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ERP SELECTION CRITERIA AND FINANCIAL AUTOMATION OUTCOMES IN EMERGING MARKET ORGANIZATIONS: TOWARDS A PRACTICAL SELECTION FRAMEWORK

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Abstract
Enterprise resource planning systems sit at the centre of the modern finance function, yet the question of how organisations in emerging markets should choose between them remains poorly answered. This study develops and empirically evaluates a finance-led ERP selection framework for emerging market organisations. The framework pairs the technology-organisation-environment framework, used to sort selection criteria into three groups, with the DeLone and McLean model of information systems success, whose net-benefits construct is re-specified as five financial automation outcomes: reporting accuracy and timeliness, auditability and controls, IFRS and regulatory compliance, process automation, and total cost of ownership. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire completed by 45 finance and technology professionals with direct ERP experience, drawn mainly from Pakistan and other emerging markets. The instrument proved reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.909 for the selection criteria scale and 0.867 for the outcomes scale. Respondents rated data security and access control (mean 4.67), information quality (4.62) and adequacy of finance and IT resources (4.58) as the most important selection criteria, and technological and organisational items filled the entire top ten. All five outcomes were rated highly important, but clear gaps separated importance from delivery, with the largest for process automation (0.54) and accurate and timely reporting (0.51), and the smallest for IFRS and regulatory compliance (0.05). Results from multiple regression revealed that the technology criteria were significantly predicted the importance of respondents considered the financial automation results to be ($\beta = 0.506$, $p = .011$). On the other hand, the environment criteria significantly predicted the achievement of the outcomes ($\beta = 0.510$, $p = .005$). The results support the framework's propositions: expectations of ERP are shaped by technology, but what an organisation actually collects is governed by its environment, consistent with the emerging-market context acting as a boundary condition on realised success. The study contributes a practical, evidence-grounded selection tool for finance-led organisations and extends information systems success research by giving the net-benefits construct a concrete, measurable financial form.
Keywords: *ERP Selection, Financial Automation, Emerging Markets, Technology Organisation environment framework, Information Systems Success*

INTRODUCTION

Few decisions in corporate life are as permanent, costly and uncertain as an ERP selection. An enterprise resource planning system is not just another purchase. It is the platform on which a company's transactions, ledgers, controls, and reports will run for the better part of a decade, and the decision, once made, is costly to change. Davenport (1998) reported at an early stage that an enterprise system will impose its own logic on a company's strategy, organisations and culture, and that a corporation does not ensure its own needs are consistent with that logic will face serious trouble. The warning has aged well. The global ERP software market now stands near US$65 billion. Its growth rate is approximately 12% per year (Grand View Research, 2024) many of them are developing and emerging economies. They promise to buy something but be stuck for a long time the sales presentations are forgotten. The warning has proven to be timeless. Today, the global ERP software market is valued at close to US$65 billion and expanding at approximately 12 per cent annually (Grand View Research, 2024), meaning that thousands of organisations, many of them in developing and emerging economies, are signing up for a platform they will be stuck with for years to come after the sales pitches have faded from their memory.

However, the track record of what follows such commitment is not reassuring. From the early stages of adoption, the literature on implementation failures is widely recognized applications that exceeded budgets, missed deadlines, and, in some cases, endangered the existence of the adopting company (Bingi et al., 1999; Markus et al., 2000). For Mabert, Soni and Venkataramanan (2001), the difference between the myths that were sold regarding ERP and reality was considerable, and Aloini et al., (2007), review the risk literature,

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placed poor system selection among the risk factors that surface earliest and cut deepest. Recent research continues to circle back around to this same idea. As Cao et al. (2024) point out, if the wrong system is chosen, then the project is doomed from the start. In essence, the choice made before the first consultant even arrives on-site hangs like a dark cloud over the entire process.

However, the amount of academic attention directed at that choice has never matched its importance. The traditional approach in ERP research is to examine implementation, especially critical success factors, the components of strategy and tactics which distinguish successful projects from failed ones (Holland and Light, 1999; Nah et al., 2001; Umble et al., 2003; Al-Mashari et al., 2003; Aziz et al., 2025; Choudhary et al., 2026). This approach has been repeatedly codified and elaborated (Finney and Corbett, 2007; Dezdar and Sulaiman, 2009; Ali, 2015; Kanwal et al., 2025; Gillani et al., 2026) and applied to such areas as change management (Aladwani, 2001) and small businesses (Zach et al., 2014; Ali, 2018; Saim et al., 2025). Process-based decision models have been proposed (Verville and Halingten, 2003; Longston et al., 2025), studies have been conducted to analyse the processes used by mid-size and large firms in conducting evaluations (Bernroider and Koch, 2001), and even frameworks for conducting such a costing technique have been suggested (Wei and Wang, 2004; Ali & Bibi, 2017; Rana et al., 2025). But perhaps the most common technique involves applying multi-criteria decision-making approaches based on the diagnostic hierarchy process (Saaty, 1980). Multi-criteria decision-making approaches may be regarded as really brilliant ways to make a decision; nevertheless, all of them share one implied assumption that is not so obvious but rather strong: all criteria must be determined, along with their corresponding weights. The difficulty of the entire process is really in establishing the criteria and the weights attached to them.

It becomes even more acute in emerging economies. Comparative research in the past has shown that the issues associated with enterprise systems in developing countries differ from those in industrialised Western nations. Key factors include infrastructure, government policy, and limited vendor presence (Huang and Palvia, 2001). Rajapakse and Seddon (2005) advanced this by demonstrating that the assumptions about Western ERP systems do not fit the organisational realities of developing Asia. In the case of Pakistan, the empirical basis is limited. Jamil and Qayyum (2015) noted limited local knowledge, resistance to standardisation, and low budgets as serious issues, while the latest research in the public sector demonstrated another set of problems related to adoption (Ali & Audi, 2016; Ahmed et al., 2024; Hashmi et al., 2025). All of these cases share something in common in that the environment was not as tolerant, as there was greater risk for the organisation in making the wrong decision, and there was no cushion of being a multinational organisation or of having any consultants or infrastructure available for support.

But the scholarship devoted to that judgment has never lived up to its merits. It is generally accepted that the dominant orientation in ERP research has been the ERP implementation study (above all the study of critical success factors, elements that have to be introduced at a strategic and tactical level between projects that land or projects that crash: Holland and Licht, 1999; Nah et al., 2001; Umble et al., 2003; Al-Mashari et al., 2003; Ali & Rehman, 2015; Marc et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2025). The tradition has been compiled, taxonomised and refined multiple times (Finney and Corbett, 2007; Dezdar and Sulaiman, 2009; Ashraf et al., 2025) and adapted to change management (Aladwani, 2001; Khan et al., 2025) and the small-firm context (Zach et al., 2014; Aqeel et al., 2025). Selection, on the other hand, sits on a narrower shelf. Various process models of the ERP buying decision exist (Verville and Halingten, 2003), surveys of how midsize and large organisations operate their selection process (Bernroider and Koch, 2001; Marc & Ali, 2023; Arshad et al., 2025) and comprehensive frameworks for structuring the evaluation (Wei and Wang, 2004; Khan et al., 2025). The most active stream uses multi-criteria decision-making techniques derived from the analytic hierarchy process (Saaty, 1980) to rank a set of candidate systems. All the approaches rely on the implicit premise that the criteria and their weights are known, and agreed. The challenge in practice is to identify which criteria are relevant and their relative importance, the latter being the least supported by the literature.

The problem improves in emerging markets. Comparative work established precedent that the challenges surrounding enterprise systems in developing countries differ in kind, not merely degree, from those in the industrialised West, with infrastructure, government policy and vendor slenderness looming far larger (Huang and Palvia, 2001; Shahid et al., 2025; Marc et al., 2026). Rajapakse and Seddon (2005) went further, arguing that the assumptions built into Western ERP packages can clash outright with the organisational realities of developing Asia. Specifically, in Pakistan, the empirical base remains limited. Jamil and Qayyum (2015) identified rare local expertise, resistance to process standardisation and tight budgets as the binding controls, and recent work on the public sector confirms that adoption carries its own catalogue of difficulties (Ahmed, Ahmad et al., 2024; Khalid et al., 2025; Shahi et al., 2025). These settings have an environment that provides an organisation with less room for error: a bad choice cannot be absorbed as a multinational can, and the

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surrounding market has fewer consultants and contracted vendor support, as well as less reliable infrastructure to recover from (Kanwal et al., 2025; Ahmad et al., 2025).

There is a second gap, and it concerns the outcomes selection is supposed to serve. The accounting information systems literature has shown with unusual consistency where ERP value actually lands. It lands in the information, control and reporting domain: in the reshaping of the accounting profession's concern (Grabski et al., 2011; Siddique et al., 2025; Sabir et al., 2025), in a better internal information environment and sharper management forecasts (Dorantes et al., 2013; Mehdi et al., 2025), and in stronger internal control, fewer restatements and lower stock price crash risk (Cao et al., 2022; Abbasi et al., 2025; Niaz et al., 2025). The domain belongs to finance professionals. It's the CFO, financial controller and auditor who are accountable for reporting accuracy, auditability, IFRS compliance, the month-end close and the total cost of the system over its life. And yet the selection frameworks on offer rarely speak that language. They optimise for technical fit and vendor scores while the outcomes a finance leader is actually hired to protect sit outside the model. A selection framework built around those outcomes, and tested against the judgment of the professionals who own them, does not yet exist for emerging markets.

This study sets out to close that gap. Its purpose is to develop a practical, finance-led ERP selection framework for emerging-market organisations and to evaluate it using primary evidence. Three objectives follow. The first is to establish which selection criteria finance-led organisations in emerging markets actually weigh most heavily when choosing an ERP, sorted through the technology-organisation-environment lens (Khan et al., 2025; Ghauri et al., 2025). The second is to establish how important the five financial automation outcomes are to these organisations, how well their current systems deliver them, and where the gaps between promise and delivery lie (Qaisrani et al., 2025; Khalil et al., 2025). The third is to examine whether the three measure groups relate systematically to those outcomes, and in doing so to evaluate the propositions the framework advances.

Answering these questions with primary evidence, rather than with method alone, is a deliberate choice. A selection framework claims to encode the judgment of the people who make and live with these decisions, so the fairest test available is to put the framework's contents in front of exactly those people and let them rate it: which criteria they weigh, how heavily, which outcomes they demand, and how far their current systems deliver them. Practitioner judgment is not infallible, and the study treats it with the caution it deserves, but it carries something no decision algorithm can supply, which is the accumulated experience of selections that went well and selections that went badly in the very environments the framework is built for. The evidence base is therefore first-hand and local: professionals who have implemented Oracle in a Karachi bank, run SAP in a Lahore manufacturer, or kept a locally built system alive on an uneven power grid. Their answers are the raw material of everything that follows.

The framework itself, set out in full in the theoretical section, rests on two established theories. The technology-organisation-environment framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990) sorts the selection criteria into three groups, and the DeLone and McLean (2003) model of information systems success supplies the outcome logic, with its net-benefits construct deliberately re-specified as five financial automation outcomes: reporting accuracy and timeliness, auditability and controls, IFRS and regulatory compliance, process automation, and total cost of ownership. Fit acts as the mechanism through which good selection becomes realised success, institutional pressure operates within the environment group, and the emerging-market context stands as a boundary condition on what even a careful choice can deliver. The evaluation rests on primary data: a structured questionnaire completed by 45 finance and technology professionals with direct ERP experience, drawn predominantly from Pakistan with additional representation from the Middle East and beyond. The instrument's reliability is tested, the criteria are ranked, the importance and delivery of each outcome are compared, and the criteria groups are regressed on the outcomes, so that the framework is made to respond to the stated selection of the people who are aware of these decisions.

This research contributes in three ways. Theoretically, the study gives a flexible construct in the information systems success tradition, net benefits, and a concrete financial form that can be standardised and measured with acceptable reliability in the field. Empirically, the primary evidence comes from a population where literature reaches: practising finance professionals in an emerging market, reporting not only what they say matters in selection but how far their systems deliver what was promised. The evidence turns out to carry a lesson with real bite, namely that the criteria practitioners rate most important do not predict what they actually receive. Practically, the study leaves behind a selection framework that a finance team in Lahore, Karachi or any comparable setting could pick up and use, grounded in the stated priorities and lived experience of its peers rather than in assertion.

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The literature review traces the ERP research traditions and this study draws on and identifies the gaps it addresses. The theoretical section builds the framework and states its six propositions. The empirical methodology describes the survey design, sample and analysis strategy. The results and discussion section reports the primary evidence and reads it against the framework, and the conclusion draws the findings together with their limitations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Enterprise resource planning systems are, at their core, integrated software frameworks designed to unify fragmented business functions into one coherent technological structure. Klaus et al., (2000) provided what remains one of the clearest academic definitions: a packaged software solution that attempts to integrate all processes and functions of a firm so that decision-makers can operate from a single source of information. That definition, simple as it reads, conceals an enormous amount of organisational complexity. ERP market around the world exceeds 50 billion US dollars and is expected to grow almost 100% in the next ten years (Grand View Research, 2024; Arshad et al., 2025; Nasir et al., 2025; Muzaffar et al., 2026). Still, the fundamental question of how a firm should choose the right ERP system has not been convincingly answered, despite of the fact that poor selection criteria is one of the major reasons of ERP project failure (Cao et al., 2024; Ammar et al., 2025; Anus et al., 2025; Zamir et al., 2026). This is especially the problem for companies in developing and emerging economies, where the expectations gap, between what organisations or leaders expect or think versus what they achieve, is very high. Selection and implementation of an ERP is not a simple technical exercise. It reaches from overall organisational commitment, strategic direction, financial planning, long-term vendor relation, change-management capacity to synchronization of people-processes-partners so that all pieces of the puzzle form a bigger picture. When the choice goes wrong, the consequences tend to be severe. Budget overruns, implementation delays, user resistance, and outright project failure have all been documented extensively (Bingi et al., 1999; Markus et al., 2000; Ali et al., 2026). In a smaller firm, a poor choice can spell the end of the business. In contrast, the selection process has received little scholarly attention compared with the post-implementation or implementation process (Verville and Halingten, 2003; Amir et al., 2025; Kachalia et al., 2026). If the selection is made right from the beginning, it will be just as important as managing the implementation that comes after.

Earlier research work in this field focused on identifying critical success factors for ERP projects. Holland and Light (1999) studied several UK manufacturing companies and identified a difference between strategic factors (top management support and business vision) and tactical factors (software configuration and legacy system handling). That was how much of the discussion that ensued was formed. Nah, Lau and Kuang (2001) reviewed and identified 11 factors as essential to successful implementation, including top management commitment and a well-formed business plan. Somers and Nelson (2004) utilised a distinct design evaluating 22 factors over six stages of the ERP lifecycle. The crucial insight is that the significance of each factor is not constant. It varies across the project phases. The support of top management from start to finish is truly significant only at the end. Ehie and Madsen (2005) surveyed American firms and validated these insights via a 5 steps approach, although they gave heavy weight to project management discipline and framework as a direct correlation to the desired level of output and, in addition to that, the relevance of ERP, clear scope of work, and tone of higher management were also highly emphasised. Taken together, these studies built the analytical vocabulary the field still uses today. They provided a common terminology for practitioners and researchers discussing the work or failures of ERP projects. Nearly all was carried out in large firms from the West. The researchers implicitly or explicitly assumed the kind of organisational environment. Stable infrastructure, deep vendor ecosystems, experienced consultants, and relatively high IT maturity were taken as given. That assumption, as later research would demonstrate, becomes problematic the moment one moves outside those settings. Nearly all was carried out in large companies from the West. The researchers implicitly or explicitly assumed the kind of organisational environment. Stable infrastructure, a broad vendor base, experienced consultants and relatively high IT maturity. As subsequent studies have shown, this assumption is problematic as soon as one steps outside the settings.

Several researchers pushed the analysis beyond simple factor lists. Umble et al (2003) also produced one of the highly cited papers in the extant ERP literature, i.e. over 1500 citations to date. They had to link the implementation procedures (such as forming a steering committee, doing a needs assessment, etc.) to critical success factors. The presentation of the argument was strong and simple. Every step in the procedure could have either a positive or a negative impact on the success factor; the two lists are not the same thing. An alternative approach was proposed by Hong and Kim (2002), who concentrated on the organisational fit. They interviewed 34 Korean companies and discovered that the difference between the ERP system's processes and the workflows of the company that adopted it was a good indicator of problems. If that gap was great and the

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organisation was also resistant to changing the situation, failure was more probable. This observation is obvious for businesses in emerging economies, where most work is done in an informal or ad hoc fashion, and far removed from the standardised workflows encoded in packages from SAP or Oracle. Akkermans and van Helden (2002) presented another opinion. A Dutch aviation company studied an ERP deployment and concluded that there are no ERP deployment success factors. They interact. Failure to manage the project, for example, negatively affects training quality, user acceptance thus preserving data integrity. The cycle is self-sustaining. They labelled "vicious cycle" effect, and the process is also true the other way: do the early stages well, and the positive momentum continues to roll. The common thread among the three studies is that ERP success and failure is a systemic phenomenon rather than caused by a single variable.

Alongside the literature attainment factor, a discrete line of inquiry examined a prior question: what drives organisations to adopt ERP in the first place? Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990) suggested the Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) framework, which holds that adoption decisions are shaped by three interacting forces: the technology itself, the characteristics of the adopting organisation, and the external environment in which it operates. Awa and Ojiabo (2016) put this framework to the test in Nigeria, surveying small and medium enterprises (SMEs) considering ERP adoption. The model explained close to 79% of the variance in their decisions, which is a strong result for a non-Western context. Amoako-Gyampah and Salam (2004) started from a different theoretical study. They extended the Technology Acceptance Model to an ERP setting and concluded that the training and managerial communication is the key to people perception of the importance of system, which then shapes their willingness to adopt it. The study was one of the first to anchor the rather abstract constructs of acceptance theory in the practical realities of an ERP rollout. Van Everdingen et al (2000) pursued a macro-level question entirely. They examined ERP adoption in ten European countries and found that national culture, measured through Hofstede's dimensions, had a statistically significant effect on adoption rates. Countries with low uncertainty avoidance and high individualism adopted ERP more readily. High power-distance cultures were slower. For anyone studying ERP in South Asia or the Middle East, where power distance is typically high and uncertainty avoidance varies considerably, this finding cannot be set aside.

The dynamics of research reforms in developing economies. Al-Mashari et al., (2006) conducted a case study of Middle Eastern organisations and found that the success factors identified in studies of developed countries could not be replicated in developing countries. Additional barriers were also observed, including unstandardized infrastructure, insufficient vendor networks, limited consulting expertise and culturally biased attitudes towards hierarchy and change. Huang and Palvia (2001) similarly concluded by comparing ERP challenges in the United States, China, and India. It was observed that government policies and telecommunications infrastructure were major barriers in the developing countries as compared to developed countries. For the last twenty years, the gap between the two research traditions has been narrowed but not completely reconciled. In one of the few empirical studies conducted on Pakistani organisations, Jamil and Qayyum (2015) found that limited ERP expertise, resistance to process standardisation, and tight budgets were the most pressing challenges locally; however, the evidence does not meet the sufficiency criteria. The study is both exploratory and qualitative, which pointed out that there is a need for locally customized models and frameworks rather than western methodology. Asif et al., (2025) conducted a survey of 266 Pakistani small and medium-sized enterprises that implemented ERP between 2017 and 2023. All system, information and service qualities were found to be significantly related to competitive advantage. The study validated that the success models prescribed by DeLone and McLean can be applied in the South Asian ecosystem. These contributions are useful but have been oriented towards implementation outcomes. In Pakistan, the selection process, that is the primary factor to implementation, has received little attention.

A noticeable group of authors and researchers have addressed the ERP selection directly by highlighting the prominence of decision making criteria with multiple factors. Wei et al., (2005) were among the early researchers who used the Analytic Hierarchy Process to select ERP systems. The authors argued that the selection process is a multi-criteria decision-making problem because of various correlated and dependent dimensions, such as technical compatibility, vendor reliability, cost, and strategic alignment. This research was expanded by Karsak and Ozogul (2009), who proposed a framework using the integration of quality function deployment (QFD), fuzzy linear regression and zero-one goal programming, aiming to identify how the criteria interact instead of treating them as independent. For practitioners, Haddara & Elragal (2014) suggested a technique to map processes based on the SMART approach. This involved capturing the key business processes of the adopting organisation and evaluating the performance of each ERP solutions to support such processes. However, Alaskari et al. (2020) suggested an easier three-stage process (define, evaluate, and select), which was specifically tailored to SMEs. These authors recognized the fact that the decision-making process in terms of choosing solutions is a qualitatively different task for SMEs compared to large corporations

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due to lack of resources and low margin for error. These tools continue to remain dynamic and inventive. B. Cao et al. (2024) have made use of a rough best-worst approach combined with a rough weighted sum product technique for ranking ERP alternatives under conditions of uncertainty. Despite the obvious strengths of the above mentioned approaches and tools, there is a common drawback in most of them, i.e., they assume the existence of predefined criteria and corresponding weights, whereas in reality, the challenge lies in identifying the criteria and establishing their importance levels. The above mentioned tools were mainly developed in environments where consultants were concentrated and high quality data for the models was largely available. However, the question of whether these hold up in Karachi, Lahore or Dhaka has been rarely asked.

SMEs have been given specific attention by Loh and Koh (2004), who interviewed employees at eight SMEs based in UK and identified three categories of concern: Critical Success Factors, Critical People, and Critical Uncertainties. The primary argument was that all three must be managed across the entire ERP lifecycle and not only the implementation phase. It was an effective framework since it reflected an inherent aspect of small businesses. Since, they mostly do not have any backup capacity, therefore, there is a high risk of failure either because of the attrition of the key project's team member, burning out of budget etc. Large corporations are able to absorb such setbacks with less significant impacts. Meta-analysis by Ngai et al. (2008), based on 48 articles from 10 different countries, showed that top management commitment is the most frequently cited success factor, regardless of company size. Also, it was noticed that training and internal communication are significant factors in smaller companies (SMEs) because each user in such cases has to deal with a greater part of operations. This leads to a definite conclusion that the selection model designed for large companies is not only less efficient but it can also be misleading when used for smaller companies, due to the difference in governance systems, IT readiness, and financial stability.

Simultaneously, a series of literature has focused on failure rather than success. Rajapakse and Thushara (2023) reviewed 55 articles published between 2000 and 2022 and catalogued 35 distinct failure factors. It was highlighted in their study that the most common failure factor is the expectation gap between what the system can do and what the business strategy needs, followed by weak management support and insufficient training. Coşkun et al. (2022) mapped a broader set of 72 articles and confirmed similar patterns, while also adding resistance to change and poor project governance as distinct failure factors. This literature emphasizes that the success factors and failure factors are not directly correlated for example the presence of top-management support does not guarantee success, but its absence almost guarantees failure. This is worth noting that the asymmetry and negative correlation matters because it shapes the methodology to build the selection framework. A credible selection framework has to account for the risks of failure to the projects, not only the success factors that are necessary in ideal implementation.

To analyse and measure whether ERP systems actually deliver the financial and operational gains the organisations and leadership expects, Matolcsy et al. (2005) followed an unconventional but logical approach by applying a modified value-chain framework to track financial ratios over a two-year window and comparing adopters against non-adopters. While some companies demonstrated improvements in process automation and internal coordination, others did not show significant variations. However, an important contribution was made in this methodology, that the benefits of ERP are not equally distributed throughout all functions and that some values are deferred. When evaluating the value added by ERP, finance and accounting professionals should consider that reporting and efficiency gains may arrive over a certain period of time rather than at go-live, and selection criteria should be built in a realistic horizon for the payoff. The literature related to Accounting Information Systems has further emphasized this idea. According to Grabski et al. (2011), who wrote a comprehensive review of the literature related to ERP from an accounting perspective, ERP acts as a disruptive change agent for the field of accounting itself. In their research, Dorantes et al. (2013) observed that adoption of enterprise system enhances the completeness, accuracy and timeliness of information available which increases the meticulousness of management forecast. Cao et al. (2022), in their research in Chinese companies, observed that adoption of ERP system results in effective internal controls resulting in fewer cases of financial statement restatements and reduced chances of stock price crashes. Collectively, it can be inferred from these papers that ERP systems work best in the field of information, control and reporting, where finance professionals are responsible, however, the existing selection criteria overlooks these criteria.

With new advancements in the field of data and storage, cloud based ERPs have added a new dimension to the selection problem which lowers upfront capital requirements, compresses deployment schedules, and delivers automatic updates. These features are more attractive to resource-constrained firms in emerging markets due to stated reasons, however, cloud ERP also introduces risks around data sovereignty, internet connectivity, and vendor dependency. Rîndaşu et al. (2024) studied the adoption of Oracle Fusion Cloud ERP by analysing the user' reviews collected between 2020 and 2023. They found recurring complaints about integration

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complexity, limited customisation options, and uneven vendor support across industries. The study highlighted that while cloud ERP removes some traditional barriers, it replaces them with new ones which the selection frameworks do not adequately address. Therefore, practitioners in emerging markets are cautioned that cloud based ERP is not a shortcut around the selection problem, it simply reconfigures the problem. Any credible selection framework must account for cloud-specific risks along with the conventional concerns of functional fit, cost versus benefit, and organisational readiness. Davenport and Ronanki (2018) sorted AI in business into three forms, automating tasks, drawing insight from data, and engaging with people, and counselled building these capabilities incrementally rather than chasing the most ambitious application first. Early evidence from emerging markets is consistent with the promise. Abdur et al., (2025), surveying firms in Pakistan, reported that AI-enabled ERP was associated with greater process automation, better decision quality and improved transparency and regulatory compliance. These studies do not address the selection problem. Cloud and AI simply reconfigure it, adding criteria such as automation depth, data residency and the relevance of automated outputs which were not needed to be considered in earlier frameworks.

This study aims to solve three gaps that stood out from the review of the above literature. The first is geographical, where the great majority of ERP selection frameworks were built in and for industrialised Western economies, and empirical testing in the institutional settings of South Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa remains scarce (Huang and Palvia, 2001; Al-Mashari et al., 2006; Jamil and Qayyum, 2015). The few studies that do come from these regions tend to examine implementation success rather than the selection stage that precedes it. The second gap is lack of inclusivity, where the literature on selection criteria sits at a distance from the people most often responsible for the decision in practice, the finance and accounting professionals who judge an ERP through audit readiness, regulatory compliance, reporting accuracy and the total cost of ownership across the system's life. That lens is largely missing from existing frameworks, even though, as the accounting-systems evidence shows, the information and control domain is where ERP value is most reliably found (Grabski et al., 2011; Dorantes et al., 2013; Cao et al., 2022; Iqbal et al., 2025; Marc et al., 2026). The third gap is the lack of a practical approach. The field is rich in description and explanation, factor lists, adoption models, decision techniques (Nah et al., 2001; Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990; Wei et al., 2005; Farras et al., 2025; Farooq et al., 2026), but short on practical, designed tools that a finance team in a resource-constrained setting could actually pick up and use, and that have been grounded in real outcomes rather than method alone. It is this threefold gap that the present study sets out to close. Rather than add another list or another model, it builds a practical, finance-led ERP selection framework for emerging-market organisations, one informed by the documented record of ERP success and failure and validated against the judgment of experienced practitioners, so that the criteria it recommends rest on evidence rather than assertion.

THEORETICAL METHODOLOGY

This study sets out to build something, not to test something. It does not put an existing theory to the numbers, and it does not add one more list of success factors to a literature already long on them. The aim is a practical artefact: a selection framework that a finance team in an emerging market can use when it has to choose an ERP system and then live with the choice for the better part of a decade. That aim points to a particular way of working. Design science treats the building of a useful artefact, a model, a method or a framework, as legitimate research in its own right (Hevner et al., 2004; Peffers et al., 2007; Bukhari et al., 2025; Naseer et al., 2026), and it pairs naturally with a pragmatist stance, which judges ideas by whether they work on the problem in front of you (Saunders et al., 2019; Arshi et al., 2025; Audi et al., 2026). The reasoning moves back and forth. We read the theory, we read what happened to real firms, and we refine the framework until it accounts for both. The framework rests on two established theories rather than a checklist, with two further ideas doing supporting work.

The first theory organises the inputs. The technology-organisation-environment framework (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990) holds that a firm's response to a new technology turns on three things: the technology itself, the character of the organisation, and the environment around it. In a wide review of firm-level adoption models, Oliveira and Martins (2011) judged it the most robust of them at the organisational level, which is part of why it anchors the work here. There is one claim point that requires attention as it can be easily over claimed. This study does not intend to use the framework as the cause of sorting, but rather as a tool for sorting. The selection criteria already exist, scattered across the success-factor and decision-making research; this lens gives them a home. Functional fit and system quality sit in the technology group. Top-management support, readiness to standardise processes, and adequate finance and IT resources sit in the organisation group. Vendor depth, infrastructure reliability and regulatory fit sit in the environment group. That third group is the reason the framework suits an emerging-market study, because the hardest problems in these settings are environmental ones: thin vendor markets, unreliable infrastructure and rules that move. The causal claims do

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not come from this lens. They come from what those criteria are supposed to produce, which is the work of the second theory.

The second theory handles the outputs. The DeLone and McLean model of information-systems success (2003) holds that a system has quality in three forms, system, information and service, that this quality shapes use and user satisfaction, and that these in turn yield what the authors call net benefits. Two things make the model fit here. It has travelled to the settings this study cares about: Asif et al. (2025) found its quality dimensions lined up with competitive advantage in Pakistani SMEs, and Akrong, Shao and Owusu (2021) found the same dimensions drove information-system success in Ghana. And it gives the framework a backbone. The model is not beyond criticism. Seddon (1997) re-specified parts of it, and later work clarified how its dimensions relate to one another (Petter et al., 2008; Batool et al., 2025; Zahid et al., 2025; Al-Masri & Audi, 2025), with net benefits being the least well-defined of the set. Such looseness is typically seen as a weakness. In this case, however, it becomes an opportunity. But for that opportunity to be seized, there must first be a way out of the trap. The quality of the framework constitutes a tool that can be determined by a consumer prior to purchase; this is also something that can be assessed after installation. The solution is to view the model from a perspective of time. The selection criteria come first since they are what the company can determine before committing to the purchase. The measures of DeLone and McLean come later since they are used to determine what the company has obtained.

The net gains stage is where this study makes its essential move, and the move is deliberate. In the original model, net benefits is a blank box that holds whatever value a firm happens to gain. This framework fills the box with what a finance professional is actually accountable for, and it does so on evidence rather than intuition. The accounting-systems literature shows that where ERP delivers value, it delivers it first in the information, control and reporting domain. ERP reshapes the accounting profession itself (Grabski et al., 2011; Rafique et al., 2025; Umair et al., 2025; Majeed et al., 2026), improves the internal information environment and the quality of management forecasts (Dorantes et al., 2013; Shaukat et al., 2025; Tahir et al., 2026), and is associated with stronger internal control, fewer restatements and a lower risk of stock price crashes (Cao et al., 2022; Aman et al., 2025; Fatima et al., 2026). Re-specifying net benefits as financial automation outcomes gives that domain a name and a structure. Five dimensions make it up. The first is reporting that is accurate and timely. The second is auditability, a clean and traceable record backed by working controls. The third is regulatory and standards compliance, the system's fit with IFRS and local rules. The fourth is process automation, above all the month-end close and account reconciliations. The fifth is total cost of ownership across the system's full life. Auditability and compliance are kept apart on purpose: the first is about whether a transaction can be traced and evidenced, the second about whether the reported result conforms to a standard, and a system can be strong on one and weak on the other. None of this is exotic to a practitioner. The contribution is to take a vague outcome and give it the sharpness that finance work demands, and to make each dimension something a firm could in principle measure.

Two further ideas do supporting work. The first explains why compliance and auditability belong inside a selection framework at all, rather than being left for after the system is chosen. Firms do not pick systems for efficiency alone; they also pick for legitimacy. Regulators push one way, the audit and accounting profession pushes another, and firms copy what their peers do. These are the coercive, normative and mimetic pressures that institutional theory describes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), and recent work confirms they shape enterprise-system choices (Schiavi et al., 2024; Daud et al., 2026). Rather than stand as a separate theory, institutional pressure is treated here as a force operating within the environment group, raising the weight a firm places on the compliance and audit criteria. In emerging markets that pressure runs stronger, not weaker, because rules change often, the audit profession holds real sway over how finance is done, and Western ERP packages carry assumptions that can clash with local organisations (Rajapakse and Seddon, 2005; Aman et al., 2025; Naeem et al., 2025; Humayun et al., 2026). The second supporting idea is fit. Criteria do not turn into outcomes on their own; they do so only when they produce a genuine match between the system and the firm, in the sense Hong and Kim (2002) gave the word. Fit sits in the middle of the framework as the mechanism through which good selection becomes realised success (Muzaffar et al., 2026).

The emerging market context sits underneath all of this as a boundary condition rather than a variable. The study does not test context as a statistical moderator. It is better understood as a set of local realities that decide which criteria matter most and how much of the promised benefit a firm can actually collect. The evidence that context bites is hard to wave away. Van Everdingen, van Hillegersberg and Waarts (2000) found that national culture explained a real share of the difference in ERP adoption across ten European countries, and the lesson carries to emerging economies with more force, since these tend to score high on power-distance and uncertainty-avoidance. So the framework does not hand every firm the same weights. The weights move

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with how thin the vendor market is, how reliable the infrastructure is and how firmly the rules are enforced. Put the pieces together and a single model appears. Selection criteria, sorted into the three groups, drive the quality of the choice; that quality, understood as fit, drives the realised success the DeLone and McLean model describes; and that success shows up as financial automation outcomes. The whole chain sits inside the emerging-market context, and its compliance element is pushed along by institutional pressure. Figure 1 sets this out in full.

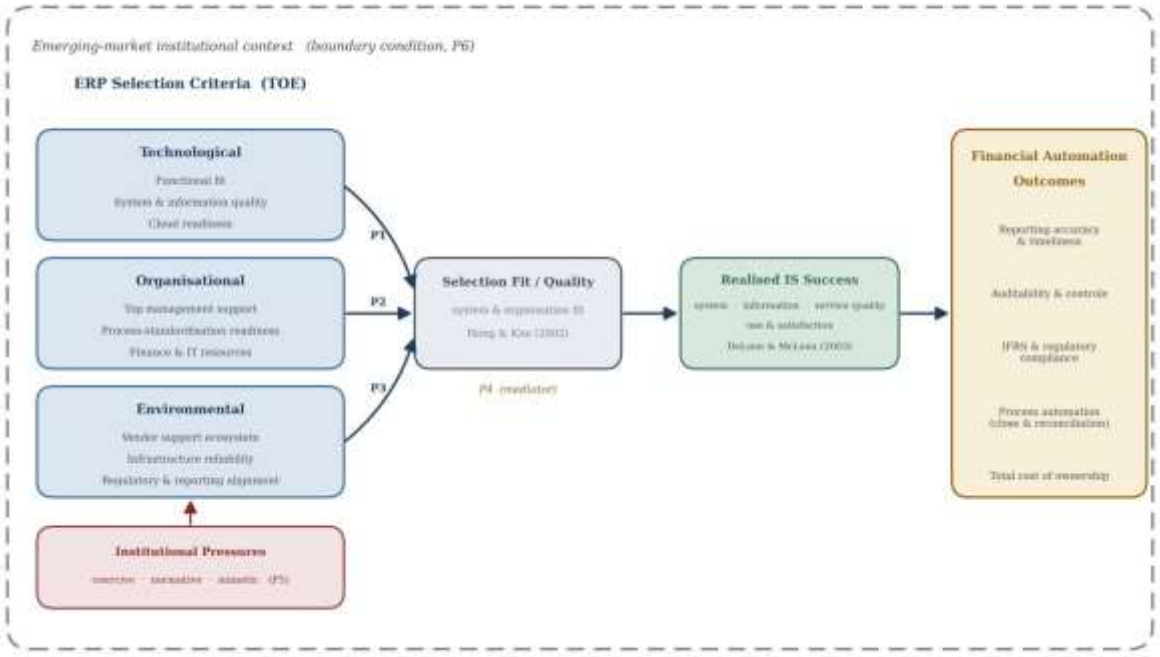


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking ERP selection criteria to financial automation outcomes in emerging-market organisations.

Because the study is conceptual, the model is written as propositions to be evaluated against evidence, not as hypotheses to be tested statistically.

P1. Stronger technological criteria, meaning functional fit, system and information quality, and cloud readiness, lead to better financial automation outcomes.

P2. Stronger organisational criteria, meaning top-management support, readiness to standardise processes, and adequate finance and IT resources, lead to better financial automation outcomes.

P3. Stronger environmental criteria, meaning a deep vendor network, reliable infrastructure and a good fit with the rules, lead to better financial automation outcomes.

P4. Selection criteria translate into outcomes only through fit. A strong score on paper that does not produce a real match between system and firm will not deliver the outcomes.

P5. Institutional pressure from regulators, profession and peer behaviour increases the weight that emerging market firms place on compliance and audit criteria.

P6. The local setting sets a ceiling. A thin vendor market, weak infrastructure and lax enforcement hold back the outcomes that even a careful choice can deliver.

The propositions being made are not intended to be accepted at face value. Rather, these propositions are to be verified in the following sections in which, we examine the criteria and the results through a structured process of judgment by finance and technology experts

EMPIRICAL METHODOLOGY

This section demonstrates the quantitative approach used in this study for a finance led ERP selection framework, and its empirical task is to evaluate the propositions against the judgment of the people it is meant to serve. It follows the logic of design science research (DSR), in which a designed framework earns its place through demonstrated relevance and evaluation against the world rather than through a conventional falsification test (Hevner et al., 2004; Peffers et al., 2007; Ditta et al., 2025; ur Rehman et al., 2026). A pragmatist position underpins the design, judging the framework by whether it works in front of it (Saunders et al., 2019; Iqbal et al., 2025; Shafiq et al., 2026). The evaluation rests on primary data collected through a

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structured, cross-sectional questionnaire survey of finance and technology professionals with direct ERP experience. Three objectives can be identified through the survey. First, it assesses the recognition and relevance of the criteria identified in the framework to the practitioners. Second, it measures the level of importance given to the criteria and the five categories of financial automation outcomes by the practitioners. Third, it facilitates the evaluation of the correlation between the groups of criteria and outcomes, enabling a reading of the propositions contained in the framework against actual evidence instead of only literature. Thus, it is clear that the research method is quantitative and descriptive/evaluative in nature (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Zafar et al., 2025; Javed et al., 2026).

The target population includes finance and technology professionals who have chosen, implemented, used, or audited ERP systems within organisations, mostly in emerging countries. Purposive sampling was applied because the research question asks for knowledgeable respondents, not just any random people from the population; the validity of the criteria weighting method depends on the experience of the raters (Saunders et al., 2019; Sekaran and Bougie, 2020; Ullah et al., 2025; Karim et al., 2026). Although sample size calculation tables are available when the population is known (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970), in the case of a specialized professional population of undefined size, the key issues are the quality and reach of the respondents. In total, there are 45 responses that are valid for the analysis. Respondent description, presented in the results section, proves the purposefulness of the sampling: most of the respondents are either finance leaders or accounting professionals, three out of four respondents are from Pakistan, with additional participation from the Middle East and Europe, and the vast majority has had experience in choosing, implementing, using, and auditing ERP systems. The sample size is relatively small, a drawback noted and addressed again in the discussion, but it was chosen very specifically from the group that the model is meant to reflect.

The measurement tool used is a structured questionnaire divided into five sections, which is one-to-one mapped on the framework. The first section is a respondent profile covering role and function, nationality, organisation size, experience and familiarity with ERP systems. The second section consists of 19 selection criteria statements, grouped into three criteria groups, seven technological, six organisational and six environmental criteria, and rated for importance using the five-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932), ranging from not important to critically important. Section C presents the five financial automation outcomes which are rated for their importance during the selection process and how much they are delivered by the current system, thus providing a total of 10 outcome items that can be compared in terms of importance and delivery. The fourth section includes four framework validation items for experienced practitioners regarding whether the three criteria groups and the five outcomes cover the essentials of a good selection decision. Section E closed with open questions on overlooked criteria and root causes of failed selections. The questionnaire was piloted before release to check wording and flow, was administered online, and carried an informed-consent statement on its face: participation was voluntary, responses were anonymous, withdrawal was allowed at any point, and data were to be used only in aggregate for research. No confidential company information was collected.

Since all the measures are derived from one instrument administered in one point in time, procedural methods that guard against common method variance were incorporated in the study design (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Karim et al., 2025; Rauf et al., 2026). These included anonymity which discouraged socially desirable responding, separation of the predictor measures (Section B) from the outcome measures (Section C), different instructions and anchor values for the two sections, as well as the need to evaluate both valued outcomes and received outcomes separately.

The data were analysed in four stages corresponding to each research objective. First, Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was used to test the internal consistency of all scales, setting the threshold value at 0.70 according to the standard criteria (Hair et al., 2019; Khalid et al., 2025; Zahid et al., 2026). As a result, no construct was introduced into the main analysis without having proven its reliability. Then, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) helped to rank the nineteen selection criteria and determine which groups predominate among practitioners' priorities. Next, a gap analysis was conducted by taking the difference between the mean delivery rating and the mean importance rating of each of the five outcomes, thereby revealing gaps where the existing systems are most deficient compared to what is required from them by finance professionals. Finally, two multiple linear regression analyses were performed – the composite scores of the technology, organisation and environment criteria groups were regressed against the composite importance of the financial automation outcomes in the first model, and against the composite perceived delivery of the same outcomes in the second one (standardised coefficients and the significance criterion at five per cent were considered). Propositions P1 to P3 are examined directly through the rankings and regressions, while P4 to P6 are examined interpretively through the pattern of results, in keeping with the study's evaluative rather than hypothesis-testing stance.

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There are two aspects of the design that need to be addressed. Firstly, the analysis is solely based on the survey data discussed in this paper; all statistics provided in the results section are calculated using the 45 surveys and are completely replicable based on the instrument and the statistics presented in next section, which follows ordinary research ethics practice throughout. Secondly, the study aims to evaluate the propositions against the responses rather than proving the predetermined outcome. A sample of a particular size as mentioned above, knowingly gathered at one point in time, can show whether the framework's criteria and outcomes are recognised, how they are weighted, and whether the criteria groups relate to the outcomes in the direction the propositions expect. It cannot establish causal effects, and no such claim is made. The limitations this creates, and the research designs that would relax them, are taken up at the end of the discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section summarizes the key evidence and reads it through the lens of the framework. The analysis goes through four steps: the reliability of measurement scales, the profile of the respondents and the system they operate, the ranking of the selection criteria, the importance and delivery of the 5 financial automation outcomes, and the regression of the three groups of criteria onto the five financial automation outcomes. The results are then discussed in terms of the propositions P1 to P6.

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the measurement instrument. All scales and the three groups of ERP selection criteria scales were given a reliability test. The internal consistency of each construct is good based on the results of table 1. Overall Cronbach's alpha for the ERP Selection Criteria scale was 0.909, which is considered to be very good. Both the Financial Automation Outcomes scale ($\alpha = 0.867$) and the Framework Validation scale ($\alpha = 0.743$) had high reliability. The dimensional reliability coefficients were Organisation Criteria ($\alpha = 0.869$), Technology Criteria ($\alpha = 0.788$) and Environment Criteria ($\alpha = 0.760$). Every value was above the usual level of 0.70, indicating that the items on each construct measure the same concept throughout. Overall, the results of these analysis suggest that the questionnaire was a reliable basis for subsequent statistical analysis.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Importance of ERP Selection Criteria	19	0.909
Financial Automation Outcome	10	0.867
Framework Validation	4	0.743
Technology Criteria	7	0.788
Organisation Criteria	6	0.869
Environment Criteria	6	0.760

Table 2 shows the total number of answers received from the professionals who have different roles in organisations and experience with ERP. Finance Leadership (46.7%) was the largest group and Accountant/Financial Reporting accounted for 20.0% of the respondents. The ERP Implementation professionals comprised (13.3%) of the sample and IT or Systems specialists made up 6.7%. The others were in Internal Audit and other professional positions. Most of the sample surveyed (62.2%) were from the Finance and Accounting field, because the sample's major emphasis was on finance related, as the finance oriented research would make use of the experiences of those directly involved in finance or finance related activities in the ERP system. Country/region-wise, the largest group of respondents came from Pakistan (75.6%), followed by the Middle East, Europe and those from global organisations, reflecting the focus of the study on emerging market organisations. The respondents worked in organisations of different sizes, the highest number was in organisations with over 1000 workers (33.3%). Further, the respondents had a decent amount of hands-on ERP experience with a majority (57.8%) of them working on ERP implementation projects and others on ERP operation, selection or audit projects. These combined attributes suggest that the sample includes participants who have a background in legal practice and hands-on experience with ERP, making it suitable for exploring the financial automation benefits and ERP selection factors.

The ERP systems reported by the respondents are shown in Table 3. Oracle (25.0%) was the most common ERP system reported, followed by SAP (22.7%). Microsoft Dynamics made up 12.5% of the total systems reported and Custom Local ERP solutions were 11.4%. The rest of the responses were spread throughout the various ERP software including Odoo, ERPNext, QuickBooks, Temenos, JD Edwards, Finacle, Retail Pro, PIBAS, ePromis, Fourgen and Xero, which accounted for a smaller percentage of the respondents. The

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presence of both the well-known ERP systems as well as local ERP systems suggests that respondents have gained experience in a wide variety of ERP systems. This diversity not only broadens the study, but also provides a representation of ERP and operations experiences in a variety of technological platforms that are widely used by organisations in emerging markets.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n = 45)

Variables	Category	n (%)
Primary Role	Finance Leadership	21 (46.7)
	Accountant/Financial Reporting	9 (20.0)
	ERP Implementation	6 (13.3)
	IT or Systems	3 (6.7)
	Other	5 (11.1)
Main Work Area	Internal Audit	1 (2.2)
	Finance	28 (62.2)
	Advisory/Consulting	5 (11.1)
	Other	5 (11.1)
	IT	4 (8.9)
	Operations	3 (6.7)
Country/Region	Pakistan	34 (75.6)
	Middle East	6 (13.3)
	Europe	4 (8.9)
	Global	1 (2.2)
Organisation Size	1,000 or more employees	15 (33.3)
	Under 50 employees	10 (22.2)
	50 to 249 employees	10 (22.2)
	250 to 999 employees	10 (22.2)
ERP Experience	Implemented an ERP	26 (57.8)
	Operated/Used an ERP	10 (22.2)
	No Direct ERP Experience	6 (13.3)
	Selected/Helped Select an ERP	2 (4.4)
	Audited an ERP Environment	1 (2.2)

Table 4 presents the ten highest-rated ERP selection criteria based on respondents' importance ratings. Data Security and Access Control emerged as the most important criterion (4.67 ± 0.74), followed by Information Quality (4.62 ± 0.75) and Adequacy of Finance and IT Resources (4.58 ± 0.66). System Quality and Reliability (4.56 ± 0.69), Realistic Budget and Funding (4.49 ± 0.69), Clear Internal Ownership (4.49 ± 0.73), and Top Management Support (4.47 ± 0.79) were also rated high. Similarly, Functional Fit (4.44 ± 0.81), Change-Management and Training Capacity (4.42 ± 0.78), and Scalability (4.40 ± 0.78) were identified among the highest-rated selection criteria. Together, these findings indicate that finance led organisations place considerable emphasis on both technological capabilities and organisational readiness when selecting ERP systems. Particularly, the prominence of data security, information quality, and system reliability reflects the critical importance of maintaining financial information and ensuring dependable system performance; however, the high ratings assigned to organisational factors underscore the need for adequate resources, effective governance, and management commitment to support successful ERP implementation.

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Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of ERP System

Category		n (%)
ERP System	SAP	20 (22.7%)
	Oracle	22 (25.0%)
	Microsoft Dynamics	11 (12.5%)
	Odoo	4 (4.5%)
	ERPNext	2 (2.3%)
	Custom Local	10 (11.4%)
	QuickBooks	2 (2.3%)
	Temenos	3 (3.4%)
	JD Edwards	3 (3.4%)
	Finacle	2 (2.3%)
	Retail Pro	2 (2.3%)
	PIBAS	2 (2.3%)
	ePromis	2 (2.3%)
	Fourgen	2 (2.3%)
	Xero	1 (1.1%)

Note: Multiple responses acceptable; percentages based on 88 system mentions.

Table 4: Ten selection criteria with the highest rating (mean 1 - 5)

Criterion	Group	Mean ±SD
Data security and access control	Technology	4.67 ± 0.74
Information quality	Technology	4.62 ± 0.75
Adequacy of finance and IT resources	Organisation	4.58 ± 0.66
System quality and reliability	Technology	4.56 ± 0.69
Realistic budget and funding	Organisation	4.49 ± 0.69
Clear internal ownership	Organisation	4.49 ± 0.73
Top-management support	Organisation	4.47 ± 0.79
Functional fit	Technology	4.44 ± 0.81
Change-management and training capacity	Organisation	4.47 ± 0.79
Scalability	Technology	4.42 ± 0.78

Table 5 below shows the high importance ratings for all financial automation outcomes, with mean scores ranging from 4.36 to 4.62. Accurate and Timely Reporting was highest mean 4.62 and most important outcome, followed by Process Automation with a mean of 4.55. The Gap = importance - perceived ERP delivery for demonstrating was the greatest (0.54). The smallest gap, however, was found in IFRS and Regulatory Compliance, with 0.05. Integration of current ERP systems fulfils the users' expectations in supporting to a large extent in regulatory compliance.

The results of the multiple linear regression to test the prediction of financial automation outcomes by the Technology, Organisation and Environment criteria are presented in Table 6. The regression accounted for 36.1% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.361$) for the model of importance. The Organisation and Environment criteria were not statistically significant while the Technology Criteria was the only significant predictor of outcome importance ($\beta = 0.506$, $p = .011$). The regression accounted for 32.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.323$) in the delivery model. The technology and organisation criteria were not considered significant, whereas the

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perceived delivery of financial automation outcomes was significantly predicted by environment criteria (β = 0.510, p = .005).

Table 5: Financial automation outcomes (1 to 5) are important and delivered.

Outcome	Importance	Delivery	Gap
Process automation (close and reconciliation)	4.42	3.88	0.54
Accurate and timely reporting	4.62	4.12	0.51
Auditability and controls	4.49	4.23	0.26
Total cost of ownership	4.42	4.23	0.19
IFRS and regulatory compliance	4.36	4.30	0.05

Note: Gaps computed from unrounded means.

Table 6: Regression of Financial Automation Outcomes on the Three ERP Selection Criteria Groups

Predictor	Outcome Importance β (p-value)	Outcome Delivery β (p-value)
Technology Criteria	0.506 (0.011)	n.s.
Organisation Criteria	n.s.	n.s.
Environment Criteria	n.s.	0.510 (0.005)
R^2	0.361	0.323

β = Standardised regression coefficient and n.s. = not statistically significant (p > .05).

ERP selection framework proposed and empirical support provided respond to the three goals of the research in this study. The results indicate that finance led organisations place the highest value on technology related criteria, specifically data. The main capabilities include security, information quality, system reliability, and organisational factors such as the adoption of the new technology and the development of the necessary capacity, commitment from the upper level and clear accountability are also very important factors.

In ERP selection, the study revealed that the performance expectations and implementation gaps related to enterprises. It finds that when deploying ERP systems, enterprises projected improvements in five core capabilities, which encompass financial reporting, process automation, auditability, compliance and cost management, but only compliance met its implementation standard. The expected benefits of financial reporting and process automation were never delivered.

The latest regression analysis shows that Technology Criteria affect valued outcomes of financial automation and Society, they are influenced quite significantly by some criteria in the actual delivery process. These results support the following hypothesis: Ensure that you take technological, organisational and social factors into account and emphasise them. These criteria made the selection of ERP systems as a collective consideration of a group of environmental factors. Conclusively, the research provides a comprehensive framework for an informed ERP selection and enhanced financial automation, particularly for companies in emerging market.

The prominence of technology shows a prevailing trend in the criteria rankings; however, within the technology criteria themselves, data security and access control are the top priorities, indicating an inclination towards protection over convenience. Information quality and system reliability are also important technology criteria, ranking second and fourth, respectively. The Proposition P1 from the perspective of respondents' highlights that the technological factors ranked highest completely align with the dimensions of quality which, according to the DeLone and McLean (2003) model, are seen as the source of system success. These dimensions have proved their relevance in environments very similar to that of this study, from public organisations in Ghana (Akrong, Shao and Owusu, 2021) to small and medium-sized businesses in Pakistan (Asif, Siddiqui and Faraz, 2025). Data security is of critical significance, although it was not considered in the conventional success criteria. According to the respondents it is the most critical success criterion in the list. Most likely, this is because of the era when cloud services are commonly used which makes data privacy, security and governance an item on the board's agenda, which absolutely matches the recent discussion of the integration and trust issues related to cloud based ERP implementation (Rîndaşu et al. 2024). In any case, for those working with finances and having ledgers in their information systems, it is not an issue at all.

Four out of the top ten selection criterion are related to the organisational criteria, which supports proposition P2 on the basis of stated priorities, however, the order that respondents have assigned to them shows a different meaning. Overall, the adequacy of finance and IT resources ranks third and realistic budget / funding fifth,

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both are above the top-management support criterion, which has been mentioned as the single most cited success factor for two decades by the implementation studies (Nah, Lau and Kuang, 2001; Finney and Corbett, 2007; Ngai, Law and Wat, 2008). Such an arrangement appears to be logical when the context is taken into account. In resource-limited situations, sponsorship is relatively inexpensive, while capacity is costly. Therefore, even the most supportive chief executive is not able to generate expertise and resources that are necessary for the successful implementation of ERP and the respondents, who made selections in Pakistan, appear to be well aware of this fact. Such constraint pattern is consistent with the one described by Jamil and Qayyum (2015) for Pakistani firms.

Environmental criteria provide the most valuable finding in the study by their absence from the top ten selection criteria. This might have suggested the failure of proposition P3 if considered in isolation. However, the regression analysis of the respondents' answers reflects that the environment criteria are the only significant predictors of delivering outcomes in financial automation ($\beta = 0.510$, $p = .005$). Respondents underestimate, in terms of importance, precisely the set of criteria that defines the actual delivery. This disconnection is exactly the type of oversight the selection framework is supposed to resolve. Vendor capability, infrastructural readiness and compatibility and regulatory fit represent underlying factors, unnoticed when present, but critically important when absent. In the comparative literature it is widely stated that they occur in developing countries more frequently than anywhere else (Huang and Palvia, 2001; Rajapakse and Seddon, 2005). Now the empirical data show an even stronger fact, namely the professionals operating in such environments themselves underestimate the importance of the environment while discussing its criteria.

This analysis provides further depth to the importance-to-delivery gaps. In each case, the importance score is very high, from 4.36 to 4.62, indicating that indeed the five outcomes of financial automation presented here are those desired by the finance professionals. On the other hand, delivery does not seem to be as consistent. The two largest gaps are found right where the promise of automation is made the strongest; process automation of the close and reconciliations is 0.54 below its importance rating, and accurate and timely reporting is 0.51 below. It is these benefits that vendors emphasize during their pitches, and they are also the ones for which the respondents feel their systems deliver least effectively. The results fall in line with what the benefits literature had suggested (Matolcsy, Booth and Wieder, 2005). On the opposite end, the gap between IFRS and compliance is just 0.05, while total cost of ownership comes second at 0.19. In other words, compliance is almost entirely as good as promised. Institutional theory can provide an answer here rather more compellingly than technology can. Compliance is the deliverable that both coercion (from regulators) and normative pressure (from the accounting profession) work on directly (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This applies not only to buyers but also to vendors: compliance has been made an integral requirement of software packages which is embedded in its designed, because a package that does not deliver compliant results has no place in a regulated market. Here we can conclude that this data supports proposition P5.

The regression results give a conceptual framework with empirical validation, because the two models split exactly along the framework's timeline. In the importance model, technology criteria alone predict how much weight respondents give the financial automation outcomes ($\beta = 0.506$, $p = .011$); predictions are technology-led, formed by what the system's capabilities suggest is possible. In the delivery model, environment criteria alone predict how much of those outcomes respondents perceive their systems to deliver ($\beta = 0.510$, $p = .005$): realised success is environment-rationed. The framework drew that distinction in advance. Selection criteria operate ex ante, realised success is measured ex post, and the emerging-market context serves as a limit on the linkage between them. Proposition P6 claimed that a thin vendor market, weak infrastructure and uneven enforcement set a ceiling on what even a careful choice can deliver, and the delivery model is that ceiling showing up in the coefficients. An organisation can want what its technology promises; it can only collect what its environment allows.

The organisational null in both models needs care rather than dismissal. Three readings are available, and they are complementary rather than competing. The first is the framework's own proposition P4: organisational criteria translate into outcomes only through fit, the genuine match between system and organisation that Hong and Kim (2002) identified, and a mediated path can leave little direct trace in a regression that does not model the mediator. The second is the asymmetry that runs through the failure literature: the absence of organisational essentials such as management support almost guarantees failure while their presence guarantees nothing (Grabski, Leech and Schmidt, 2011; Rajapakse and Thushara, 2023), a threshold relationship that a linear model is poorly shaped to detect. The third is statistical: the organisational items are rated uniformly high, four of them within a 0.16 band at the top of the scale, and compressed variance starves a predictor of the room it needs to correlate. On any of the three readings, the sensible conclusion is not that organisation does not matter but that its influence is conditional and nonlinear, which is precisely how the framework positions it.

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The framework itself survives its evaluation well. The validation scale returned an acceptable alpha of 0.743, and the constituent scales all cleared the conventional threshold, which matters because the five financial automation outcomes are this study's novel construct: the data show that the construct can be measured coherently in the field, answering the long-standing complaint that net benefits is the least defined element of the information systems success tradition (Seddon, 1997; Petter, DeLone and McLean, 2008; Gable, Sedera and Chan, 2008). The technology-organisation-environment lens, used taxonomically as Oliveira and Martins (2011) recommend, sorted the nineteen criteria without strain, and the dual importance-and-delivery rating operationalised the framework's ex-ante and ex-post timeline in a form respondents navigated without difficulty. The empirical structure of the results, expectations shaped by one criteria group and delivery governed by another, is not something a single-theory design could have surfaced at all.

For practice, the findings reorder the selection checklist. The first instruction is to audit the environment as hard as the demonstration. Vendor depth in the local market, the availability of skilled implementation partners, infrastructure reliability and regulatory fit predict delivered outcomes when nothing else in the stated-priority list does, so a finance team should weight them deliberately against its own instinct to focus on features. The second is to discount automation promises. The month-end close and reconciliation automation generates the largest delivery shortfall in the data, so contractual commitments, reference checks aimed specifically at close automation, and staged acceptance criteria are worth more than any brochure. The third is to treat compliance as table stakes rather than a differentiator, since systems in this market deliver it almost in full, and to redirect the evaluation effort that compliance no longer needs toward the outcomes that still under-deliver. The fourth is to secure capital and funding before over-relying on software: respondents rank capacity above sponsorship, and in this setting they are right to. For vendors and implementation partners, the same numbers read as a market map, and the close-automation gap is the opening.

Limitations are genuine and need to be expressed. This sample size of 45 is relatively small even though it was purposely chosen from the same population that matters; besides, three-fourths of it comes from Pakistan. So, generalisation across the emerging markets needs to be done with caution. Furthermore, all the measures are self-perceived observations collected at once, and even with procedural corrections to minimise common method variance, mono-method designs are not free from this problem. The regression uses combined scores across three predictors, which fits the targeted sample size but cannot test the mediating role, and stated importance does not equate to revealed behaviour in a live selection. These limits plan the road. Larger, multi-country samples would allow the framework's weights to vary by context as proposition P6 implies. Structural models could evaluate that fit the value proposition P4 explicitly, and longitudinal designs that follow organisations from selection through to realised outcomes would replace perception with observation at both ends of the framework's timeline. None of these limitations disturbs the study's core, and executable, finding: the criteria that dominate expert attention are not the criteria that govern what practitioners receive, and a selection framework that corrects for that blind spot earns its place.

CONCLUSIONS

From the review of the literature, three gaps stood out in common. Selection frameworks have been built largely in and for industrialised Western economies and rarely tested in the institutional settings of South Asia, the Middle East or Sub-Saharan Africa. The finance lens is missing from those frameworks, despite the evidence that the information, control and reporting domain is where ERP value most reliably lands. And the field is short of practical, designed tools that a resource-constrained finance team could actually pick up and use. This study set out to close that threefold gap by answering the question the literature has left underserved: how should a finance-led organisation in an emerging market choose an ERP system, and against what outcomes should the choice be judged? Its answer is a designed framework, evaluated with primary evidence. The framework sorts the selection criteria through the technology-organisation-environment lens, routes them through fit to realised information systems success, and re-specifies the vague net-benefits construct as five financial automation outcomes that a finance professional is actually accountable for: reporting accuracy and timeliness, auditability and controls, IFRS and regulatory compliance, process automation, and total cost of ownership.

The primary data, collected from 45 finance and technology professionals' first-hand experience with ERP, mostly Pakistani respondents, offer three outcomes that are independently valid. First, all the scales passed the reliability test, indicating that not only are five financial automation outcomes a possible construct, but they are also measurable in practice. Second, respondents place technology and organisational factors among the top factors in terms of importance, led by data security, information quality, and finance and IT resource sufficiency, with every factor under consideration being of significance to them, however the largest achievement gaps lie in the factors with the most destructive vendor promises, in process automation of the

close and in accurate and timely reporting, and the smallest in regulatory compliance. Finally, and most importantly, the regressions divide along the framework process: technology factors predict the importance attached to financial automation outcomes, while environment factors predict the achievement of these outcomes.

The lesson wraps up with one statement: Organisations decide to focus completely on the technology, but they adapt to what their environment makes available. It is the gap between those two perspectives, not explicit in the ranking process but glaringly evident in the delivery method, that the framework exists to fill, and it is the most practical insight the study provides. Using the framework, the finance department should be guided to audit vendor depth, implementation capability, infrastructure, and regulatory compatibility with the same precision applied to system validation and disregard automation claims until there is contractual evidence and intentional compliance as the bare minimum.

The contributions go beyond the checklist. First of all, theoretically, the paper demonstrates that the most flexible component of the information systems success approach may have a monetary equivalent that does not reduce the quality of measurement, and that the technology-organisation, environment model, when used as a classification scheme rather than a causality mechanism, allows organising the criteria of selection very neatly in an emerging market environment. Secondly, the empirical contribution is made by providing primary data from the sample of finance practitioners in Pakistan and similar markets, which the research in the area seldom considers.

The study's limits, a modest purposive sample, a single-country weighting and self-reported perceptions at one point in time, define its successors rather than diminish it: larger multi-country samples, structural tests of the fit mechanism, and longitudinal designs tracking selections through to realised outcomes. For now, the framework stands where the evidence put it, as a practical tool grounded in the stated priorities and lived delivery experience of the professionals it was built to serve.

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