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Hired by an Algorithm

A qualitative study on candidates' perception of AI in
recruitment

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Abstract

This study investigates how candidates perceive and experience artificial intelligence-driven recruitment processes, and how these experiences shape their broader impressions of hiring organizations. Drawing on 11 semi-structured interviews with individuals from diverse professional backgrounds who had firsthand experience with AI-assisted recruitment, the research adopts a qualitative, abductive approach and analyzes the data through thematic analysis. Three interconnected findings emerged from the data: mistrust, dehumanization, and disengagement. Candidates frequently encountered opacity regarding how AI systems processed their data and influenced hiring decisions, generating skepticism toward both the technology and the organization deploying it. The loss of meaningful human interaction, combined with generic feedback and the unnatural demands of AI video interviews, left many candidates feeling unable to present their authentic selves. Which in turn prompted behaviors such as keyword optimization and algorithmic performance. These experiences ultimately led to varying degrees of disengagement, from emotional detachment to full withdrawal from the application process. The central contribution of this study implies that candidates do not evaluate AI-tools in isolation. Instead, they interpret an organization's use of AI as a signal of its underlying values, culture and integrity, using recruitment as a window into the company.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI Recruitment, Candidate Perceptions, Candidate Experience, Algorithmic Hiring, Algorithmic Transparency, Organizational Attractiveness

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1 Introduction

1.1 Explanation of the Research Topic

The current revolutionary widespread adoption of AI-tools and systems in companies' recruitment processes has given rise to noteworthy repercussions (Aparna & Kumar, 2025). As recruitment has become highly digitized over the years, the number of applications per job opening has risen exponentially, increasing competition amongst candidates, while setting high standards of application practices and skills for candidates (Arcidiacono, 2018; Flynn et al., 2026; Pinker & Tilson, 2013). In addition to this competition, candidates are now finding themselves having to understand, interact with, and make sense of different AI-based applications that companies are implementing (Flynn et al., 2026). AI systems are extensively used for active sourcing, CV screening, and interviewing, among others. The capabilities of these systems have naturally given rise to benefits as well as disadvantages (Agrawal, 2025; Nain & Shankar Shyam, 2024).

AI systems have proven to be transformational for companies and candidates. For companies, AI has significantly reduced the time and cost of certain activities carried out by human resource (HR) departments, decreasing the number of days required for hiring processes (Mary et al., 2025; Yadav et al., 2025). Additionally, AI has enhanced efficiency, reducing the workload through the automation of highly repetitive tasks (Tiwari et al., 2024). AI recruitment systems also offer speedy, real-time, and objective outcomes during all stages of recruitment, including the application, verification, and selection stage (Karthik et al., 2025). Similarly, candidates benefit from the speed of the feedback and responses from application processes, with many systems now being capable of providing some form of communication within 24 hours from the initial application time (Horodyski, 2023; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). Besides speed, some systems have become increasingly humanized, providing personal feedback and tailored interactions (L.K Grace et al., 2023).

Expanding on the effects of AI on candidates, it has become apparent that there are not only benefits but also disadvantages worthy of consideration and exploration. As job markets have become increasingly competitive, understanding the experiences, emotions, and perceptions that AI recruitment systems generate in candidates has become increasingly important for companies

to understand how to attract and retain comprehensive talent (Schick & Fischer, 2021). Current research also explores some of the implications of AI systems in recruitment, including the loss of human interaction and judgement, along with the lack of transparency in how the systems process data to produce certain judgements (Haque, 2025; Pandey & Arora, 2025). The extent to which the positive and negative implications influence the perceptions of candidates of AI is a current topic of debate.

Each accumulated experience of candidates forms the foundation of their perceptions towards AI tools in recruitment (Biesmans et al., 2026). Candidates who have experienced AI systems more frequently might have different perceptions than those who have not been exposed to them to the same degree. Similarly, the stage at which AI is implemented and the share of power it has over the decisions made also affects candidates' perception of the system and the recruitment process as a whole (Barattucci et al., 2025; Köchling et al., 2023). Nonetheless, what has been assumed is that candidates still hold a preference for some form of involvement of human judgement and skills in the recruitment process, as a safeguard against algorithmic biases or to enhance fairness (Gonzalez et al., 2022). Taking these considerations into account, it is apparent that research on this topic is nuanced and often contrasting, leaving room for further investigation into how and what types of perceptions are formed by candidates. It also highlights the need to explore both the positive and negative implications, and ultimately to consider potential solutions.

1.2 Background

To understand what AI-based recruitment processes imply, it is most of all important to understand what types of AI there are. AI encompasses technologies and tools that enable systems to carry out varying tasks with a certain degree of autonomy that would otherwise require human intelligence (Mohammad Rafee et al., 2023). AI technologies are based on algorithms, which are computational engines capable of data processing, pattern identification, and problem-solving (Urbach et al., 2026). Algorithms are trained on historical data sets in order to learn functions that can predict outcomes of newer, unseen data (Mohammad Rafee et al., 2023). This historical data may contain human biases that the algorithm can internalize (Roselli et al., 2019). Meaning that some AI tools may perpetuate certain types of human biases due to the data on which the algorithm has been trained, biases which can be difficult to remove entirely. Algorithms are also trained through interactions with simulated environments or even synthetic data that other algorithms generate (Cunningham & Delany, 2021). Throughout this thesis, words such as

automated system, AI systems, and AI tools will be used interchangeably to refer to any tools and systems used by companies.

In order to understand the types and purposes of AI tools currently implemented by companies, it is also necessary to understand what recruitment processes typically consist of. The first stage candidates undergo is a CV and cover letter screening, where a company, either manually or through an AI, scans the documents and selects candidates who fulfill certain requirements (Azzou & Talei, 2024). These requirements can include education, work experience, and languages spoken. Following this stage, companies adopt different routes. Some opt for personality or logistics tests, while others move straight to AI-based video interviews (L.K Grace et al., 2023; Hemaswathi S. et al., 2025; Suen & Hung, 2023). After this, companies either introduce further AI-based tests or interviews, or they invite candidates for live group or one-to-one interviews (Khedkar et al., 2025). It is important to note that companies run their recruitment processes differently and that the stages outlined above only provide a generalized overview of how hiring is structured today; they do not necessarily apply to every organization's recruitment processes.

1.3 Our Research Purpose

This study expands upon the developing body of literature on the implementation of AI in HRM. Specifically, it contributes to the growing research on candidates' experiences and perceptions of AI systems used in recruitment processes. Our research is based on interviews with individuals from diverse professional backgrounds and industries who have firsthand experience with recruitment processes that were either fully or partially supported by AI systems and tools. By identifying and analyzing the variety and dimensions of interviewees' responses, the study explores the underlying factors shaping candidates' perceptions of AI in recruitment, as well as the implications of these perceptions.

The findings of this paper identify current challenges in AI-based recruitment processes, especially the lack of transparency and loss of human interaction. These challenges are shown to significantly influence candidates' perceptions, which collectively act as a window into the hiring organization. A central contribution of this study relates to understanding how candidates interpret a company's adoption of AI systems and tools as a direct signal of its values and moral

alignment. We have found that candidates do not tend to solely evaluate AI technologies on their own, but rather that experiences around the implementation of these technologies also weigh their judgments of hiring companies.

1.4 Outline of the Paper

This paper is organized into six chapters. Following this introduction, which has contextualized the growing role of AI in recruitment and established the relevance of the research, Chapter Two presents a literature review organized around three thematic areas: the broader behavioral effects of AI on humans, the organizational drivers and types of AI tools in recruitment, and existing research on candidates' perceptions and emotional responses to AI-driven recruitment. Chapter Three explains the methodological decisions underpinning the study, including the research approach, design, data collection, and analysis process. The chapter ends with a discussion of the study's trustworthiness. Chapter Four presents the empirical findings, organized around three interconnected perceptions that emerged from the interviews: mistrust, loss of human interaction, and recruitment as a view into the company. Chapter Five discusses these findings in relation to existing literature, articulating the central contribution of the thesis: that candidates interpret AI-driven recruitment as a reflection of the hiring organization's culture and values. Chapter Six concludes the thesis by revising the research aims, re-stating the findings, and reflecting on the study's contribution to the growing body of literature on AI in HRM.

2 Literature Review

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly embedded in everyday life, researchers have begun to examine how AI systems affect not only what people do, but also how they think, feel, and make sense of the world around them (Abbass, 2019; Schuilenburg & Peeters, 2021). This chapter reviews the current literature on the psychological, emotional, and practical dimensions and implications of human-AI interactions, establishing a theoretical foundation for understanding how people respond to AI in decision-making contexts such as recruitment. The review is organized around three main parts. The first takes a broad perspective on AI's influence on people, exploring how AI shapes behavior and experiences more generally. The second section narrows the lens to AI in recruitment, examining why organizations adopt AI-driven tools, what types of AI are being used, and their systemic implications. The third and final section narrows the lens further by focusing on candidates' perceptions of and responses to AI throughout the

recruitment process.

2.1 How AI Influences Human Behavior

Recent research suggests that the growing integration of AI into everyday life carries important psychological and cultural implications. According to Ruckenstein (2023), the relationship between humans and technology has shifted from one of simple tool usage to a complex coevolution that profoundly shapes how individuals experience and interpret digital systems. Sharma (2024) argues that AI now mediates decisions across multiple domains of everyday life, positioning AI not only as a tool but as an influential social actor. Similarly, Williams and Lim (2024) demonstrate that AI has a measurable influence on people's psychological states, shaping how they feel, think, and behave in ways that extend way beyond the immediate task at hand. Roundtree (2024) demonstrates that while individuals are generally aware of AI technologies and may accept them in low-stakes or convenience-oriented contexts, concerns become significantly stronger when AI systems influence areas involving employment, privacy, or decision-making authority. The author also described how the resistance towards AI intensifies when it replaces rather than supports human judgement.

Emotional responses play a central role in shaping perceptions of AI. Research by Shank et al. (2019) identifies emotional reactions such as surprise, unease, disappointment, and pleasure in interactions with AI systems. Expanding on this, Ruckenstein (2023) argues that people rarely feel only one thing towards AI. She explains how AI is both praised and ostracized in everyday experiences, suggesting that tensions with algorithms cannot be fully erased. Irritation illustrates how both dominant and oppositional feelings are simultaneously present when people try to make sense of algorithmic relations (Ruckenstein, 2023). The author also notes the fact that people still continue to use platforms even when they distrust them, meaning that people learn to live with the ambivalence rather than actually trusting that the tensions have been resolved.

One dominant explanation for reactions to AI is the concept of algorithmic aversion. Studies by Williams and Lim (2024) and Jussupow et al. (2024) show that individuals often demonstrate a scepticism toward algorithmic decision-making processes, which is commonly linked to perceptions that algorithms cannot adequately account for human uniqueness or contextual sensitivity. Additionally, people tend to react strongly to algorithmic errors and frequently perceive AI systems as opaque or difficult to understand (Jones-Jang & Park, 2022; Jussupow et

al., 2024; Peters, 2023). At the same time, literature also identifies circumstances in which individuals display algorithmic appreciation rather than aversion. According to Williams and Lim (2024) and Jussupow et al. (2024), people may prefer algorithmic judgement when objectivity is considered especially important or when there is a fear of social bias and human judgement. In these situations, algorithms can be viewed as more impartial, consistent, and less emotionally influenced than human decision makers (Williams & Lim, 2024).

2.2 The Role of AI in Recruitment

While the previous section examined how AI can shape behavior and experiences in broad terms, these dynamics become especially interesting in high-stakes contexts where AI becomes a part of key decisions. One of these contexts is recruitment, where AI systems have become deeply embedded across multiple stages throughout the process.

2.2.1 The “Why” Behind Companies’ Implementation of AI in HRM

Companies have been increasingly integrating AI to streamline their recruitment processes. Time efficiency and cost-cutting are often mentioned to be amongst the paramount reasons behind AI usage. However, the extent to which and how such algorithms compare to human recruitment is a current topic of exploration. The implementation of AI systems has been shown to benefit organizations due to their ability to process large volumes of data relatively faster than humans doing it manually (Yadav et al., 2025). The authors describe how AI is revolutionizing HRM by reducing CV screening time by 75%, shortening the interview process from 12 to 5 days, and decreasing overall time-to-hire from 45 to 20 days. They also explore how AI tools have impacted candidate experience and satisfaction using a candidate feedback survey, which showed 83% of candidates reported that AI chatbots provided more accessible and faster communication, 70% perceived AI-driven tests as fair, as they focus on assessing skills without personal, human biases.

A systematic literature review by Will et al. (2023), which evaluates the effectiveness of AI in recruitment, suggests that AI can predict candidate performance more efficiently than human recruiters. The authors state that AI systems are often more effective at identifying and selecting higher-performing employees since they are trained on historical data associated with successful candidates. Additionally, Bergman et al. (2020) studied the effects of different algorithmic designs for the quality and diversity of candidate selection and found that AI models achieved a

hiring yield of up to 20% higher than human recruiters. The study also found that candidates selected by AI tend to perform better within the company and are more likely to be promoted compared to those selected by human recruiters. Overall, these studies suggest that the use of AI in recruitment can improve hiring quality for both hiring companies and candidates.

2.2.2 Existing Types of AI Tools & Systems

Literature shows companies using a combination of different AI systems in recruitment. According to Dutta & Naveen (2026), the literature distinguishes between two general types: discriminative vs generative AI. Discriminative AI is frequently used in recruitment to filter large volumes of applications by matching the candidate profiles to hiring criteria, simplifying decision-making while optimizing the screening and selection process (Dutta & Naveen, 2026). The authors further explain how organizations leverage generative AI to draft and review job descriptions, ensuring they are contextually relevant, gender-neutral, and free from bias. Unlike discriminative AI, generative AI is designed to create new content from scratch by using probabilistic functions (Dutta & Naveen, 2026).

Suen & Hung (2023) described AI being used in the interview stages of the recruitment. They specifically focused on one type of AI interview called Asynchronous Video Interviews. They explain how this type of AI video interview requires applicants to record themselves by answering prompted questions, without any human presence. The AI is trained to evaluate these interviews based on verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal cues, and data points that can create insights about the personality traits, communication skills, and cultural fit for the job (Suen & Hung, 2023).

Additionally, Rhea et al. (2022) note that organizations use algorithmic personality assessments to evaluate candidates, employing machine learning to extract personality profiles from resumes and LinkedIn profiles. In the article, Rhea et al. (2022) discuss two real-world AI candidate screening tools purchased by organizations, namely Humantic AI and Crystal, which compare candidate profiles to an "ideal candidate" benchmark. Both systems use two popular psychological frameworks, the DiSC model and the Big Five model, which help organizations quantitatively assess the personality traits of candidates (Rhea et al., 2022).

Langer and Landers (2021) identify two operational aspects of AI tools: augmented versus automated decision-making. Langer and Landers (2021), alongside Gonzalez et al. (2022),

demonstrate that augmented decision-making is used to enhance human decisions in evaluating information or formulating candidate recommendations, rather than replacing hiring professionals. In contrast, the automated systems imply recruiting processes that are entirely led by AI, where algorithms dictate decisions from the initial screening phase to candidate rejections (Langer & Landers, 2021). Expanding upon these concepts, the theory of bounded rationality supposes that humans can be overwhelmed by complexity when a large volume of information needs to be processed (Lee & Cha, 2023). Therefore, the authors argue that AI systems can complement humans by handling this data load more efficiently. Furthermore, Hina et al. (2025) support a collaborative approach between AI and humans as it can effectively mitigate negative aspects like opacity and lack of empathy.

Besides the efficiency of AI in recruitment processes, Davidson et al. (2026) also investigate the bias of AI in HRM. Since AI hiring systems can be trained to handle all phases from initial screening to generating employee recommendations, it is important to look at the potential consequences (Davidson et al., 2026). The authors build upon three different kinds of bias that could stem from AI HRM: bias in the training or source data, bias in the algorithm itself, and user bias. Firstly, the authors discuss that data bias appears when the algorithm is being trained on historical data to recognize certain demographics, gender, or race (Davidson et al., 2026). Secondly, algorithmic biases arise because developers may optimize the systems without ethical or fairness constraints (Davidson et al., 2026). For example, the systems can be designed to seek "proxy variables" like socioeconomic status, which can make candidates seem more attractive to the algorithm (Davidson et al., 2026). Lastly, the authors illustrate that user bias can occur if the hiring managers allow personal bias to interfere with the AI judgment, and hence, the final hiring decisions are no longer objective recommendations from the AI systems.

Another concept that is discussed by Ochmann et al. (2021) and Davidson et al. (2026) in the literature is the black box oracle phenomenon. Davidson et al. (2026) describe this phenomenon as the human tendency to reflexively accept the algorithmic outputs as irrefutable facts. This occurs because humans project the ideal of expertise and "ultimate decision-making authority" onto AI systems, leading to them accepting the results without questioning the underlying logic (Davidson et al., 2026). This creates a paradox, whereby organizations adopt AI recruitment tools to reduce subjective human bias, whilst these systems often discourage their users from critically assessing the recommendations from the assessments they provide (Davidson et al., 2026). This happens because the internal mechanisms behind these systems function as a black box where

data processing is opaque, leading recruiters to become more prone to trusting and prioritizing algorithmic rankings, despite lacking knowledge on how data was processed (Lacroux & Martin-Lacroux, 2022). This leads to what Davidson et al. (2026) call moral absolution, where recruitment professionals uncritically trust and rely on AI-generated decisions, failing to account for historical biases or distorted data patterns.

In addition, Laukkarinen (2025) addresses how biases are dealt with by consumers and users of AI tools. Laukkarinen (2025) describes "AI Crafting", which he refers to HR professionals' ability to shape and change their work practices in response to AI. This involves working with and around AI systems to align the automated outputs with the recruiter's own criteria and intellectual judgement (Laukkarinen, 2025). The author explained how AI systems tend to over-recommend highly active users, instead of featuring highly suitable candidates based on minor profile details. This is something HR professionals can bypass or work around by actively ignoring top-ranked individuals and searching for scarce profiles of suitable candidates (Laukkarinen, 2025). AI crafting ultimately relies on algorithmic awareness, and data literacy, both of which contribute to recruiters' technical abilities and their use of personalized search parameters and third-party sourcing tools (Laukkarinen, 2025).

2.3 Candidates' Feelings Towards AI in Recruitment

The perceived organizational benefits of AI in recruitment paint a compelling picture from the employer's perspective. Yet these same systems simultaneously shape the experiences of candidates navigating them, which raises important questions about fairness, transparency, and the human dimensions of recruitment.

2.3.1 Perceptions of AI-Driven Recruitment Processes

Candidates' perceptions of AI-based recruitment processes have become an increasingly researched topic in recent years, with the term "perception" often being used interchangeably to describe individuals' experiences, emotions, and reactions (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). The contributions of Gilliland's (1993) research, pioneered the development of studies on candidates' perception and experience of recruitment processes through a framework integrating organizational justice and fairness theories into recruitment. The framework distinguishes candidates' perceptions of fairness into procedural and distributive justice. Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the recruitment process, while distributive justice concerns the

perceived fairness of its outcomes (Gilliland, 1993). Together, these perceptions also take into account the implications of the process and its results for both the candidate and the hiring organization (Barattucci et al., 2025; Gilliland, 1993). Following Gilliland's contribution, two main types of perceptions began to be explored in research, one type focusing on fairness of the selection process and its influence on the candidate's organizational attractiveness, and the other on the candidate's perceptions on their own performance during different evaluation stages (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Research on the first type has become progressively developed through new frameworks and studies, which has shown and promoted the importance of developing positive experiences for candidates, to improve the hiring company's reputation and brand image, whilst also attracting top talent (Ferdowsi, 2025; McFarland et al., 2024; Miles & McCamey, 2018).

In recent years, the overall consensus in research, has been that maintaining ongoing communication and interaction with the candidate has become key determinant of a candidate's experience of the process, shaping the candidate's view of the company's reputation, image and values (Miles & McCamey, 2018; Barattucci et al., 2025). Biesmans et al. (2026) examined the factors that contribute to candidates' memorable recruitment experiences, developing a framework to explain this process. The framework describes how candidates transform recruitment experiences into memorable ones through evaluative sensemaking, in which they interpret "triggers" from social, structural, and physical/digital contextual factors encountered during the process. These include, for example, timely communication, personal and genuine interactions, and the functionality and usability of digital application systems (Biesmans et al., 2026). The author explains how the transformation of these factors activate candidates' perception of value (the acquisition of new skills or insights); of fairness (procedural, distributive, informational, and interpersonal), and finally, of person-environment fit (the extent to which candidates feel aligned with the organization). The study found that social and physical triggers tend to create more enduring and impactful memories than digital/structural factors, with candidates often interpreting these moments as signals of a company's level of transparency, respect and moral posture in recruitment (Biesmans et al., 2026; McCarthy et al., 2018; Miles & McCamey, 2018).

2.3.2 The Negative Impact of AI on Candidate Recruitment Experiences

Nowadays, with the already widespread adoption and usage of developing AI recruitment tools, more research has been conducted on its current and future consequences for not only organizations, but the candidates as well (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018; Koman et al., 2024;

Oliveira et al., 2025). Besides the potential benefits of AI in recruitment for companies, such as increased cost and time efficiency, a growing concern has surfaced regarding issues of fairness, transparency and human interaction in the recruitment process (Dadaboyev et al., 2025; Khmour et al., 2025; Oliveira et al., 2025). This is an important topic as it poses consequences back onto the organization. The current literature highlights how candidates' perceptions have a direct impact on their attractiveness towards the hiring organization (Bauer et al., 2001; Gilliland, 1993). For instance, the study by Bauer et al. (2001) concluded that a candidate's perception of the fairness of the hiring process positively relates to the extent to which they are attracted to the company. More specifically relating to AI, Köchling et al. (2022) study also points out that candidates' perception towards the hiring company's level of transparency of AI usage in the process influences their level of attractiveness towards the company.

The literature also identified concerns regarding the integration of AI into recruitment processes and its effects on the candidates. For example, Oliveira et al. (2025) highlight the impersonal nature of AI-driven processes, reducing the generation of nuanced judgement critical for assessments of soft skills. Another concern is candidate disengagement, which arises from an excessive automation of interactions between recruiter and candidate (Oliveira et al., 2025; Tursunbayeva et al., 2026). Additionally, the purporting of algorithmic biases and concerns for data privacy are also mentioned in connection to candidates' perception of fairness and transparency of the entire process. The findings of Horodyski (2023) study on candidate perceptions of AI in recruitment similarly highlight that candidates perceive current AI tools falling short on producing nuanced human judgment, lacking transparency, and leading to privacy issues, among others.

2.3.3 The Positive Impact of AI on Candidate Recruitment Experiences

Current research has also discovered positive candidate perceptions of AI in recruitment (Dadaboyev et al., 2025). Among these aspects is the rise of humanized AI technologies, which studies have found improve the user experience of candidates (Clavel et al., 2025; Dadaboyev et al., 2025). Another aspect is the ability of some developed AI systems to produce personalized feedback and provide updates during different stages of the recruitment process, reducing candidate uncertainty and anxiety (El-Ghoul et al., 2024; Dadaboyev et al., 2025). A third aspect is the efficiency and ease of use of AI systems, which also has shown to produce positive candidate experiences (Ferdowsi, 2025). Candidates can now receive feedback and results from their performance much faster, enabling their job search to become less time-consuming and

increasing their engagement in the process (Brandão et al. 2017; Horodyski, 2023; Pathak & Pandey, 2025). AI has also shown how some candidates perceive companies as novel and innovative as a result of their use of AI (Van Esch & Black, 2019; Kim & Heo, 2022; Tursunbayeva et al., 2026).

2.3.4 When the Stage of Recruitment Matters

Though current literature addresses both positive and negative perceptions; however, there is no single conclusion as to whether candidates experience only one type or the other. The perceptions currently addressed in the literature appear to be far more nuanced and contrasting than we previously assumed. Interestingly, one common conclusion shared by the majority of recent studies is that the different types of perceptions addressed in research are commonly determined by the stage of the recruitment process in which AI is used (Köchling et al., 2023). Due to the rapid digitization of recruitment and job information, the number of applicants per job vacancy has grown exponentially, leading to an increased use of AI recruitment tools, which have been proven to be more efficient than humans, particularly during the earliest stages of the recruitment process where CV screening can be done rapidly (Aryan et al., 2025; Oliveira et al., 2025; Pathak & Pandey, 2025; Van Esch & Black, 2019). Moreover, not only have these tools been proven to be more efficient, but candidates have shown more tolerance or preference towards their use in the earlier stages of recruitment (Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2026; Tarawneh & Alzghoul, 2026).

Furthermore, Köchling et al. (2023) explore how the use of AI at different stages of the recruitment process influences candidates' perceptions of organizational attractiveness. Their model explains how AI can trigger various responses, including affective evaluations, emotions, and attitudes. The study identified two primary mediators affecting organizational attractiveness: perceived opportunity to perform (affective evaluation) and emotional creepiness (negative emotional response). Findings indicated that candidates were most accepting of AI during the pre-selection stages, where they did not expect high levels of personal engagement from the hiring company. However, resistance grew when AI was utilized in phone or video interviews, leading to decreased organizational attractiveness. Candidates felt they had fewer opportunities to showcase their skills and experienced intensified emotional creepiness, such as anxiety and uncertainty (Köchling et al., 2023).

These insights fundamentally explain why much of the literature recommends a hybrid approach to implementing AI tools (El-Ghoul et al., 2024; Gonzalez et al., 2022; Kim & Heo, 2022;

Mozelius et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2025; Van Esch & Black, 2021). Current research also confirms that candidates prefer the influence of human recruiters in final hiring decisions (Giermindl et al., 2022; Pandey & Arora, 2025). For instance, Mirowska (2020) found that candidates were more inclined to participate in AI video interviews if they knew their responses would be reviewed by a human recruiter. Similarly, Lee (2018) emphasizes that final decisions are perceived as tasks requiring human skills for fair evaluation, which ultimately increases candidates' trust in the recruitment process. However, have these opinions changed? Do current candidates view AI systems differently?

2.3.5 Investigating Current Candidate Perspectives on AI Systems

The literature reviewed so far reveals significant inconclusiveness regarding candidates' perceptions of AI systems in recruitment. The rapid development of AI technologies continues to reshape recruitment environments (Kim, 2026). This presents substantial opportunities to expand research on candidates' perceptions, emotions, and reactions toward AI recruitment tools, along with their potential implications. Consequently, these issues form the central focus of this thesis, which aims to explore the following research question:

How do candidates perceive and experience AI recruitment processes, and what are the consequences of these perceptions?

3 Methodology

3.1 Research approach

We chose an abductive research approach for this study. Unlike a purely deductive approach, which tests pre-existing hypotheses, or an inductive approach, which builds theory from scratch, an abductive approach moves iteratively between empirical observations and existing theoretical concepts (Bell et al. 2019). This process, described by Bell et al. (2019) as dialectical shuttling, allowed us to revisit and refine our interpretations throughout the research process rather than anchoring ourselves in a fixed analytical direction. We considered this approach suitable since the study did not begin

with testing a hypothesis, nor did it intend to generate a new theory from the ground up. Instead, we aimed to interpret participants' experiences of AI in recruitment while continuously positioning these interpretations in relation to existing literature. Dubois and Gadde (2002) describe this kind of systematic combining as especially useful in exploratory research, where the boundaries between theory and empirical material are deliberately kept fluid. This flexibility allowed us to remain open to unexpected insights while still grounding our findings in established theoretical perspectives, providing a deeper understanding of the research area.

3.2 Research design

Given that the use of AI in recruitment is a relatively new and evolving research area, existing literature remains limited, creating a need for deeper interpretative insight into how individuals understand and interact with the phenomenon. This led us to adopt a qualitative, exploratory research design guided by interpretivism. Within the interpretivist framework, the goal is not to produce universal generalizations but to understand how individuals make sense of their social reality through their own experiences and perspectives (Bell et al. 2019). This was central to our study, as we were interested in how candidates subjectively experienced and interpreted AI-driven recruitment processes. A qualitative design also aligns naturally with the abductive approach described above. As Bell et al. (2019) note, qualitative research allows findings, themes, and insights to emerge from the empirical material rather than influencing them in advance. We considered a quantitative design unsuitable since we did not aim to test a predefined hypothesis or measure statistical relationships between variables. Instead, we aimed to explore and interpret participants' experiences and perceptions in depth, which required flexibility, contextual understanding, and detailed qualitative data rather than standardized numerical measurements.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Participant selection

We selected participants for the study based on a purposive sampling method, which involves strategically identifying individuals who are relevant to the research question and capable of contributing valuable insight (Bell et al., 2019). Our primary selection criteria were that participants had experienced at least one recruitment process involving AI-driven tools or technologies. In addition, we drew on snowball sampling for some participants, where interviewees referred us to others in their networks who met the selection criteria.

Initially, we attempted to recruit a few participants through LinkedIn by identifying individuals who were recently recruited by a company known to use AI in their recruitment. However, due to a lack of response through this approach, we decided to select participants from our networks, provided they fulfilled the previously stated selection criteria. We acknowledge that this is a possible limitation of our sampling strategy since recruitment through personal networks introduces the risk of convenience bias and may have shaped the composition of the sample in ways that are difficult to fully account for. Nevertheless, we would argue that this sampling strategy remains defensible given the nature and purpose of the study. Purposive sampling is not designed to produce a statistically representative sample; it's designed to ensure that participants can provide meaningful insight to the research question (Bell et al. 2019). All 11 participants had direct, first-hand experience of AI-driven recruitment, some even had multiple extensive experiences, providing greater nuance to our study. In exploratory qualitative research, the analytical value of a sample derives from the richness and depth of participants' experiences rather than from demographic representativeness (Patton, 2002). From this perspective, the important question is not whether the sample mirrors the whole population of job-seekers, but whether it contains sufficient variation and experiential depth to generate insight into the research area. We would argue that it does. The sample spans a meaningful range of ages, occupational backgrounds, and employment situations, and the interviews produced substantive, varied experiences that allowed patterns and

differences to emerge across the data. Convenience bias is therefore a limitation to acknowledge and be transparent about, as we have, rather than a flaw that undermines the study's contribution.

3.3.2 Participant overview

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation
David	50	Male	Unemployed (previously a Senior IT professional)
Elena	32	Female	Digital marketing and events specialist (has a job)
Olivia	22	Female	Marketing student (does not have a job offer)
Hannah	25	Female	Unemployed (has a Master's degree in business)
Lucas	24	Male	Corporate intern
Sofia	26	Female	Business Bachelor's student (does not have a job offer)
Victoria	23	Female	Business Bachelor's student (does not have a job offer)
Julia	22	Female	SAP Treasury Business Analyst & Bachelor's student
Emma	24	Female	Illustrator/game designer
Jonas	25	Male	Buying and Merchandising Intern
Laura	22	Female	Finance master's student (has a job offer)

3.3.3 Data collection

We chose semi-structured interviews as the data collection method for this study. According to Bell et al. (2023), semi-structured interviews offer a balance between flexibility and focus, and are often used for qualitative studies. While the prepared set of themes guided the conversation, the format allowed for follow-up questions, probing, and enabled the interviewees to elaborate on their own perceptions. We thought this was particularly valuable for an emerging research topic like ours, where unexpected insights may surface, which a more rigid method would fail to capture. Unlike structured

interviews or surveys, semi-structured interviews generate rich, in-depth data that capture the nuances of how individuals think and feel about a topic (Bell et al. 2023), which aligns with the qualitative nature of our study.

Before beginning the data collection, we conducted three pilot interviews to test the interview guide and practice our questioning and probing techniques. As a result of the pilots, we revised several questions that had generated unclear or overly brief responses, and we adjusted the order of the themes to allow the conversation to flow more naturally. The pilot interviews were therefore a meaningful step in refining the interview guide rather than a formality.

The interviews were conducted via video call using Microsoft Teams, which allowed participants to take part regardless of geographical location while still enabling a personal and conversational dynamic. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was both recorded and transcribed through Teams. In order to create the right atmosphere for the participants, we started each interview with an introduction of our research topic and the themes covered in the interview. We also made sure that the participants were aware that all their answers would be anonymous and that they were allowed to end the interview at any time without explanation. After each interview, each transcript was anonymized before being uploaded to Taguette for coding.

3.4 Data analysis

The transcripts were analyzed abductively using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, which provided a structured yet flexible approach to identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns across the data. Given our abductive research approach, we applied the framework reflexively rather than mechanically, using it as a guide while remaining open to the interplay between emerging patterns and existing theoretical concepts. The first phase involved familiarizing ourselves with the data. This began during the transcription, as the process of anonymizing and ensuring the transcription was done correctly required close repeated engagement with the material. We followed this with thorough readings of each transcript and noting initial impressions

and ideas before any formal coding began. In the second phase, we generated initial codes. Working through the transcripts, we assigned codes to segments that appeared meaningful in relation to the research topic. At this stage, codes were applied inductively, staying close to the language and framing used by the participants themselves. The third phase involved searching for themes. We gathered related codes and began grouping them into potential themes, using mind maps to visualize connections, tensions, and overlaps across the codes. This was also the phase where the abductive element of our approach became more prominent. We moved back and forth between the emerging themes and existing literature, asking whether the patterns were adding to, creating nuance, or taking a different stance than existing literature. In the fourth phase, we reviewed and refined the themes using the following questions as guides:

- Is the theme relevant?
- Is it a theme or a sub-theme?
- Is it connected to anything else?
- Does it provide any nuance to existing literature?

Initially, we identified 14 themes, which we combined or removed, based on existing literature, to create our final three main findings: mistrust, the loss of human interaction, and recruitment as a window into the company. The fifth phase involved defining and naming the themes. For each of the three findings, we developed a clear structure of what the theme captured and what distinguishes it from the others. We then moved on to the sixth phase, which was producing the analysis. Each finding was formulated and explained using direct quotes from the interviews, allowing interviewees' own words to illustrate the interpretations we had developed. A seventh and final step was also added to make sure that the analysis accurately and effectively reflected the findings, but also the arguments made in the discussion. In this stage, we ensured to move things around, add more detail to certain parts of the data, and reduce some details while still aligning with the findings, to ease the reader's understanding.

3.5 Trustworthiness

To evaluate the quality of this study, we draw on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for trustworthiness in qualitative research, which proposes four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (based on the reformulation in Bell et al. 2019).

Credibility refers to how accurately the findings represent the participants' perspectives. We aimed to strengthen the credibility in several ways. The abductive approach ensured that our interpretations were continuously tested against both the empirical data and existing literature, reducing the risk of the findings becoming our own preconceptions. The multi-phased coding process, combined with an ongoing analysis and discussion within the team where we actively challenged each other's interpretations, further supported this.

Transferability refers to the degree to which findings can be applied to other contexts. It is not something that can be guaranteed for all qualitative research, and we do not claim that our findings generalize to all job seekers. However, we have provided sufficient descriptions of the participants, research context, and analytical process to allow readers to assess the relevance of our findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As noted in the section about participant selection, the sample's demographic profile means that transferability to older candidates or those in non-business fields may be limited.

Dependability, which refers to the stability and consistency of the research process, was supported by the structured six-phase analysis and the use of a shared interview guide across all 11 interviews. The pilot interviews also contributed here, as they allowed us to refine the guide before the data collection began.

Confirmability refers to the extent to which findings reflect the data rather than the researcher's bias, and we addressed this through transparency about our own methodological choices and our own positions in relation to the topic. While complete objectivity is neither possible nor the goal within an interpretivist framework, we aimed

to make our analytical reasoning visible through this chapter and to acknowledge where our perspectives may have influenced the research process.

3.6 Definition of Key Terms

Throughout the thesis, a distinction is made between two terms that are related but carry different meanings in the context of this study. The term "interviewees" refers specifically to the 11 individuals who took part in this study. The term "candidates", on the other hand, is used to refer to job applicants more broadly, including both the interviewees themselves and the wider population.

3.6.1 Abbreviations

AI - Artificial intelligence

HR - Human Resource

HRM - Human Resource Management

4 Analysis

In this chapter, we aim to present the empirical findings originating from the 11 semi-structured interviews conducted with individuals who have experienced Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven recruitment processes. The gathered perceptions and attitudes towards the hiring processes and organizations represent the psychological impact that such automated systems exert on candidates. This analysis explores the relational and emotional aspects of navigating them, while three distinct and sequential findings surfaced from the interviews: mistrust, loss of human interaction, and recruitment as a window into the company.

4.1 Mistrust

4.1.1 Understanding the role of AI

Many interviewees expressed concerns and an overall lack of understanding of how their

personal data is collected, handled, and/or stored. One pattern that emerged was that the interviewees often had a strong feeling that AI was being used by companies in recruitment, despite it never being explicitly mentioned beforehand. Some of them got their hunch confirmed during or after a recruitment process, while the feeling just remained a hunch for others. Therefore, they rarely had the opportunity to give their consent to the use of AI. As one participant argued:

"I do not think that anyone will be reading the fine print of what our company is doing with it [the AI]. And if you do read the fine print, all it will say is you agree that the company can use your video and your answer for whatever use they want. That is not clear on how they're using my video. Are they showing this video to HR training? Are they showing this video to an employee that has to decide whether I'm being invited for the next stage or not? Or is this just being uploaded to AI and the AI is putting us in the bin or not. That is not clear at all." (Laura, Finance Master's Student)

The limited understanding of the extent to which, how, and when AI is being used was something we found across multiple interviews. For example, some suspected it was used to filter CVs based on certain keywords or to do a pattern-matching of the candidate profile and the job description. Consequently, the perceived lack of transparency left the applicants questioning the factors driving the recruitment process and how they affect the hiring decisions. It is also worth mentioning that they could not determine the extent to which human recruiters rely on AI systems for efficiency, or if they fully trust automated recruitment. Without clear disclosure from hiring professionals on the handling of personal and sensitive information, the applicants started manifesting a sense of mistrust towards the hiring organizations due to the algorithmic involvement.

4.1.2 When Efficiency Comes at a Cost

The perceived lack of transparency also drove the interviewees to question the reasons behind the AI adoption in recruitment. Several of them showed an understanding that it is

adopted for organizational efficiency, since recruiting is "time-consuming and expensive", as Hannah noted. Lucas argued that prioritizing efficiency can be counterproductive for the organization as a whole, explaining that while companies save time and money, they risk hiring candidates who lack the necessary social skills or cultural fit. Interestingly, Sofia stated that "no one benefits in the long run," while Elena said that automated screening offers applicants a "fair chance," since every CV is at least scanned, whereas human recruiters may lack the time to go through them all. Furthermore, as candidates invest time and emotional effort into the recruitment process, only to be met with minimal organizational effort in return, many expressed a feeling of mistrust towards the organizations. Consequently, this feeling did not seem to stem from the AI adoption in recruiting but rather from the perception that companies misuse AI to prioritize cost-cutting instead of human connections. When organizations interchange an appreciation for the applicants with algorithmic efficiency, it signals to the applicants that recruitment is rather transactional, where they are treated as quantifiable metrics rather than valued individuals.

Furthermore, the dependency on automated AI tools also prompted interviewees to question the companies' reasons for using AI tools to navigate large volumes of applicants. We noticed that many of them critically challenged the assumption that AI systems need to be used for corporate efficiency. One interviewee described:

"I don't believe the argument that they're looking for the best candidate and because there's so many people, they have to employ AI to do that [...] you don't need a pool of thousands of people to find the best person. In that case, there's a big problem [...] you just need a better recruitment process." (Olivia, Marketing Student)

To conclude this section, we found multiple interesting findings that all relate to candidates not feeling like they can trust the hiring organization. The most interesting was that the mistrust in AI recruitment stemmed less from the technology itself and more from the lack of transparency and the perceived organizational misuse. When

interviewees must guess whether an algorithm decides their fate, resort to keyword manipulation to be seen, and question whether they are genuinely valued, the recruitment process risks becoming a transactional exercise that undermines both candidate dignity and organizational integrity.

4.2 The Loss of Human Interaction

4.2.1 When Feedback Alone Is Not Enough

Another interesting and recurring finding of our interviews related to the loss of human interaction. Across interviews, many shared experiences and discussed how they felt that AI tools used in recruitment processes reduced the level of communication between themselves and the recruiting managers. They described how this made the process feel impersonal by reducing the human interactions. One particular concern that was repeatedly raised by the interviewees was related to the feedback and responses they received during the different recruitment stages. Once the interviewees had applied to a given job and gone through one or more stages of the recruitment process, it was widely expressed that the feedback and response they were given when they didn't advance in the process, was rather vague and unpersonalized. As described by Julia:

"Most [recruiters] after you apply, don't even contact you back to say 'hey, we've rejected your application', some do just give you an 'oh, we've decided to go with someone else', which is very brief and has nothing specific about you and your behavior and what you did wrong or right." (Julia, SAP Treasury Business Analyst & Bachelor's student)

This sentiment was widely expressed in the interviews. Their need for, and interest in knowing how proficient they were at writing their CV, cover letter or even responding in an interview, stemmed from their genuine desire to know how to improve their application skills. However, the perceived genericness of the feedback seems to have become an inhibiting factor of such improvements, which Lucas explained well by

stating:

“Feedback is the only valuable thing that you can get from any application, otherwise, how do you know what you can improve? What can you do better? Every other AI generated or automatic reply is just extremely generic.” (Lucas, Corporate intern)

Generic AI-generated feedback, naturally, does not contain the degree of personalization that only human interactiveness can offer, which appeared to be a source of frustration for the interviewees. David contrasted his feelings towards AI-generated feedback versus human-based feedback by describing how a recruiter personally called them to explain why they weren't selected for a position. He noted that he felt "...a very, very strong sense of respect for the company's side because it was a human that called [him] and put energy into it", adding that he was now looking for jobs at the same company. The human contact and interaction given by recruiters seems to provide more value for the interviewees while also increasing their attraction towards and desirability to work for the company itself, which brings mutual benefits to both sides of the recruitment process. Therefore, feedback that lacks this human quality left many interviewees feeling, besides frustrated and confused, quite invisible as well. Considering also that it is nowadays highly common for candidates to apply to hundreds of jobs, when going through such tedious processes time and time again, receiving AI-generated feedback and responses can significantly exacerbate this feeling of being unseen and overlooked by hiring companies. As pointedly put by Sofia:

“Sometimes I feel like ‘oh, I'm just one in a million’. If [the recruiting managers] could not give me much time I'm usually quite understanding, but after so many applications [I am] quite tired of it...most of them have given me a basic reply.” (Sofia, Business Bachelor's student)

Feelings of being 'one amongst many', of being unseen or even overlooked, were continuously brought up in the interviews, revealing a significant level of dissatisfaction

with the quality of feedback received from recruitment processes involving AI, removing the different human aspects of personal interaction between recruiters and candidates.

4.2.2 AI Tools Can Only Do So Much

In addition to the unpersonalized or entirely absent feedback from recruiters, the limitations of the AI technology itself also seemed to influence interviewees' perceptions. Participants, predominantly brought up that in their view, specific AI tools, especially interviewing tools, are not fully capable of assessing a candidate's technical and interpersonal skills. Many interviewees described feeling unable to present themselves fully and wholly through screening, assessing, and interviewing stages where AI was involved. For instance, Julia pointed out that:

“An AI is simply a tool, and I feel like besides the characteristics that you display in your resume, a lot of things matter, things that an AI is not going to pick up because it just can't.” (Julia, SAP Treasury Business Analyst & Bachelor's)

Hannah developed this take by adding:

“...for some of the positions that I have applied to and that AI assessed me... I did not have maybe some of the critical skills for it, but ...I did compensate for other skills that were not highlighted by [the AI tool]” (Hannah, Business Master's student)

These “additional skills” which many participants mentioned AI could not adequately detect, included, for example, one's mannerisms, tone, adaptability, confidence, emotional intelligence, social presence, listening skills, etc. According to the interviewees, these signals conveyed through human interaction were deemed to be of equal, if not greater importance, when it came to candidates' presenting their true selves to recruiters. Therefore, some candidates who possess fewer technical qualifications may compensate through strong interpersonal skills and since participants described feeling like AI could

not pick up on both types of skills, some candidates could be overlooked and go unnoticed by the algorithm. As one participant points out:

"If a human were to look at my CV or a cover letter, would they be able to understand or see or value something that an AI wouldn't be able to? I think a good example of that might be, if you're active within a big student organization, for those that know, it is a pretty big deal. It has a lot of responsibility and a lot of learning and all that, but an AI might have zero idea of what it is, [...] and might not value that as highly as a human. Or vice versa, someone might, in their CV, say I was an investment analyst at XYZ firm and AI might value that very highly, but a human might realise, that this firm is like 2 people" (Lucas, Corporate intern)

Consequently, participants' preestablished vision of AI tools being unable to capture all of these signals influenced their view of the recruitment process as a whole. For example, many interviewees expressed how the use of AI tools made them experience the process as unfair. David explained that it was because:

"...you have no chance as an individual against the machine itself. It also depends on how they build the structure of AI, you can adjust it by yourself quite a lot according to your needs or wishes. So it feels a little bit unfair." (David, Senior IT professional)

David has an above-average level of technical knowledge of AI, and shared his concern for how companies might also be programming AI tools according to their own ideal criteria, which may be too strict or unrealistic for the job positions they want to conduct hirings for. This suggests that some candidates may be favored during CV screening for appearing to have the right qualifications on paper, while potentially missing equally important skills that set them apart from other applicants. Overall, this concern illustrates participants' perception that success in the AI-based recruitment process depends more on compatibility with the AI system rather than on a candidate's full potential.

More specifically, when describing their individual experiences with AI interviewing tools in particular, the interviewees commonly used the word “unnatural”. The word “unnatural” was commonly ascribed to the feeling of going through such interviews. This stemmed from candidates having to change their natural way of talking in order to stick to the time limit, whilst including as much information as possible to properly answer the questions. As explained by Olivia:

“...I felt like I had to plan in advance what I was going to say...you start to overthink what you're saying and then you overthink how you're saying it and then you just rerecord...in the end it feels so fake and not real, because you've pretty much just practiced the script and you're saying it again and again until you're happy with how you look, how you're saying it, like in what tone you're saying it.” (Olivia, Marketing student)

On the other hand, some of them did recognize the positive sides of AI video interviews. Laura, for example, explained:

“with the in-person interview, I was much more nervous because you can't retake it...you are speaking to the person in real time...you might feel a bit more pressure to say the right thing.” (Laura, Finance Master's student)

However, Laura did note that when having the chance to re-record yourself “you completely overthink your answer because you're trying to tailor your answer to the question instead of tailoring your answer to who you are”. Overthinking, insecurity and pressure appeared to be common experiences of interviewees when going through AI video interviews. It appeared that, when given the opportunity to give a rehearsed, polished presentation of themselves, it accustomed them to the unnatural habit of explaining their answer multiple times in different ways until they were satisfied with it.

As so relevantly pointed out by Olivia:

“If you go to a real job interview, you don't say something and then say it again and again and again to make it sound right. In the end it feels so fake...because you've pretty much just practiced the script...saying it again and again until you're happy with how you look, how you're saying it, ...in what tone you're saying it.” (Olivia, Marketing student)

The ability to repeat and re-record themselves removed the authenticity and spontaneity of their answers, which would have shown a human recruiter how they rationalize and communicate their thoughts on the spot. Therefore, it appeared AI interviewing tools encouraged the performative, unauthentic version of the interviewees to be presented in the application process, essentially a performance for a machine. This appeared to be a contributing aspect towards the distortion and loss of human interaction.

4.2.3 When Devaluation Becomes The Consequence

Besides the unnatural and performative aspects of AI assessments, interviewees also discussed feeling devalued along the process. Interestingly, this feeling appeared to directly affect their perception of the hiring company itself. One specific view interviewees expressed was that the company's usage of AI in recruitment signaled that the company did not care for the process overall, much less the candidates involved. Olivia explained this:

*“[companies] see recruitment as a hassle, they want to just get it over and done with which makes me think that they may be recruiting the wrong people.”*adding *“[It] makes me feel a bit like they don't really care, like you're not appreciated.” (Olivia, Marketing student)*

This sentiment was easily identifiable across interviews. Putting ourselves in the interviews' shoes, we understood that knowing you are one candidate amongst a hundred others, who are getting screened by AI tools, doesn't necessarily give you the biggest

confidence about advancing in the process. This further impacts your sense of value, and ultimately your perception of companies who are actively choosing, whether directly or indirectly, to make candidates feel uncared for and overlooked in the recruitment process by using AI to assess you. In the interviews, we sensed that the interviewees put into question the underlying values of the company, its level of care toward the recruitment process, and, as discussed earlier, even the type and quality of employees working within the organisation. These perceptions seemed to shape the image candidates formed of the environment, its people and the kind treatment they might expect to receive if they ultimately were given the opportunity to work for the hiring company.

4.2.4 AI Against AI

Complementary to this topic of loss of human interaction, a common idea that became apparent in the interviews was one about the use of “AI against AI”. Participants detailed that, in an attempt to get through to further recruitment stages involving AI, they in turn used AI tools to adapt their CV and complete AI-based tests. Some presented this habit as an act of defiance or retaliation against the AI systems employed by companies, David, for example, said: “..we also use AI against AI, it's payback.” However, considering that interviewees described having limited access to human-based, personalized feedback, AI tools appeared to come in handy to lessen the confusion and frustration the interviewees described feeling towards improving their job application skills. As noted by Hannah:

“...it's ironic and quite silly that you're using AI to assess me and then I am using AI to write my CV and my cover letter. Because at the end of the day, what part of any of it is actually then authentic? ... I'm of course using AI because it's a very good tool, if you know how to use it, that is.”
(Hannah, Business Master's student)

According to our interpretation, interviewees' use of AI might have appeared opportunistic or questionable, however, it largely reflected an attempt to gain advantages from the technology in the same way companies do. Interviewees explained that AI helped with spelling errors, identifying relevant keywords, and improving the layout of

CVs, etc. Considering the large number of applications some participants reported submitting, AI was also experienced to significantly reduce the required application time. For example, David explained that tailoring a CV and cover letter could take less than 60 seconds with AI assistance. From the interviews, it appeared that the use of AI by both candidates and companies has become widespread, contributing to the loss of humanization of the recruitment process to varying extents, as human interaction automatically becomes partially or sometimes fully replaced by AI technology. Nonetheless, candidates' use of AI against AI, appeared to be a way of enjoying benefits such as efficiency and speed that the technology provides, making the selection process perhaps more tolerable and worthwhile. These benefits also appear to help candidates to adapt to the increasingly competitive job market, whereby some understanding of the algorithm behind AI recruitment tools is required for one to have a minimum chance at standing out.

4.3 Recruitment as a window into the company

Another interesting finding was one that many interviewees described as the endpoint of a long emotional journey. Having navigated feelings of mistrust and loss of human interaction, many of them expressed how they disengaged from the recruitment process in different ways. What we found most interesting was that the negative perceptions did not stem solely from the AI system itself, but also from what interviewees inferred about a company's use of AI. Many of them described how the recruitment process functioned as a window into the company's culture and values, and that it often portrayed the company negatively. Several participants described AI-heavy recruitment as "a signal of laziness" or a "lack of interest on the company's part". Sofia explained that:

" [...] it shows a lot of laziness. Then I will think negatively about that company. I'd be like: 'okay, that's not a company I want to work with. That's not a company ethos I want to be associated with.' I probably would rather work for a company that's maybe outdated that doesn't use AI, but they are very hard working and they are authentically themselves and they want to put out the best work that they can without any AI help."

(Sofia, Business Bachelor's student)

Another interviewee added:

"I think that, like, knowing that companies are using AI to, like, sift through candidates is very discouraging, because that makes it feel as if they don't have the care to use a human." (Lucas, Corporate intern)

We found this interpretation very significant. The interviewees were not only frustrated with the inconvenience of AI, as mentioned in the previous parts of the analysis, but they were also actively reconstructing their image of the organization based on how the company chose to conduct the recruitment process.

This negative perception was further strengthened when recruitment behavior contradicted company branding. Olivia described how many companies present themselves as people-oriented in their branding, yet "they then have an AI recruitment", a contradiction that "gives me a bad impression of the company." In other words, the recruitment process itself became a broken promise, which connects directly to our finding of mistrust explored earlier in the analysis. As explained, interviewees already had doubts about whether AI could accurately identify the best candidate, and the misalignment between what companies appeared to prioritize and what interviewees believed actually mattered, further decreased the confidence in the company. Some interviewees went so far as to remove themselves from processes entirely on these grounds. In one notable instance described by a participant, a candidate chose to decline an interview opportunity, one that had been difficult to get, solely because it involved AI, as they felt this "reflected on the company." David also explained, "when I see that they require a video I just renounce, I don't apply [...] and I know people who do the same", based on the assumption that only an AI will review it, advancing in the process becomes a worthless and time consuming pursuit for the candidate.

However, some interviewees described how they continued to apply despite a negative

perception of the company, although not out of enthusiasm, but out of necessity. Laura acknowledged, "...I really don't have that much of an option." Hannah similarly described, "I'm still gonna do it because I have to try. But my chances are going to be so much lower [with AI]." Victoria also explained the emotional aspect where, "you must be able to earn money and stuff, but it just makes me hopeless and kind of sad." A distinction we think matters since it describes disengagement as a spectrum of reduced investment, ranging from emotional detachment all the way to full withdrawal from the the application process.

5 Discussion

Based on the literature review and our three findings from the analysis: mistrust, lack of human interaction, and recruitment as a window into the company, we found a consistent and somewhat unexpected pattern. While existing literature has largely examined candidates' perceptions of AI in recruitment through the lens of fairness, efficiency, and process satisfaction (Gilliland, 1993; Horodyski, 2023; Oliveira, 2025), it has rarely addressed how the use of AI in recruitment affects the way candidates perceive the company itself, a central tension that emerged from our empirical material. The interviewees were not simply forming opinions about the recruitment process itself: how fair it felt, how efficient it was, or how satisfied they were with the outcome. They were using it to form opinions about the company behind it, interpreting the way a company chose to recruit as a signal of its values, its culture, and the degree to which they genuinely care about the people it hires. This leads into the main contribution of our thesis: that candidates interpret AI-driven recruitment as a reflection of the company behind it.

In the discussion that follows, we identified three perceptions through which candidates evaluate a company. First, candidates perceived a fundamental imbalance in effort, where their own emotional and practical investment clashed with the diminishing human engagement following the organization's decision to automate the recruitment process. Second, candidates found that AI systems gradually constrain genuine self-presentation,

leading to a loss of authentic human interactions. Third, and perhaps most consequential, candidates encountered opacity that directed their mistrust not to the AI technology itself but towards how the organization was using it.

5.1 The Perceived Effort Imbalance Between Hiring Organizations and Applicants

As Will et al. (2023) suggest, companies increasingly turn to AI-based recruitment tools to manage large volumes of applications more efficiently. Instead of viewing this increasingly common practice among companies as necessary, our analysis indicates that candidates perceive this as an effort imbalance between them and the hiring organizations. While organizations gain from the efficiency and cost reduction-related benefits of AI tools, candidates are left to deal with the mental toll and meticulous tailoring that AI-based application processes require of candidates (Gonzalez et al., 2022). This explains why we found that most candidates perceive AI recruitment tools as beneficial solely for companies. This perceived imbalance in the effort and benefits between both companies and applicants seemingly affected candidates' experience of the fairness of the whole recruitment process. This is because, contrary to the companies, they do not have the choice to either interact or not with these AI systems, and are left to figure out how to even pass the first CV screening stage, which, based on research and our analysis, appears to be the most automated out of all stages.

Central to this perceived effort imbalance is the way AI-driven processes constrain authentic self-presentation. According to Gilliland's (1993) Organizational Justice Theory, procedural fairness relies on allowing the applicants to perform and participate in two-way communication, conditions that automated screening tools may largely impede. Similarly, the Capability-Personalization framework explains that candidates enter the recruitment process with a strong need for personalized human interaction to accurately express themselves (Luo et al., 2025). When met with an automated, rigid, and an impersonal environment, this need becomes unmet, deepening the psychological sense and perception of effort imbalance. Yuan et al. (2025) outline the concept of Algorithmic

Reductionism, which is also relevant here. The qualitative dimensions of a candidate's profile are reduced to rigid, quantifiable metrics, reinforcing candidates' unease that their interpersonal complexity is not being adequately captured. This introduces a nuanced layer to the discussion, that consequential decisions, like hiring decisions, are therefore being made unfairly and based on incomplete information.

This perceived imbalance does not remain confined to the recruitment process itself, it consequently also shapes how candidates view the hiring organization as a whole. According to HR Attribution Theory, candidates react strongly to the reasons behind an organization's HR practices (Nishii et al., 2008). When candidates invest significant time, effort, and emotion into applying only to be filtered-through AI-automated systems, they are inclined to attribute AI adoption to organizational laziness or a lack of genuine care rather than mere operational necessity. Consequently, this negative attribution leaves the candidates feeling unappreciated in the recruitment process, leading them to assume they will experience the same lack of appreciation and care even as future employees within the organization (Yuan et al., 2025). As outlined by Nishii et al. (2008), as organizations minimize their hiring efforts, it may only result in destroying candidate trust and diminishing their own employer image.

Finally, companies' efficiency-driven logic, reflects on their broader rationalization of the recruitment process. Drawing on Weber's Rationalization Theory, Bredén and Söderlind (2025), as well as Mökander and Schroeder (2024), argue that the human dimensions of recruitment are progressively displaced by corporate motivations for efficiency, calculability, and predictability. While AI systems can make the initial assessment of applications faster and cheaper, they come at the direct cost of meaningful human connection and interaction. As Bredén and Söderlind (2025) further note, social relationships become colder and less personal, a dynamic that Weber described as the "disenchantment of the world". In the context of recruitment, when candidates are denied the opportunity to genuinely connect with organizations, this deprioritization of human interactions ultimately diminishes organizational attractiveness. Because the organizations' efforts do not seem to mirror those of the candidates', and they are left

with a transactional experience that discourages emotional investments, which eventually manifests as disengagement.

5.2 Performing for the algorithm and the loss of authenticity

Existing research has documented how AI-driven recruitment tools alter the way candidates are able to present themselves. Köchling (2023), Wehner & Warkocz (2023), and Suen & Hung (2023) find that pre-recorded video interviews in particular produce an unnatural encounter, one that is stripped of the social presence, eye-contact, and real-time reciprocity that characterize human interaction, and that this compromises candidates' perceived opportunity to perform effectively. Gilliland's (1993) Procedural Justice Framework similarly suggests that when candidates cannot identify or meaningfully influence the criteria by which they are being evaluated, the process is experienced as unfair. Williams and Lim (2024) and Jussupow et al. (2024) further show that algorithmic aversion tends to increase when candidates feel that the system fails to account for their individuality or contextual complexity. Taken together, the literature establishes that AI recruitment tools create constraining conditions for candidates, while less attention has been given to how candidates behaviorally respond to these conditions, and what it means for the authenticity of the candidate.

Our findings largely follow the above-mentioned literature. Consistent with Köchling et al. (2023) and Gilliland (1993), our interviewees recounted having experienced AI recruitment as procedurally opaque and experientially constraining. However, our data suggests that candidates not only struggle to present themselves through these tools, but they also actively begin to reshape what they present to the recruiter. Rather than the tools simply making self-presentation more difficult, the process appeared to gradually shift what candidates felt the recruiter was actually asking of them. This shift manifested in two ways.

The first concerns what we refer to as optimization behavior, which is related to the written preparations for a recruitment. Laukkarinen (2025) introduces the concept of AI Crafting to describe how recruiters manipulate algorithmic systems to better align with

their own candidate preferences. Our findings suggest a similar process taking place on the candidate side, something literature most commonly refer to as “gaming the system”, “gaming behavior”, or “strategic adaptation” (Ebrahimi et al., 2025; Hardt et al., 2016; Van Den Boom, 2026; Zhang et al., 2026). Interviewees described adjusting their CVs and cover letters to reflect what they believed the algorithm was looking for, inserting keywords and rephrasing their experiences not to present themselves more accurately, but to improve their chances of passing the screening stage. Some also used AI tools to assist in this process. The phenomenon of gaming was explained by Van Den Boom (2026) as a resistance to opaque AI systems in high-stakes domains like insurance and social welfare. We, however, argue that this also applies to other high-stakes situations like recruitment, where the actual decision process lacks transparency. This extends the AI Crafting beyond the recruiter context, suggesting that strategic adaptation to algorithms occurs on both sides of the recruitment process, raising questions about the degree to which either side is engaging authentically.

The second relates to what could be described as algorithmic performance, which was most apparent in the interviewees’ experiences with AI video interviews. Our findings here align with Suen & Hung (2023) and Köchling et al. (2023) in confirming that these tools created encounters that felt unnatural and lacked genuine social interaction. Building on this, our data also points to a power asymmetry that shaped how candidates behaved within these interviews. Interviewees described re-recording their responses multiple times, adjusting not only what they said but how they said it, in an attempt to produce a version of themselves that they felt the AI would prefer. As Gilliland (1993) would suggest, the opacity of the evaluation criteria contributed to a sense of unfairness, and the consequence of this, as our findings indicated, was that candidates increasingly performed for the algorithm rather than genuinely presenting themselves.

In conclusion, these two dynamics point to something the literature has not fully addressed. The issue is not only that AI tools are imperfect at capturing human complexities, which existing literature acknowledges, but rather that the conditions created by the AI tools appear to discourage candidates from presenting their authentic

selves in the first place. Both optimization behavior and algorithmic performance reflect candidates rationally adapting to a process that seems to reward system compatibility over a genuine presentation. This finding also connects back to candidates' broader perception of the company, where a recruitment process that discourages authenticity may be interpreted by candidates as a signal that the organization places little value on authentic human expressions.

5.3 Procedural Opacity & Perceptions Towards Hiring Organizations

Current literature has explored candidates' perception of transparency and fairness, and its consequences on how they view hiring companies. Oliveira et al. (2025) identify a lack of transparency in AI-driven decision-making processes as a major weakness, emphasizing its negative effects on candidates' trust and confidence in the recruitment process. Ruckensteins (2023) study exploring the experiential and emotional realms of algorithmic relations, highlighted the interviewees' desire for informational transparency on the processing of their data and decision making; candidates often felt unqualified to understand these incomprehensible technologies. Our findings similarly revealed that most interviewees were unaware of how AI tools were used throughout the entire recruitment process. While some expressed concerns about the handling and storing of their data, most expressed having almost no understanding of these processes. This illustrates the "black box" problem of AI, where technical opacity creates information gaps that hinder human comprehension and prevent the development of trust toward recruitment tools (Giermindl et al., 2022; Davidson et al., 2026).

However, contrary to the black box oracle phenomenon discussed by Davidson et al. (2026), our findings show that interviewees approached AI-driven recruitment tools with skepticism and critical reflection. Due to the lack of transparency surrounding AI use in recruitment, they suspected that these systems could perpetuate biases and disadvantage certain candidate profiles, limiting their chances of fairly advancing beyond the initial CV screening stage. Rather than blindly accepting AI-generated decisions, interviewees

described actively questioning and mistrusting the tools' decision-making processes, with some also questioning how hiring companies implemented and potentially manipulated these systems.

In their study, Biesmans et al. (2026) emphasize the factors that shape a candidate's most memorable experiences and impressions of a hiring organization. Crucially, the authors highlight how the degree, timing, and quality of a company's communication shape perceptions of fairness of the recruitment process and strongly affect how respected and seen candidates feel. Likewise, our findings reflect how the level of communication provided by companies through the process appeared not to be on par with the interviewees' expectations. All interviewees expressed strong dissatisfaction with the quality and frequency of company feedback and communication regarding their progress throughout the recruitment process, particularly concerning the reasons for rejection. This lack of communication emerged as a significant source of frustration and negatively affected their confidence as applicants and perceptions towards the fairness of the process.

Furthermore, previous research has discussed a trade-off between efficiency gains for companies and human interaction for candidates in AI-assisted recruitment, similarly to the previous discussion on effort imbalance. Black & van Esch (2022) argue that while companies benefit from increased efficiency and reduced costs, these gains often come at the expense of substantive feedback and personal interaction with candidates. Similarly, Oliveira et al. (2025) and Biesmans et al. (2026) suggest that excessive automation, combined with limited transparency and perceived unfairness, can contribute to complete candidate disengagement from the recruitment process. Additionally, Gilliland (1993) argues that lower perceptions of fairness reduce candidates' motivation to continue assessment processes, recommend the company to others, or even accept potential job offers. Consistent with this literature, our findings showed that although interviewees understood why companies use AI tools for efficiency and cost reduction, many were disappointed with the loss of human interaction throughout the process. This lack of personal engagement, combined with low trust in AI-based assessments, led some interviewees to avoid continuing applications altogether, as they felt unable to stand out

against automated assessment tools.

Finally, the damage that candidates' perceived unfairness and lack of transparency in AI-based recruitment can do to a company's long-term reputation is well-documented (Pandey & Arora, 2025; Biesmans et al., 2026). Kim and Heo (2022) found that initial perceptions of innovation quickly turned into mistrust due to the black box nature of AI, lack of distributive fairness and human interaction. Consistent with this, our interviewees' frustration at the loss of human interaction led them to question the morals and values of companies using AI, as they viewed the recruitment process as a window into the company's culture. Our analysis reveals that an over-reliance on AI is often interpreted as a signal of organizational laziness or carelessness. Taking this one step forward, many interviewees perceived companies' use of AI tools as a dishonest and misleading choice, against the commonly adopted "people-oriented" branding. The transactionality of the hiring process leaves candidates feeling devalued whilst undermining the integrity of and destroying a hiring company's credibility in the eyes of the applicants. This consequently leads candidates to either emotionally distance themselves or disengage entirely from the recruitment process.

5.4 Practical Implications

Through this paper, we identified several factors companies should consider when deciding whether to implement AI tools in recruitment processes. First, recruitment practices that rely heavily on AI assessments may unintentionally harm a company's organizational attractiveness by creating perceptions of laziness and carelessness. Our analysis shows that recruitment practices signal to candidates the degree of organizational care, authenticity, fairness, and respect toward employees. Although AI can provide benefits such as efficiency and cost reduction, these advantages may come with reputational and relational costs. Short-term gains may therefore lead to candidate mistrust, disinterest, and even disengagement from the recruitment process.

Second, we found that companies should be as transparent as possible about their use of AI throughout every stage of recruitment. Our analysis suggests that candidates are not

necessarily opposed to AI itself, rather they are concerned about the lack of clarity regarding how their data is used, what evaluation criteria are applied, the overall opacity of AI systems. Maintaining transparent communication about the role of AI, clarifying whether humans are involved in decision-making, and providing meaningful feedback are therefore crucial for building and maintaining long-term trust with candidates.

Finally, although interviewees did not express complete aversion to AI, they emphasized the importance of human interaction throughout the recruitment process. We found that excessive reliance on AI assessments may encourage candidates to behave inauthentically in ways that align with what they believe the system favors. While such behavior may be positively evaluated by AI tools, it may not reflect the qualities the hiring company is genuinely seeking. We therefore recommend that companies adopt hybrid recruitment models that combine AI technologies with human involvement. Such an approach can help maintain emotional connection, authentic candidate engagement, and human-based reasoning in decision-making.

5.5 Limitations

While our analysis explores findings drawn from interviewees having experienced AI-driven recruitment, several limitations must be discussed. Firstly, since this exploratory study uses a purposive sampling method, it inherently lacks statistical generalizability of the findings. Although our analysis explores findings drawn from interviewees who have experienced recruitment processes at international companies and possess an international background, one limitation is the specific geographical context of interviewing individuals living in Sweden and Denmark. Therefore, these findings on the candidates' perceptions and experiences may differ in other cultural or regulatory contexts. Moreover, because a cross-sectional study captures a snapshot of the data at a certain point in time, it risks missing how candidates' mistrust or disengagement evolves alongside technological advancements.

Secondly, despite this study briefly touching on organizations' reasons for AI adoption in recruitment, the scope remains delimited to the applicant perspective, addressing a

specific gap in the literature. Therefore, this explains the overall slightly negative and subjective perspective of applicants, as the study captures only the perceived intentions and objectives of the hiring organizations rather than the actual strategic reasons of HR professionals. Lastly, as argued by Xu et al. (2025), AI literacy remains a crucial indicator of the applicants' knowledge and skills regarding AI-driven processes. Expanding on this concept, the applicants' perceptions of the fairness for example, across the different recruitment stages, might significantly change as AI familiarity and expectations shift.

5.6 Future Research

To go beyond the cross-sectional, snapshot nature of this study, future research should adopt a longitudinal study design to capture more nuances across a period of time. The applicants' opportunity to perform and levels of disengagement could be analyzed in greater depth, particularly as AI continues to evolve and candidate perceptions shift accordingly. Additionally, delving into cross-cultural comparative studies could reveal different attitudes globally towards the efforts candidates put in and the demand for authentic human recognition. Quantitative research could also test candidate reactions across certain ages and industries to further examine AI acceptance or aversion when applying to low- versus high-tech companies (Luo et al., 2025). Furthermore, the organizational perspective must be explored to understand if human recruiters feel restricted by the algorithm, how they balance efficiency with transparency, and how they might engage in AI Crafting (Laukkarinen, 2025). Lastly, hybrid solutions or HR-in-the-loop approach in recruitment (Yuan et al., 2025) should be investigated since fully AI-led processes may result in negative perceptions associated with organizational trust and attractiveness.

6 Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the empirical findings and theoretical contributions of the thesis. It begins by revisiting the research aims and research question guiding the study

(6.1), followed by a presentation of the three main findings and their broader significance (6.2). Lastly, the chapter ends with a summary of the thesis' central contributions (6.3).

6.1 Research Aims

This thesis set out to explore the emotional and behavioral dimensions of navigating AI-driven recruitment processes from the candidate's perspective. Despite the growing body of literature on AI in HRM, relatively little attention has been brought to how candidates interpret not only the tools themselves, but the organization deploying them. To delve deeper into the topic, the following research question was formed to guide the research and writing process:

How do candidates perceive and experience AI recruitment processes, and what are the consequences of these perceptions?

To ensure this research question was properly and multidimensionally addressed, we conducted extensive research analyzing previous literature findings. This foundation guided us in uncovering the psychological impacts of navigating automated hiring systems. Although from an organizational perspective, hiring efficiency, such as reduced time and costs, was highly relevant in this process, we aimed to analyze the emotional manifestations of applicants. Ultimately, we explored how the AI influence resulted in profound perceptions of fairness, authenticity, and organizational integrity.

6.2 Research Findings

The main contribution of our thesis is that candidates do not evaluate AI-driven recruitment in isolation, they interpret the use of AI as a direct reflection of the organization behind it. In a way, recruitment functioned as a window to the organization's values, culture, and integrity. This finding extends beyond existing literature which has largely focused on process satisfaction and fairness perceptions without fully accounting for how these experiences shape candidates' broader impression of hiring companies. Building on the contribution laid by the thesis, are three supporting findings that emerged

from the data.

The first, concerns the effort imbalance experienced by the applicants. Our data revealed frustrations that come after the immense efforts they invest into job applications. From their perspective, organizations react to their efforts by automating the hiring processes in the scope of saving costs and time, instead of genuinely appreciating the applicants' skillset or personality traits. Supported by the theory of HR Attribution, Nishii et al. (2008) describe that individuals react to the reasons behind core HR practices. Consequently, we found that the applicants perceive the cost-saving pursuit of organizations in using AI as a way to diminish their trust in the hiring process and the company itself.

The second finding concerns the loss of authentic self-presentation under automated recruitment conditions. Rather than simply making self-presentation more difficult, AI tools appeared to gradually shift what candidates felt the process was asking of them. Our analysis revealed this shift manifested itself in various ways. One way involved candidates adjusting their CVs and cover letters to align with what they believed the algorithm was looking for, thereby gaming AI systems. Another way involved candidates repeatedly re-recording video interview responses in an attempt to satisfy perceived AI evaluation criteria, a behavior we describe as striving to perform for the algorithm. Therefore, because candidates feel compelled to perform for these AI systems, our findings showed their perception of companies that implement AI into their recruitment processes, may not be so positive. Our findings suggest candidates may perceive companies as careless and devaluing towards the qualities of human interaction and judgement.

The third finding aligns with the black box problem of AI, which hinders the opportunity for the applicants to understand how their data is processed and handled by the system. We expand on this opacity and integrity behind the AI machines by addressing the level of mistrust experienced by applicants. Our findings suggest that this mistrust is a product of companies' lack of transparency towards applicants in regards to how AI is used

throughout the recruitment process. This is further illustrated by the candidates' expressed concern for companies' possible willingness to trade efficiency, calculability, and predictability for impersonal and disengaging human interaction (Mökander & Schroeder, 2024; Bredén & Söderlind, 2025).

6.3 Chapter Summary

Taken together, this chapter summarizes the thesis by revisiting the research aims and investigating the main empirical findings. A central dynamic emerged from the data: that applicants do not evaluate AI-led recruitment in isolation, but rather they succeed in seeing beyond, namely to view it as a window into the values organizations project. In direct alignment with contemporary research, dimensions like candidate mistrust, the loss of human interaction, and recruitment as a window into the company were shaped by the perceived effort imbalance, the inability to authentically present oneself and procedural opacity. Finally, this thesis concludes that while candidates do not inherently perceive AI in recruitment as entirely negative, the manner in which organizations implement these technologies within their HR departments plays a significant role in shaping candidates' perceptions of organizational values, priorities, image, and overall attractiveness.

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Appendix

Authorship statement

We hereby declare that we are the co-authors of this bachelor's thesis *Hired by an Algorithm*. In alignment with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017) and the Vancouver rules (2018), all authors significantly participated in the conceptual design, qualitative data collection, and interpretation of findings. Furthermore, each co-author contributed equally to the final interpretation and writing of this thesis by objectively drafting, reviewing, and approving the manuscript. Lastly, we declare that no external sources other than those acknowledged within the text and included in the final reference list have been leveraged.

AI usage statement

AI was used throughout the thesis to assist the search for relevant literature and to improve grammar. Initially, Claude was used to break down the research topic into keywords and find synonyms that can be used to find other relevant literature that we might not have found solely using our wording of the research topic.

The following prompt was used:

"I am currently writing my bachelor's thesis examining candidates' perception of companies' usage of AI in recruitment. Can you help me break down the research topic into keywords and find synonyms that can be used to find literature on the topic?"

Grammarly, Gemini, and Claude were all used throughout the writing process to improve grammar and give feedback on academic language and flow of sections. Two authors have downloaded the Grammarly extension to the computers, allowing it to correct grammar live as text is written. Gemini and Claude were used for both improvement of the academic language and provide feedback on the flow of sentences or sections.

Examples of prompts used:

"Can you critically evaluate the flow and line of reasoning in the following section? Please provide examples of what was done well, and what could be developed to improve the flow and reasoning."

"Can you please provide some examples of how to improve the academic language of this section."

"Can you please provide some examples of how to improve the academic language of this sentence."

"Can you check the grammar in the following section?"