large number of applicants while ensuring fairness and transparency in the selection process is a significant challenge for the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), as highlighted by a participant,

"The overwhelming number of applicants creates difficulties in ensuring fair evaluations." – (FGD\_2)

When the volume of applicants overwhelms the system, it leads to inefficiencies, cognitive overload, and potential biases. The recruitment team is pressured to process large amounts of information in limited time frames, which risks compromising the impartiality of evaluations and creating perceptions of unfairness. To address this, the BFP has implemented streamlined processes, such as automated screening tools, standardized testing, and digital tracking systems to handle the volume efficiently. However, these methods can introduce biases if not calibrated or monitored correctly, potentially disadvantaging certain applicant groups. As noted in research by Fabris et al. (2023), algorithmic biases in digital screening tools can undermine fairness. Perceived fairness is crucial for maintaining the credibility of the recruitment process, as Lo Piccolo et al. (2024) found that it influences applicants' trust in the organization and their willingness to accept job offers.

**Extensive Selection Process Detering Potential Applicants**

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment process is rigorous, with stringent qualifications, medical and physical requirements, and extensive selection stages that, while ensuring only capable individuals are selected, often deter potential applicants. As one participant shared,

"The recruitment process is long and rigorous, discouraging many prospective candidates." – (IDI\_2)

Kim and Lee (2021) note that such lengthy processes can discourage applicants, especially in public safety sectors where the standards are higher to ensure candidates are fit for duty. Rosales et al. (2022) found that stringent requirements often lead to a decrease in applicant pools as potential candidates are intimidated by the demanding standards.

Despite ensuring only the physically and mentally fit are selected, the BFP's stringent process, including complex medical and physical exams, becomes a barrier for many applicants. As noted by a participant,

"Many applicants give up midway because they feel overwhelmed by the numerous requirements." – (FGD\_1)

Kim and Lee (2021) emphasize that unclear guidelines and inconsistent communication can also create confusion and reduce applicant satisfaction. This is compounded by the BFP's reliance on public postings through social media and official websites, which may not effectively reach all potential applicants, leading to misunderstandings and incomplete submissions.

**Coping Strategies Employed by the Recruitment Committee Members**

**Table 5. Themes and Core Ideas on the strategies employed by the recruitment committee members in overcoming challenges**

ESSENTIAL THEMES	IFICANT STATEMENT
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<p><b>Digitalization and Process Optimization</b></p>	<p>The BFP has integrated digital tools such as Google Forms and Google Drive to streamline data collection and storage, reducing errors and improving efficiency; the use of Google Forms facilitated easier data collection from applicants; Google Drive is utilized for secure storage and efficient management of recruitment documents.; Code-based examination systems help ensure merit-based selection by eliminating biases.</p>
<p><b>Expanding outreach channels and ensuring inclusivity in job postings</b></p>	<p>Recruitment strategies include job boards, social media, and partnerships with local community organizations; Publications explicitly state that the recruitment process is open to persons with disabilities, indigenous communities, and individuals of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities; Region-wide recruitment drives are conducted to reach underrepresented communities and enhance workforce diversity.</p>
<p><b>Partnering with key agencies</b></p>	<p>Partnering with key agencies ensures the verification of applicant qualifications and enhances recruitment efficiency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSC, MARINA, and PRC play a crucial role in verifying candidate eligibility.</li> <li>• DOH-accredited facilities facilitate medical evaluations required for recruitment.</li> <li>• Collaboration across internal sections and units ensures a structured and efficient recruitment process.</li> <li>• Partnerships enable access to additional resources and background verification to improve recruitment fairness.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promoting Fairness and credibility in recruitment</b></p>	<p>Implementing blind screening methods and adherence to strict guidelines promote fairness and credibility in recruitment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of codes during exams prevents checkers from seeing applicants' personal details, reducing political influence and bias.</li> <li>• Strict adherence to CSC and BFP guidelines ensures transparency and integrity.</li> </ul>

**Digitalization and Process Optimization**

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) has embraced digital tools to optimize its recruitment process, significantly improving data collection and management. The use of Google Forms for data collection streamlined the application process by reducing manual encoding and minimizing human error. As a participant noted,

"The use of Google Forms facilitated easier data collection from applicants, reducing the burden of manual encoding and minimizing human error." – (FGD\_5)

This digital approach enhanced data accuracy and speed, aligning with Wang and Tan’s (2024) findings that digital tools improve recruitment efficiency by reducing human error and allowing for faster screening.

In addition to improving data collection, the BFP adopted Google Drive for secure storage and document

management, ensuring that all files were both accessible and protected. As explained by a participant, "Google Drive is utilized for secure storage and efficient management of recruitment documents, ensuring that all files are accessible yet protected." – (IDI\_6)

The transition to code-based examination systems further enhanced fairness by anonymizing applicants' identities during evaluations, ensuring that assessments were based solely on merit. As a participant emphasized,

"The code-based examination system helps ensure merit-based selection by eliminating biases, as examiners are unaware of the candidates' identities." – (FGD\_5)

Liu and Zhang (2021) support this, noting that anonymous coding systems promote equal opportunities for all candidates by eliminating bias. While the digital transformation led to improved recruitment processes, it was not without challenges. The BFP recruitment team faced initial resistance due to the learning curve of digital tools, as noted by a participant:

"Some team members were hesitant to use Google Forms and Drive initially, but after proper training, they recognized its efficiency." – (IDI\_2)

Nguyen and Tran (2023) emphasize that adequate training is essential to overcoming technological resistance. Ultimately, the BFP's digitalization efforts have made the recruitment process more transparent, efficient, and fair, with a focus on attracting qualified and diverse candidates. As a participant concluded,

"Digitalization has revolutionized our recruitment process, enabling us to maintain efficiency and fairness in selecting the best candidates for the bureau." – (IDI\_5)

### **Expanding Outreach Channels and Ensuring Inclusivity**

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) has adopted a multi-channel recruitment strategy to increase visibility and attract a diverse pool of candidates. The approach includes leveraging social media platforms, job boards, and partnerships with local community organizations to reach candidates from various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. As a participant mentioned,

"We utilize social media platforms and job boards to reach a wider audience. We also partner with local community organizations to reach underrepresented communities." – (FGD\_4)

This strategy aligns with the findings of Thompson and Gregory (2021), who highlighted that such channels effectively engage younger job seekers and marginalized groups. In addition to expanding outreach, the BFP is committed to inclusivity by explicitly stating in job postings that the recruitment process welcomes applicants from diverse backgrounds, including persons with disabilities, Indigenous communities, and individuals of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. As a participant explained,

"We make it clear in our publications that we welcome applicants from all backgrounds, including persons with disabilities and indigenous communities." – (IDI\_3)

The BFP further ensures that its recruitment processes are merit-based and transparent, aiming to evaluate all applicants solely on their qualifications, as emphasized by a participant:

"We are committed to ensuring that all applicants, regardless of background, are evaluated based on merit and qualifications." – (IDI\_5)

This approach is consistent with Equal Opportunity Employment principles, promoting fairness in recruitment. Despite its efforts, the BFP faces challenges in ensuring consistent inclusivity, particularly in regions with cultural biases and misconceptions about gender and disability. As a participant noted,

"In some regions, there are cultural biases and misconceptions about gender and disability, which affect

applicant turnout." – (FGD\_4)

The BFP provides sensitivity training and engages in community outreach to raise awareness about equal employment opportunities. This initiative aligns with the work of Johnson and Martinez (2021), who stressed the importance of cultural sensitivity and community engagement. Through continuous efforts to combat biases and improve accessibility, the BFP's inclusive recruitment practices foster a diverse workforce, ensuring that its environment reflects the values and diversity of the communities it serves. As a participant stated,

"Diversity is our strength, and inclusivity is our commitment." – (FGD\_5)

### **Partnering with Key Agencies**

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) has established key partnerships with agencies such as the Civil Service Commission (CSC), MARINA, and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) to streamline recruitment and ensure the verification of applicants' qualifications. These collaborations help verify professional licenses, certifications, and eligibility, reducing the risk of fraudulent documentation and ensuring that candidates meet the BFP's required standards. As a participant explained,

"We work closely with CSC, MARINA, and PRC to verify eligibility. Their databases help us confirm the authenticity of professional licenses and certifications." – (FGD\_2)

This collaborative approach upholds transparency, reduces credential fraud, and enhances recruitment accuracy, maintain objectivity in health assessments, ensures recruits are fit for the job's rigorous demands, aligning with findings from Gonzales and Cruz (2021) and supported by Lee and Santos (2020). Additionally, the BFP emphasizes internal coordination among HR, recruitment panels, and selection committees to ensure a structured and transparent recruitment process. Ultimately, these strategic partnerships and internal efforts reinforce the BFP's commitment to integrity, operational efficiency, and transparent recruitment practices, ensuring that only the most qualified candidates are selected.

### **Promoting Fairness and credibility in recruitment**

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) promotes fairness and credibility in its recruitment process through the implementation of blind screening methods. Applicants are assigned unique codes during examinations, ensuring that their personal information, such as names and demographics, is concealed from exam checkers. This method reduces political influence and bias, encouraging impartial evaluations based purely on merit. As a participant explained,

"By using coded exams, we ensure that checkers assess answers based on merit rather than identity. This system promotes impartiality and discourages favoritism." – (FGD\_1)

The BFP's focus on meritocracy aligns with findings by Goldin and Rouse (2020), who assert that blind evaluations significantly reduce gender and racial biases in recruitment, ensuring that qualified candidates are selected based on performance.

Additionally, the BFP emphasizes transparency through clear and accessible job postings that outline qualifications and requirements, ensuring equal opportunity for all eligible candidates. As noted by a participant,

"We ensure that job postings are accessible to everyone. We clearly state the qualifications and requirements, leaving no room for ambiguity." – (IDI\_1)

According to Perez and Cruz (2022), continuous improvement and technological integration are key to adapting to modern recruitment standards. The BFP's efforts to maintain fairness and transparency have earned public trust, as a participant added,

"Our commitment to fairness and transparency has strengthened public trust. Applicants now see our

recruitment process as credible and impartial." – (IDI\_1)

This commitment enhances the organization's reputation and attracts a more qualified pool of applicants, as emphasized by Diaz and Lim (2023).

**Insights of the Recruitment Committee Members**

**Table 6. Themes and Core Ideas on the insights of the recruitment committee members**

ESSENTIAL THEMES	IFICANT STATEMENT
<b>Holistic Selection Approach</b>	Recruitment should go beyond qualifications and skills to assess candidates' alignment with organizational values, culture, and long-term goals.
<b>Strategic and Objective Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection process must be comprehensive, using structured assessments such as competitive interview questions and thorough background investigations; Recruitment committee members must remain honest and impartial in selecting future firefighters.</li> <li>• Implement more rigorous screening methods and evaluation tools.</li> <li>• Involving provincial offices in application intake broadens the pool of applicants and enhances inclusivity.</li> <li>• Implement advanced digital screening tools, increase transparency in selection, and provide recruitment officers with additional training for fairer evaluations.</li> </ul>
<b>Beyond Paper Qualifications</b>	Essential qualities such as work ethics and adaptability cannot always be measured on paper but are critical in the selection process.
<b>Flexibility and Continuous Improvement</b>	The recruitment process must evolve with changing needs to remain effective.
<b>Teamwork in Decision-Making</b>	A collaborative approach among committee members ensures fair and well-informed hiring decisions.

**Holistic Selection Approach in BFP Recruitment**

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) adopts a holistic selection approach in its recruitment process, emphasizing not just qualifications but also alignment with organizational values, culture, and long-term goals. This approach ensures that recruits are competent, ethical, and dedicated public servants. Underlining the importance of a transparent and unbiased recruitment process that prioritizes organizational fit, a participant noted,

"Selecting the best candidates for a job demands a comprehensive, objective, and strategic approach" - (FGD\_1)

Beyond technical skills, the BFP places significant value on intangible qualities like integrity, work ethics, and adaptability, recognizing their importance for success in high-pressure environments. Additionally, the BFP ensures that recruits embody core values such as integrity, courage, and dedication to public service. Highlighting the organization's focus on value-driven recruitment, as a participant emphasized, "We look for skilled candidates who embody our core values. It's about finding people who see public service as a calling, not just a job" - (IDI\_2)

Research from Kristof-Brown et al. supports this by emphasizing the importance of person-organization fit (P-O fit) for employee satisfaction and retention, particularly in the context of public service, where ethical alignment is crucial.

Furthermore, the BFP's recruitment process considers candidates' long-term potential and leadership abilities, seeking individuals who can grow with the organization and contribute to its strategic goals. As a participant shared,

"We're looking for future leaders who can inspire others and uphold the BFP's mission. It's about investing in people who can contribute to our long-term goals" - (IDI\_5).

This approach aligns with recommendations from Focus HR (2024) on proactive succession planning, which emphasizes the development of leadership pipelines to ensure organizational continuity. Despite its effectiveness, the holistic approach can be challenging, especially in assessing cultural fit, which can be subjective. Ensuring consistency and fairness in the selection process, as a participant noted,

"Assessing cultural fit can be subjective, but we mitigate this through standardized interview questions and collaborative panel evaluations" - (IDI\_6)

### **Strategic and Objective Evaluation**

The BFP employs structured assessments and standardized interview questions to ensure that candidates are evaluated uniformly, thereby reducing subjective biases. As one recruitment committee member noted, "Selecting the right candidate goes beyond looking at qualifications; it requires a strategic evaluation of skills, character, and values."- (IDI\_1)

Structured interviews—bolstered by behavioral questions that ask candidates to reflect on past experiences—allow the BFP to assess problem-solving abilities, ethical decision-making, and emotional intelligence (Hopgood, 2024; Kangas & Vlastelica, 2024).

Moreover, comprehensive background investigations help verify candidates' credentials and moral integrity. One participant explained,

"We conduct comprehensive background checks to verify the authenticity of credentials and assess candidates' character and integrity. It's about safeguarding the organization's credibility and public trust." – (FGD\_3)

By using objective evaluation criteria and employing panel assessments, which incorporate multiple interviewers to balance individual biases, the BFP enhances the reliability of its recruitment process. Research indicates that such panel interviews promote consistency and fairness, ultimately leading to a higher quality workforce (Bergelson et al., 2022).

### **Beyond Paper Qualifications**

Traditional recruitment methods often focus on academic achievements and technical skills; however, the BFP's holistic approach goes beyond these metrics. As one participant remarked,

"Qualifications seen and read during the recruitment process are merely icing on the cake. Some qualities, like work ethics, could not be observed but are essential." – (IDI\_3)

Ozsoy et al. (2024) demonstrate that personality traits—particularly agreeableness—can be strong predictors of positive workplace behaviors. By assessing candidates' character and values, the BFP ensures that recruits embody the ethical standards and dedication required in high-stakes public safety roles.

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recognizes the need for flexibility and continuous improvement in recruitment strategies to effectively meet evolving organizational needs and societal expectations. Emphasizing a comprehensive and adaptable approach, one participant noted,

"Selecting the best candidates for a job demands a comprehensive, objective, and strategic approach." - (IDI\_5).

Another participant highlighted that stressing the importance of assessing intangible qualities like work ethics, which are crucial for success in high-pressure environments, as noted by a committee member, "Qualifications seen and read during recruitment are merely icing on the cake," - (FGD\_2)

Incorporating flexibility in recruitment enables the BFP to respond to changing demands while maintaining agility and responsiveness (testify.com). It also enhances the candidate experience by accommodating diverse needs, thus attracting a broader talent pool. Examples of flexible practices include offering remote interviews and adjusting job requirements based on candidate potential (Tolan, 2024).

### **Teamwork in Decision-Making**

In recruitment, a collaborative approach among committee members ensures fair, balanced, and well-informed hiring decisions. Modern organizational structures, moving away from traditional hierarchies, emphasize teamwork in decision-making, especially in complex processes (Gibson et al., 2020). One participant noted,

"Teamwork within the committee is essential in making the right hiring decisions" - (IDI\_3)

This highlights the importance of collective input for thorough evaluations. Research suggests that team members' attitudes, both before and during the decision-making process, influence satisfaction with the team (Martinez & Tan, 2022). Another participant shared,

"The members of the committee must stay honest and fair in selecting the new breed of firefighters" - (FGD\_3)

This emphasize the role of integrity in achieving fair outcomes. Team dynamics research also found that individual satisfaction is linked to team members' self-efficacy and their perception of the decision's comprehensiveness (Johnson et al., 2021). Reflecting on how collaboration contributes to a rigorous selection process, a participant reiterated,

"Recruitment must be thorough and objective, and that teamwork within the committee is essential" - (IDI\_5).

Incorporating teamwork in recruitment enhances decision-making and builds a competent, reliable workforce. It helps minimize unconscious bias, promotes diversity, and ensures a more inclusive workplace (Pfeffer, 2021). Additionally, candidates interacting with multiple committee members gain a deeper understanding of the organization's culture, making the organization more appealing to potential hires (Portillo & Mancera, 2021).

## **IMPLICATION AND CONCLUDING REMARK**

### **Implications for practice**

This study on the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment process highlights key implications for enhancing the recruitment practices, focusing on improving operational efficiency, fairness, and integrity. A central recommendation is enhancing role clarity and providing comprehensive training for recruitment committee members to address ambiguities and inefficiencies. Structured orientation programs and ongoing professional development are essential to equip committee members with the necessary skills, including best practices, ethical standards, and modern selection methods. The study also stresses the importance of strategic recruitment planning, utilizing data-driven approaches to understand labor market trends and tailoring campaigns to attract a qualified and suitable pool of candidates while addressing skill gaps.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for standardization, transparency, and ethical practices in the selection process. Implementing structured interviews, clear evaluation criteria, and transparent communication will help minimize biases and enhance public trust. The BFP should also leverage digital recruitment tools, such as applicant tracking systems and virtual interviews, to streamline the process and reach a wider, more diverse pool of candidates. Collaboration with external stakeholders, including other agencies and educational institutions, is crucial to building a talent pipeline and raising awareness of BFP career opportunities. Finally, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, through regular feedback and leadership development, will ensure the BFP maintains a high standard of recruitment, capable of nurturing future leaders in public safety.

### **Implications for future research**

This study on the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) recruitment committee provides valuable insights into the challenges of attracting and selecting qualified candidates and highlights strategies to address these issues. One significant avenue for future research is conducting longitudinal studies to track the long-term effectiveness of recruitment strategies on employee performance, retention, and organizational culture. These studies would help refine recruitment practices to ensure the sustainability and impact of current efforts. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of diversity and inclusion in recruitment, suggesting that future research should focus on strategies to attract underrepresented groups, such as women, minorities, and differently-abled individuals, to create a more equitable hiring framework.

Further research is also needed to examine the alignment between organizational culture and recruitment practices, particularly how cultural values influence employer branding and candidate engagement. Investigating candidate experiences during the recruitment process is crucial to enhancing the BFP's position as an employer of choice, attracting top talent. Finally, exploring adaptive recruitment strategies will help public organizations, including the BFP, respond to evolving workforce demands and technological advancements, ensuring they maintain agility and competitiveness in a rapidly changing environment.

### **Concluding Remark**

This study explored the roles and responsibilities of recruitment committee members in the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), focusing on their recruitment experiences, challenges, and strategies for overcoming obstacles. The findings emphasize the committee's crucial role in shaping the BFP's workforce, directly influencing public safety and organizational performance. Committee members handle administrative and evaluative functions while also serving as strategic partners to uphold the organization's values during the hiring process. However, they face challenges such as attracting top talent in a competitive job market, ensuring unbiased and transparent practices, and managing limited resources.

To address these challenges, the committee utilizes structured evaluation tools, enhances employer branding, and adapts recruitment methods. The study suggests that improving recruitment strategies, investing in committee member training, and leveraging technology can help the BFP attract and retain high-quality candidates. Additionally, fostering ethical recruitment practices and promoting a culture of continuous improvement will help strengthen public trust and enhance the BFP's credibility as an employer.