

HR Professionals' Perceptions of Automation in Talent Acquisition: A Qualitative Meta-Interpretive Study on Trust, Adoption, and Decision-Making in Recruitment Processes

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ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of Automation and AI-enabled systems in work-spaces is transforming and restructuring the way most organizations operate. There is substantial empirical research on the growth and future of AI based work-places in different areas while a little have been explored on how the skilled professionals perceive this transition. This study delves into the aspect of how HR professionals think about AI-driven automation in talent acquisition. It explores with a particular focus on trust, adoption, and decision-making of the skilled professionals. AI has real potential to improve recruitment, however the practical implication varies a lot majorly because of psychological and organizational factors (Malin et al., 2023).

The existing qualitative studies show that trust in AI develops when the technology proves to be reliable, explains the reasoning mechanism and operates within the ethical boundaries (Hmoud & Várallyai, 2021). HR professionals rely on AI for high-volume repetitive tasks of recruitment, but refuse to let AI take a lead on core human evaluations and high-stakes and final decision making (Gupta & Srivastava, 2023; Khan et al., 2023). This reluctance partly arises due to the black-box problem and stems from the sense that AI is still not capable of reading the nuances of human characteristics like body language, confidence, cultural fit; like a human recruiter does (Rukadikar & Khandelwal, 2024; Sýkorová et al., 2024).

The study discovers that the integration of AI systems in the actual practice is widely dependent on how strongly the recruiters believe in that system (Malin et al., 2023). Implementation of AI is not an IT project but a change management initiative and hence HR professionals who understand a system well will derive more out of it. The study suggests that it is cultural, psychological and operational responsibility of the organizations to build trust in AI or it will lead to low adoption, wasted investment and fragmented data. The paper also highlights the gap between what the research literature says about automated hiring and what actually happens on the ground, offering insight to anyone considering to navigate that transition.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Talent Acquisition, Trust in AI, Recruitment Automation, Meta-Interpretive Study, Human-AI Collaboration.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence in the past few years made many fields undergo a paradigm shift. Human Resource Management is one of them to incorporate AI and automated decision-making systems. HRM has been predominantly a human-run domain, especially in talent acquisition. However, due to its traditionally human-intensive nature and then comes a technology and algorithms that are capable of processing vast amounts of data swiftly, at a volume that is practically unattainable by human recruiters (Khan et al., 2023). The transformation is not just technical but philosophical. It forces a reconsideration of the entire belief system where the human element that has long been the focal point of organizational selection (Rukadikar & Khandelwal, 2024).

There is no doubt that AI has the potential to improve recruitment processes. However, there seems to be a big difference between scientists and those who implement it in terms of adopting it actually; Often, people who assume responsibility for implementing this technology over the theoretical advantages of this technology raise doubts or protests or do not have a clear understanding of it (Asif, 2024; Malin et al., 2023). In fact, despite the tremendous progress being made in AI, the pace of adopting automation remains slow.

1.2 The Technological Promise of AI in Talent Acquisition

The main reason behind the inclusion of AI-based automation in Talent Acquisition is to speed up work and reduce administrative burden. Nowadays, the use of AI for sourcing, pre-screening and linking to candidates in methods of talent acquisition is increasing rapidly. These technologies promise to reduce the time and cost of hiring, as well as personal biases in human decisions.

However, thinking about the utility of AI is often divided. AI is welcomed at low-risk stages such as sourcing and pre-selection, but there is a lot of hesitation in implementing automation at critical stages such as interviews or final selection. The variance highlights an important contradiction. HR considers professional AI as a tool to augment and improve their work, but in reality, that require context-based understanding which AI conceptually lacks. AI works on patterns and algorithms, which either the human professional doesn't rely on or ends up correcting or managing the tool, spending more time than it actually was supposed to save.

1.3 The Trust Deficit and the Black-Box Problem

At the heart of the adoption challenge lies trust. Trust in AI applications within talent acquisition is predicated on three distinct dimensions:

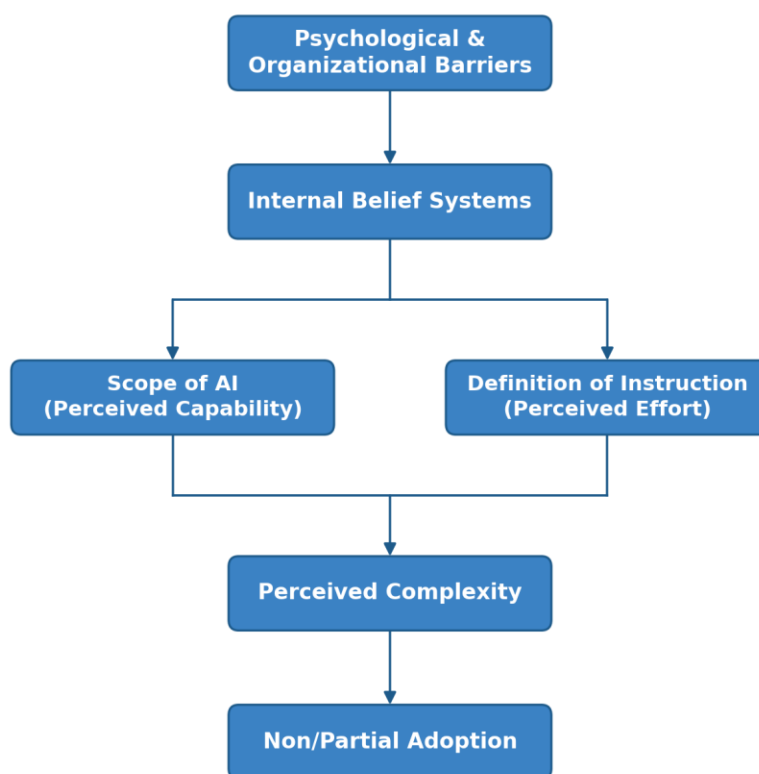
- Technical competence
- Reliability
- Ethical credibility

The root of lack of trust is in the black-box nature of many AI algorithms. When recruiters or humans in general cannot interpret how a system arrived at a certain decision such as a candidate recommendation, they experience a loss of psychological safety and fear the system may perpetuate bias as they don't understand the process.

This often leads to algorithm aversion, where professionals devalue algorithmic outputs in favor of human judgment, even when algorithms may be statistically more accurate.

1.4 Psychological and Organizational Barriers to Adoption

Resistance to AI in recruitment often has less to do with the technology itself and more to do with how recruiters interpret it. As the figure below illustrates, existing psychological and organizational barriers shape recruiters' internal belief systems; the assumptions and instincts they bring to evaluating anything new. These beliefs, in turn, influence two things: how much recruiters trust the actual scope of what AI can do, and how clearly they understand what's expected of them in using it. When either of these is unclear, AI starts to feel more complicated than it needs to, which is often what leads to non-adoption or only partial adoption in practice.



1.5 Need for a Meta-Interpretive Synthesis

The existing literature talks about whether and how much the technology is being adopted currently but fails to register the daily impact on the humans-in-the-loop. It leaves a blind spot on how this transition is impacting them on a day-to-day basis. The transformation may lead to psychological and technological challenges and in turn effecting the quality of work.

A qualitative meta-interpretive synthesis is needed to move beyond individual case studies to understand how elements such as trust, adoption, and decision-making are interlinked in an automated recruitment process. Different researches have explored different aspects with varied lenses. The meta interpretative thesis acts as a bird's eye view and evaluates these disconnected view points to create a new and comprehensive model that may explain this perspective better.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is:

1. Identifying reasons for trust in the AI system among recruitment professionals.
2. Detection of psychological and organizational barriers due to which it is not adopted or partially adopted.
3. Analyzing how AI affects the recruiter's decision-making process.
4. Creating a theoretical framework that can explain the mutual relationship between technical scope and the need for transparency and control.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 AI in Talent Acquisition

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Talent Acquisition has led to major changes in human resource management (HRM). The recruitment process is now moving towards hybrid models of humans and machines working together, rather than relying primarily on humans (Davenport and Kirby, 2016). AI techniques such as machine learning algorithms, natural language processing (NLP) and predictive analytics are increasingly used in many stages of recruitment, such as finding candidates (sourcing), checking resumes (screening), scheduling interviews. And early evaluation (Apadhy and Khandelwal, 2018; Black and Van Ash, 2020).

Several operational advantages associated with the adoption of AI in research have been consistently emphasized. The special thing is that AI enhances functionality by automating repeated tasks and significantly reducing the time it takes to recruit (Tambe, Capelli & Yakubovich, 2019). It also improves scalability (ability to expand the scope of work), allowing organizations to handle the process of large numbers of applicants without over-increasing HR resources. AI-based systems can improve candidate engagement through chatbot and personalized communication, making the recruitment experience much better and faster (Van Ash and Black, 2019), although in reality such tools are always users. Do not meet the expectations of (Lugar and Selene, 2016).

Despite these advantages, experts warn against having too much hope or positive attitude about AI. Algorithms can be influenced by the biases (bias) present in decision-making system training data, which can further increase existing inequalities (Raghavan and others, 2020). In addition, AI may find it difficult to evaluate non-traditional career paths or context-based factors that human recruiters generally consider.

Therefore, AI in Talent Acquisition should be understood not just as a tool to improve work, but as a socio-technical system for which governance, transparency and continuous monitoring.

3.2 Trust and Algorithm Aversion

Although AI systems have a lot of technical capability, the method of adopting them in recruitment is not the same. This shows a contradiction or paradox between performance and user approval. This difference is often explained by the concept of 'algorithm aversion'. This means a person's habit of not relying on or not accepting decisions taken from algorithms, especially when they see a mistake or the consequences of decisions are very important (Dietvorst, Simmons, & Massey, 2015).

In the case of human resources, studies show that professionals are more willing to use AI for repeated and less important administrative tasks such as resumes parsing or scheduling interviews. At the same time, they oppose its use in important functions such as hiring decisions or final selection (Newlands, 2021; Lacroux & Lacroux, 2022). Adopting AI in this way selectively raises concerns like accountability, fairness and losing human control.

Trust is an important factor in adopting AI. It is considered a complex element that ranges from technical ability and trust to ethical reliability and many other such factors (Glikson and Woolley, 2020). An important reason for this is the "black box" nature of the AI system, where the decision-making process is not transparent and cannot be viewed, understood or explained. Due to the lack of interpretation, the professionals drifted towards increased uncertainty and weakening confidence (Barrell, 2016; Kahayani and Muslifah, 2025; Zhang, Sun, & Xu, 2022).

Trust in AI or any technological tool is not solely determined by the performance of the system. It depends largely on the user thinking about fairness, accountability and synergy with the values of the organization. Anything that one doesn't understand, resent it. Even if they do a better job than those who take human decisions according to statistics, if it cannot explain how the system reached a particular result, it would not be trusted.

3.3 Scientist–Practitioner Gap in AI Adoption

A significant barrier in integrating AI into Human Resource Management is the 'Scientist-Practitioner Gap'. It is a rift that exists between theory and practical. This difference shows the lack of synergy between progress in academic research and their practical use in organization (Rynes, Colbert, & Brown, 2002). AI technology is advancing rapidly on one hand, on the other hand many HR professionals basic training and understanding of these systems.

Therefore, if results given by AI is trusted without proper checks and scrutiny it may lead to the risk of making biased or erroneous decisions. Similarly, HR professionals are unable to optimally utilize AI tools due to uncertainty or lack of confidence regarding their capabilities. While depending upon external vendors may reduce transparency, as organizations may not fully gauge how algorithms function (Minbaeva, 2021) and also compel them to share in-house data to a third party.

A variety of methods are needed to understand this difference and overcome it. This includes increasing AI understanding (AI literacy) among HR professionals, mutual collaboration between data scientists and HR professionals, and transforming difficult technical concepts into easy and understandable frameworks. Also, the organization should invest in training and governance structures that help in more informative and responsible use of AI. Without such efforts, the benefits of AI in talent hiring may not be fully realized leaving the risk open for poor, biased, or non-transparent hiring decisions.

3.4 Human-in-the-Loop and Hybrid Decision-Making

In response to concerns related to trust, favoritism and accountability, recent studies emphasize the importance of 'human-in-the-loop' (HITL) systems and hybrid decision-making models (Hewage, 2023). These methods present AI as a collaborative tool that improves the ability to take human decisions, not completely replace them (Jarrahi, 2018).

Both AI and humans are used in the process of taking hybrid decisions. AI offers quick processing, similarity handling, and large dataset analysis capabilities, whereas humans excel in contextual comprehension, ethical reasoning, and social signal interpretation.

Human monitoring also plays an important role in reducing the risks associated with the bias of algorithms (bias) and ensuring accountability. By maintaining human participation at the time of important decisions, institutions can increase transparency and build trust among stakeholders (Laurim, Arpasi, & Krakmar, 2021). Research shows that hybrid systems not only improve the quality of decisions, but also increase users' acceptability over AI technology (Glikson and Woolley, 2020).

Ultimately, studies confirm that the future of AI in hiring hinges on the harmonious collaboration between a skilled human and AI. Instead of adopting automation as a whole, institutions should focus on incorporating AI in such a way that human capabilities increase as well as accountability of ethical standards and decisions.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study attempts to understand how HR professionals actually make sense of AI in talent acquisition, so it uses a qualitative meta-interpretive approach. The focus stays on three things that keep coming up together: trust, adoption, and decision-making in recruitment (Sattar, Lawton, & Panagioti, 2021; Shouraki, Ahmed, & Madsen, 2024; Pedrami & Vaezi, 2025).

Meta-interpretation is not the same as a common systemic review. Systematic reviews typically combine data or numbers of individual studies together, but the qualitative results of existing research in meta-interpretation are re-read and understood. Repetitive studies do not change the fact. Rather, it takes into account what the participants actually said and what they meant, and then some big talk or theory is made on the basis of that. Often, context is overlooked in the quantitative synthesis of results, as this method aims to maintain it.

This study borrows Mike Weed (2008) framework with "interpreting interpretations" (interpretations of interpretations), as it is not limited to describing only themes (subjects). Weed's method tells the researcher to find relationships, contradictions, and patterns that appear repeatedly in different studies, not just within the same study. Also, this method emphasizes making theory using those patterns, rather than summarizing what others say. Since the motive here was to understand how working people actually experience AI in their everyday work, instead of a strict and hypotheses-testing design, a more open and an exploratory design was more correct. This is also in line with recent work on meta-interpretive synthesis (Luong, Sattar, & Greenhalt, 2023).



4.2 Philosophical and Theoretical Underpinning

This study has been done from an interpretive perspective. It is based on the thinking that reality or at least the part of it that is needed here is constructed through individual experiences, organizational environment and mutual interaction, not something that can be fixed and measured. We need to uncover what remains undiscovered. This is important for studying how to adopt AI, because if it is measured only by results such as utilization rate, speed of work or fault rate, but we end up missing why a recruiter ends up trusting or distrusting a system in the first place, and that is exactly the question this study is trying to answer.

An interpretive view can be considered correct for this subject, as people do not form their opinions about AI in a vacuum. It is constructed and shaped by many factors: such as the culture of the organization, the extent of technology being used in the company, ethical questions the professionals have faced, earlier good or bad experiences with digital tools, and work and their own understanding made over the years. Since these things vary from one organization or industry to another, HR professionals have different opinions and depend on the situation, rather than finding the same reason for people's thinking about AI. It felt more right to understand. This analysis was performed using three explanatory strategies, adopting the method of Weed. These strategies were used simultaneously rather than used separately.

1. *Reciprocal translation* - This meant comparing concepts in selected studies to see if they were actually referring to the same type of experience in different languages. Where different terms were used for the same phenomenon in two studies such as *algorithm scepticism* in one and *AI distrust* in another. They were considered to be the same concept and included in larger categories.
2. *Refutational synthesis* - Attention was given to places where the results of the studies were different from each other. Instead of considering these differences as something minor or lacking in research or dismissing as noise, they were taken seriously as data in their own right and the contractions became a point of discussion. In most cases, this difference was because the environment of organization varied, what stage was the company in terms of technology, what were the rules of the industry, or how much practical experience people already had with AI tools.
3. *Lines-of-argument synthesis* - It tells from a broader perspective how trust, ethics, organization environment and ability to take human decision together determine how and when AI will be used in recruitment. This is the stage where the review is no longer a summary of the discoveries of others, but becomes an independent argument on what they all mean overall.

Overall, these three strategies helped to create a coherent account of the changing relationship between human recruiters and AI systems increasingly involved in their work by combining different discoveries.

4.3 SPIDER Framework

The SPIDER framework has been used in this study to decide which studies were selected and how to extract data from them. SPIDER means Sample (Sample), Phenomenon of Interest (subject of interest), Design (Design), Evaluation (Evaluation) and Research Type (type of research) (Cooke, Smith, & Booth, 2012). This works great for such a qualitative synthesis (qualitative analysis) as it is designed to find studies that focus on experiences, perceptions, and interpretations rather than RAW numbers (raw data) (Methley, Campbell, Chew-Graham, McNally, & Cheraghi-Sohi, 2014).

Component	Description
Sample	HR professionals, recruiters, talent acquisition specialists, hiring managers, and HR decision-makers
Phenomenon of Interest	AI-driven automation, algorithmic hiring systems, and decision-support technologies used in talent acquisition
Design	Qualitative studies including phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and mixed-method research
Evaluation	Perceptions, trust, ethical concerns, adoption barriers, algorithm aversion, fairness, and decision-making experiences
Research Type	Qualitative and mixed-method empirical studies

The SPIDER framework enabled systematic identification of studies aligned with the research objectives while maintaining focus on interpretive and experience-based evidence.

4.4 Search Strategy and Sampling Procedure

The search process was purposive rather than exhaustive. It means that the studies were hand-picked based on relevance and not trying to include everything that has been written around the topic.

The following academic databases were utilized:

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- ScienceDirect
- Google Scholar (for supplementary searches)

Keyword combinations were developed using Boolean operators such as AND and OR.

Technology-Related Keywords

- Artificial Intelligence
- AI
- Automation
- Algorithms
- Machine Learning
- Chatbots
- Predictive Hiring

HR and Recruitment Keywords

- Human Resource Management
- HRM
- Recruitment
- Talent Acquisition
- Employee Selection
- Hiring Systems

Perception and Behavioral Keywords

- Trust
- Adoption
- Perceptions
- Decision-Making
- Algorithm Aversion
- Fairness

- Bias

In order to record the rapid growth in AI technology in recruitment, the search was restricted around the period between 2028-2025.

Purposive sampling made more sense than trying to be exhaustive, the research included the literature with non-repetitive and qualitative data that aligns with the purview of a meta-interpretative study of valuing quality over quantity. The search cycle continued until a point of conceptual saturation where the newly reviewed papers stopped giving novice results.

4.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria for including or excluding the research was considered:

Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they:

- Employed qualitative or mixed-method research designs
- Focused on AI applications in recruitment or talent acquisition
- Examined perceptions, trust, adoption, ethics, or decision-making
- Included HR professionals, recruiters, managers, or organizational stakeholders
- Provided empirical findings related to organizational or psychological dimensions of AI adoption
- Were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2018 and 2025
- Were available in English language

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they:

- Focused exclusively on technical algorithm development
- Addressed AI outside HR or recruitment contexts
- Were purely conceptual papers without empirical evidence
- Were editorials, conference abstracts, or opinion pieces
- Did not contain sufficient qualitative findings for interpretive synthesis
- Were duplicate studies across databases

A methodological rigor and conceptual relevance to the research objectives was ensured.

4.6 Data Extraction and Synthesis Procedure

A six-stage meta interpretative process adaptation of Weed's framework was utilized.

Stage 1: Familiarization and Identification of Relationships

Repeated observations were made to comprehend the context, purpose, method, and core outcomes of the selected studies. Relationships between studies were identified based on repeated concepts and similarity of themes.

Stage 2: Extraction of Constructs

Both the first-order concept (perspective of participants) and the second-order concept (interpretation of authors) were extracted from the selected studies.

Stage 3: Reciprocal Translation

Concepts and themes of individual studies were translated into each other to recognize common interpreted meanings about decisions related to AI trust, fairness, adoption preparation, and recruitment.

Stage 4: Refutational Analysis

Contradictory and conflicting results were closely examined to understand the differences arising from industry types, organization culture, maturity of technology, and human attitudes towards automation.

Stage 5: Lines-of-Argument Synthesis

By combining the results of individual studies, a comprehensive explanatory understanding was created by developing a coherent concept-based understanding of HR Professionals' thinking about AI-based recruitment systems.

Stage 6: Development of Conceptual Framework

The final stage created a high-level concept-based framework, which explains the mutual relationship between trust, adoption process, human decision and AI-assisted recruitment decision making process.

The theoretical understanding and depth of context was maintained alongside the descriptive process.

4.7 Quality Appraisal

The selected studies were critically appraised using qualitative evaluation criteria such as:

- Clarity of research objectives
- Appropriateness of methodology
- Sampling adequacy
- Transparency of data collection procedures
- Depth of analysis
- Reflexivity
- Ethical considerations

Studies lacking methodological transparency or interpretive depth were excluded from research.

4.8 Reflexivity and Trustworthiness

Considering nature of qualitative synthesis which is inherently interpretive by nature, a reflexivity approach was kept up throughout the process (Bujold, Caron, & Simard, 2023). This means to regularly stop to check the assumptions, possible biases, and existing views on AI and recruitment, rather than assuming they weren't shaping the analysis.

To keep the findings most reliant, the following safeguards were incorporated:

- Researcher triangulation through independent review and coding
- Iterative comparison of themes across studies
- Maintenance of an audit trail documenting analytical decisions
- Transparent reporting of synthesis procedures

These measures enhanced credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

This study works entirely from secondary analysis of published academic literature, hence there was no direct human participation involved, so formal ethical approval wasn't required.

However, it was ensured that ethical research practices were maintained through accurate citation, proper acknowledgment of original authors, and faithful representation of primary study findings.

4.10 Methodological Limitations

It is necessary to acknowledge some limitations associated with qualitative meta-interpretive synthesis.

First, this study depends on the quality and availability of existing primary research. Second, publication may limit the representation of unpublished or contradictory results (Khair, Atif, & Malik, 2020). Third, interpretive synthesis naturally involves the researcher's interpretation, which can lead to subjectivity despite reflexive safety measures.

In addition, results may change over time due to rapid technological developments in AI-driven recruitment.

Despite these limitations, meta-interpretation provides a robust and theoretically rich approach to understanding the changing relationship of human-AI in talent acquisition and recruitment processes.

Meta-interpretive synthesis showed that HR professionals' perceptions of AI-driven automation in talent acquisition are made up of complex interactions of technical, psychological, ethical, and organizational factors. The reviewed studies revealed five main explanatory topics: trust as a conditional concept, selective adoption at the stages of recruitment, dislike and ambiguity towards algorithms, perceived capacity vs. implementation effort, and human-centered decision making priority. .

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Trust as a Multidimensional and Conditional Construct

The most interesting finding that surfaced in most of the reviewed literature was that trust in AI is not something that comes automatically. It is important to understand that trust doesn't build overnight. It is something that is gradually formed over time by repeated use, personal and organizational experience, and transparency of technology in the decision-making process. HR professionals develop greater confidence in the AI system when the system consistently delivered correct, efficient, and easily explainable results.

Following are the three main aspects affecting trust:

Technical Competence

When the system increased operational efficiency, reduced manual workload and accelerated the screening process, the participants tend to trust it more. Activities like resume parsing, candidate sourcing, and

chatbot-based interaction were seen as valuable administrative support, increasing the productivity of the recruiter.

Consistency and Reliability

HR Professionals associates trust to the consistency and standardization of the evaluation processes. They consider AI system to be capable of reducing some of the inconsistencies occurring at the human level during a recruitment process handling high-volume data. However, trust was reduced if the suggestions seemed unexpected or inappropriate by context.

Ethical Credibility

Ethical or moral concerns stand as the biggest deciding factor concerning trust. Recruiters remain concerned around the fact that whether AI systems could ensure fairness, avoid discrimination, and maintain candidate privacy. Any hidden bias the seeped in the training data and has a possibility to go unnoticed. The process somehow maybe unfair to candidates and they might not know they were being judged by AI and may not have a way to refute or question.

The below table illustrates the findings - trust in AI recruitment systems:

Major Theme	Core Interpretation	Organizational Impact
Trust as a Conditional Construct	Trust depends on transparency, fairness, and reliability	Influences willingness to adopt AI systems
Selective Adoption	AI accepted mainly in operational recruitment stages	Limits strategic AI integration
Algorithm Aversion and Black-Box Effect	Lack of explainability creates resistance	Reduces recruiter confidence
Capability vs Implementation Effort	Benefits are offset by adoption complexity	Leads to partial or cautious adoption
Preference for Human-in-the-Loop Systems	Human oversight remains essential	Encourages hybrid recruitment models

5.2 Selective Adoption Across Recruitment Stages

The research indicates that adoption of AI is uneven across different stages of the recruitment lifecycle. HR professionals showed higher acceptance of AI in operational and repetitive tasks, while their resistance grew exponentially in stages that require subjective evaluation, emotional judgment and strategic decision-making where human insight and judgement may be essential.

AI adoption was most commonly used for:

- Resume screening
- Candidate sourcing
- Talent database management
- Initial candidate engagement

- Automated communication and scheduling

These functions were perceived as low-risk and efficiency-oriented. Recruiters viewed AI tools useful for managing large applicant volumes and reducing administrative work-load.

However, the rate of adoption declines in tasks like:

- Interviews
- Final candidate assessment
- Cultural fit evaluation
- Leadership potential assessment
- Final hiring decisions

HR professionals expressed discomfort allowing AI systems to independently evaluate nuanced human characteristics such as communication style, emotional intelligence, adaptability, and organizational fit. Recruitment was repeatedly described as a process which is very human centric. This is because recruitment requires contextual understanding and interpersonal judgment.

The findings suggest the existence of an operational boundary in AI adoption. The acceptance rate declines when the recruitment decisions become more strategic, high-stake and socially sensitive.

5.3 Algorithm Aversion and the Black-Box Effect

A prominent theme that emerges out of this research is that there algorithm aversion, referring to hesitation or resistance towards the decisions taken from the algorithm despite understanding the potential of technology.

This reluctance was largely linked to the *black-box effect*, in which HR professionals do not clearly understand how AI systems reached a certain decision, suggestion or ranking. The lack of transparency and explainability leads to uncertainty, suspicion and fear of hidden discrimination or miscalculation.

Following are the three major factors for algorithm aversion:

Lack of Transparency

The participants expressed concern towards systems that could not clearly justify recruitment recommendations. Recruiters were hesitating to rely on decisions they could not explain to candidates or organizational stakeholders.

Fear of Bias and Ethical Risk

Many HR professionals believed AI could unintentionally replicate historical organizational biases embedded within training data. This concern with respect to discrimination, fairness, and procedural justice were repeatedly emphasized and flagged.

Threat to Professional Judgment

The recruiters considered AI-driven decision systems to be reducing their autonomy and professional expertise. Some participants also viewed excessive automation as undermining the relational and human aspect of recruitment.

The study therefore indicates that resistance toward AI is not solely technological but profoundly connected to aspects issues of identity, accountability, and institutional trust.

5.4 Perceived Capability Versus Implementation Effort

An important observation was the variance between the perceived capability of AI systems and the perceived effort required for implementation. HR professionals adores the idea of what AI can do and enhance the quality of their work while are also understanding the limitation of its actual implementation. The gap between what AI has the potential to do and the organizational barriers and psychological constraints makes AI adoption more of a conceptual goal than an actual reality.

The findings identified several practical challenges:

- Limited AI literacy among HR professionals
- Lack of organizational readiness
- High implementation and training costs
- Integration difficulties with existing HR systems
- Uncertainty regarding legal and ethical compliance

The imbalance between perceived technological capability and implementation effort required has led to hesitant or partial adoption behavior.

This analysis suggests that adoption decisions are influenced not only by perceived usefulness as traditional frameworks suggest, but affected by mental burden, emotional unsurity and organizational preparedness.

5.5 Preference for Human-in-the-Loop Systems

The HR professionals demonstrated a strong preference for “human-in-the-loop” recruitment systems in which AI functions as a support mechanism rather than an autonomous decision-maker.

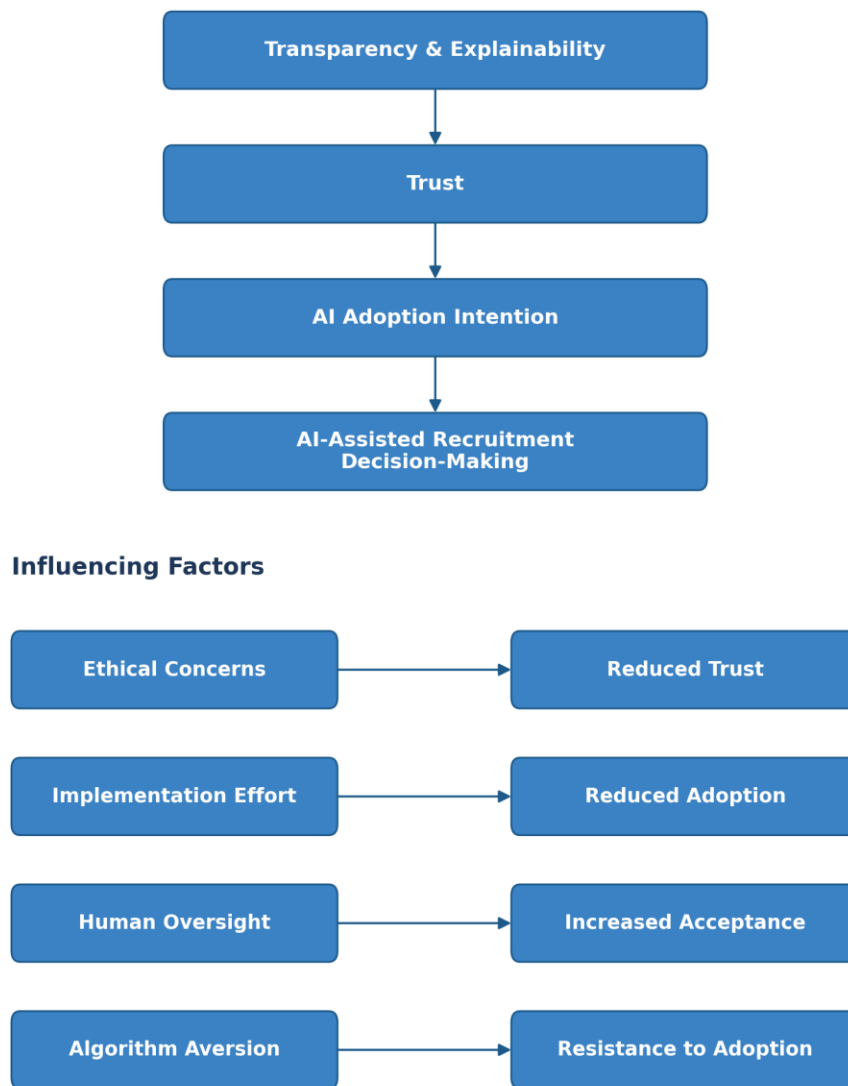
Participants favored hybrid decision-making models involving:

- Human oversight
- Recruiter validation of AI recommendations
- Decision checkpoints
- Collaborative human–AI interaction

AI was primarily perceived as an augmentation tool capable of supporting administrative efficiency while leaving final judgment to human recruiters. Human intervention was viewed to be essential for ensuring empathy, contextual interpretation, ethical accountability, and organizational alignment.

The findings indicate that HR professionals do not necessarily reject AI technology adoption. They resist fully autonomous decision-making systems that minimize human agency and professional discretion.

The professionals prefers a future model of talent acquisition that consists of collaborative intelligence, where AI enhances recruiter capability while humans retain strategic and ethical control over hiring decisions.



6. DISCUSSION

The study demonstrates the perception of HR professionals to be positive towards adoption of AI in the recruitment processes regarding efficiency and speed. However, they are cautious on aspects like ethics, decision clarity and human-touch. It is also relevant to understand that adoption of AI-based automation in talent hiring is not just a technological issue, but a comprehensive process that determines how humans understand and interpret information. Additionally, ethical and organizational factors also play an important role. There is no denying that AI systems are widely known for improving functionality, scalability, and operational speed, but concerns about trust, transparency, fairness, and humanitarian control over their use in recruitment decisions remain.

This study shows that HR professionals evaluate AI systems from both logical and emotional perspectives. The recruitment professionals consider the practical advantages of AI in repeated and administrative tasks,

while expressing hesitation in subjective or strategic hiring decisions. This reflects the difference between operational trust and strategic trust towards AI-enabled systems. recruitment systems.

This study views AI adoption through a dual perspective suggesting that decision for AI adoption depends on two factors:

- Perceived capability of AI systems
- Perceived effort and risk associated with implementation

This extends traditional technology adoption frameworks by incorporating emotional, ethical, and identity-based dimensions into understanding recruiter behavior, beyond the scope of foundational models such as the Technology Acceptance Model and UTAUT (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003).

The findings confirm that the black-box nature of AI substantially reduces the trust of recruiters. The inability to interpret reasons for decision reduces confidence in algorithmic recommendations. This also creates fear of procedural injustice, discrimination and accountability issues. Thus, interpretable AI becomes a crucial need for sustainable organizational uptake.

Additionally, a strong preference for human-based systems shows that it is unlikely that human decision-makers may be replaced by AI in recruitment. Rather, the future of talent acquisition appears to be based on a collaborative intelligence model. A future where AI collaborates in efficiency while humans retain the right to ethical decisions, relevant interpretations, and final decision-making, a broad automation-enrichment paradox described in the management literature Echoes (Rash and Krakowski, 2021).

Practical Implications

The findings provide several insights to organizations willing to deploy an AI based system in the recruitment process:

Organizations should prioritize:

- AI literacy and training programs for HR professionals
- Transparent and explainable AI systems
- Ethical governance frameworks
- Change management and stakeholder engagement
- Human-centric recruitment system design
- Clear accountability structures for AI-assisted decisions

Therefore, getting AI adopted in recruitment isn't just about how sophisticated the technology is. It also narrow downs to whether the organization has actually built trust around it and whether people are willing to accept it (Wójcik, 2024, 2025).

7. CONCLUSION

This study indicates that human, ethical, and organizational factors drive the adoption of AI in recruitment rather than mere technological limitations.

The findings demonstrate that the following observations:

- AI is easily accepted for operational and administrative recruitment functions but is not embraced in high-stake contexts of strategic decision making.
- Trust, transparency, explainability, and fairness are central determinants of adoption
- Knowledge gaps and implementation challenges hinder organizational readiness
- Human oversight remains essential in recruitment decision-making

This study adds to the existing literature by putting forward a meta-interpretive approach that brings together trust, perceived capability, implementation effort, and decision-making behavior in AI-assisted recruitment.

The findings provide deeper understanding of an evolving human and AI relationship in talent acquisition which goes beyond traditional technology acceptance theories.

From a practical view-point, organizations must focus on:

- Explainable AI systems
- Ethical recruitment governance
- Recruiter training and AI literacy
- Human-centered implementation strategies

So it looks like the future of talent acquisition is heading toward collaborative intelligence, where AI supports human judgment and expertise rather than taking over from it.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The primary limitation of this study is that its exclusive reliance on secondary qualitative data and published literature. Since it is a meta-interpretive approach, the findings are only as good as the methodological quality, scope, and diversity of the studies that were reviewed.

There could be a possibility of publication bias, and interpretive subjectivity may influence the results despite efforts to maintain reflexivity and methodological rigor.

Future studies could look into the following:

- Empirical testing and validation of the proposed conceptual framework
- Cross-cultural comparisons of recruiter perceptions toward AI
- Industry-specific adoption patterns
- Longitudinal studies examining evolving trust in AI systems
- Whether making AI more explainable actually changes how willing recruiters are to trust it
- Comparative analysis between fully automated and hybrid recruitment systems

Future research may focus on how organizations can balance technological efficiency with ethical responsibility and human-centered decision-making in automated recruitment processes.

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