

## **AI in Recruitment – A Recruiter’s Perspective on Role Transformation**

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## **AI in Recruitment – A Recruiter’s Perspective on Role Transformation**

Thesis Report submitted by Erik Boström and Isaac Okunade to the University of Skövde, for the Master’s Degree (MSc) at the School of Business.

Date: 2025-08-17

We hereby certify that all material in this thesis, which is not our own work, has been identified, and that no work is included for which a degree has already been conferred on us.

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## Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly integrated into recruitment, reshaping how organizations source, screen, and select candidates. While much of the literature emphasizes the efficiency gains and ethical risks of AI, limited attention has been given to how recruiters themselves experience and navigate this transformation. This study explores how the adoption of AI in recruitment influences the roles, responsibilities, and competencies of recruiters.

The research follows a qualitative, abductive approach, drawing on ten semi-structured interviews with recruiters across diverse industries and organizational contexts. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, producing four key themes: (1) the transformation of recruiters' roles from administrative to strategic functions, (2) shifting competencies, particularly digital literacy and interpretive skills, (3) persistent ethical concerns around fairness, bias, and transparency, and (4) the critical role of governance and organizational support in shaping adoption.

The findings show that recruiters perceive AI not merely as a tool for efficiency but as a catalyst for reconfiguring professional identity. Recruiters must increasingly balance efficiency with ethical responsibility, requiring new digital competencies and governance frameworks. By applying the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Social Judgment Theory (SJT), the study demonstrates that recruiter adoption is conditioned by perceived usefulness, organizational pressures, and ethical anchors.

This study contributes theoretically by extending TAM and TPB to highlight role transformation and competence development, and by applying SJT to explain variations in ethical acceptance of AI in recruitment. Practically, the research provides guidance for organizations to implement AI responsibly, emphasizing the need for training, transparency, and governance mechanisms that support recruiters as active mediators rather than passive adopters. The study concludes that AI in recruitment is not simply a technological innovation but a transformative force reshaping the future of the recruiter profession.

*Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Recruitment, Role Transformation, Competencies, Ethics, Governance, Technology Acceptance*

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# 1 Introduction

AI is reshaping recruitment processes, offering tools that streamline tasks like CV screening, candidate ranking and preliminary interviews. For recruiters, AI's ability to process vast amounts of data efficiently promises significant operational benefits. However, these advancements come with challenges that directly impact the recruiter's role. Ethical concerns, particularly fairness, transparency and inclusivity are central to discussions about AI in recruitment, raising questions about how recruiters perceive the changing role of their profession.

## 1.1 Background

The application of AI in the field of recruitment encompasses the use of AI technologies to help organizations determine and screen suitable potential candidates (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). The emergence of AI dates back to 1956, an era where it helped computers to undertake tasks demanding cognitive functions similar to humans (Salin & Winston, 1992; Stuart & Norvig, 2016). AI and robotics have found their applications in various aspects of society, including but not limited to healthcare, transport, agriculture, business, finance, education, entertainment, defence, and government activities (Chen & De Luca, 2021). AI improves the efficiency of operations, reduces bias, and maximizes processes in recruitment, subsequently allowing it to find and acquire appropriate candidates (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Kurek, 2021).

The post-COVID world is expected to enhance the integration of data-based services into everyday life, with AI solutions becoming increasingly vital in organizational processes, particularly in personnel management (The Economist, 2020; Kurek, 2021). The application of AI in recruitment is a relatively new area of scholarly debate, as noted by Hunkenschroer & Luetge (2022). This is largely due to the recruitment process being one of the most resource-intensive in human resources, both in terms of time and cost (Münsterman et al., 2010).

Hiring used to be a slow task where recruiters manually shortlisted the CVs, interviewed the candidates, and assessed them through subjective criteria. With the development of AI-powered tools, such as machine learning algorithms, predictive analytics, and automated screening software, the same has been made automatic, which has helped companies improve efficiency, make improved decisions, and reduce hiring bias (Hewage, 2023).

AI technology, particularly AI used in talent acquisition, today can automate activities such as parsing CVs, candidate scoring, scheduling interviews, and communicating with AI chatbots, thereby reducing the administrative burden on the recruiters (Rathore, 2023).

In recent years, organizations have increasingly prioritized finding skilled employees to stay competitive in the job market (FraiJ & László, 2021). FraiJ and László (2021) argue that integrating AI into recruitment processes can enhance organizational performance and productivity.

AI is now capable of handling tasks and making decisions that traditionally required human intelligence (Black & Esch, 2020), and its use in recruitment promises greater efficiency and broader candidate reach (Lee, 2018; Mijwel, 2015). However, while AI has revolutionized recruitment, it has also introduced both benefits and challenges.

AI-powered hiring systems utilize historical data to develop their algorithms, which can unintentionally perpetuate existing biases in the hiring process (Chen, 2023). These systems lack the human ability to assess cultural fit, soft skills, and potential beyond structured data, raising concerns over the depersonalization of hiring decisions (Hunkenschroer & Kriebitz, 2023). Candidates often express frustration with the transparency of AI evaluations, uncertain of how their profiles are assessed and the reasoning behind decisions (Chang, 2024).

Recruiters are shifting focus from manual CV screening to interpreting AI-generated data, enhancing hiring strategies, and adhering to ethical hiring norms (Oman, Siddiqua, & Noorain, 2024). The ethical and legal ramifications of AI in hiring remain contentious (Fernández & Fernández, 2019), with mixed perceptions among candidates, some finding AI processes impersonal or intimidating, while others view them as objective (Laurim et al., 2021).

## 1.2 Problematization

AI has become an increasingly prominent feature in recruitment processes, transforming how organizations identify, evaluate, and hire talent. The role of the recruiter is changing from administrative execution to strategic oversight, as argued by Johnson, Stone, and Lukaszewski (2022). This change is consistent with traditional strategy theory, particularly Ansoff's (1965) assertion that managers need to assign operational duties to free up time for strategic contemplation. This implies that automation in AI-driven hiring not only increases productivity but also frees up recruiters to work on higher-level strategic tasks like employer branding, talent planning, and relationship management.

Scholars note that AI-based tools are widely adopted for tasks such as CV screening, candidate matching, and interview analytics, promising efficiency, reduced costs, and greater objectivity in decision-making (Black & van Esch, 2020; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). However, alongside these promises, researchers also highlight critical challenges, including algorithmic bias, lack of transparency, and the potential erosion of human judgment in candidate evaluation (Bogen & Rieke, 2018; Raghavan et al., 2020). Much of the existing literature remains polarized, focusing either on the efficiency gains of AI or its risks for fairness and ethics.

A central knowledge gap lies in how the integration of AI reshapes the role of the recruiter. While studies acknowledge that automation shifts responsibilities within HR departments, few empirically investigate the lived experiences of recruiters navigating this transition (Johnson et al., 2022; Nawaz, 2023). Theories such as the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) are frequently applied to explain adoption, yet they often treat recruiters as passive adopters rather than active professionals undergoing role transformation. As Strzelec (2024) argues, AI adoption in HR should be seen not merely as a technological acceptance process but as a reconfiguration of competencies, responsibilities, and professional identity.

Thus, while research has illuminated AI's technical potential and ethical risks, there remains a lack of empirical and theoretical insight into how recruiters themselves perceive and negotiate the transformation of their role in an AI-enabled recruitment landscape. This constitutes a relevant and underexplored problem, both theoretically and practically, as recruiters remain gatekeepers of organizational talent acquisition and play a crucial role in balancing efficiency with human judgment.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze how the integration of AI in recruitment transforms the role and responsibilities of recruiters and to analyze what forms of strategic work are enabled as administrative functions become automated. By examining recruiters' lived experiences, the study aims to understand how technological, ethical, and strategic dimensions intersect in shaping new professional identities.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. *How do recruiters perceive and navigate the transformation of their roles and responsibilities in the context of AI in recruitment.*
2. *To what extent does the integration of AI in recruitment changes the strategic functions and professional roles of recruiters and how effectively does these address challenges of administrative change, bias and strategic involvement.*

### **1.5 Thesis Structure**

This thesis explores how AI is transforming the role of recruiters, particularly in relation to new competencies, decision-making responsibilities, and ethical challenges. The thesis is organized into six chapters. *Chapter 1* introduces the background, problem formulation, purpose, and research questions. *Chapter 2* reviews the existing literature on digital recruitment and AI, addressing automation, bias, governance, and changing recruiter competencies while identifying research gaps. *Chapter 3* presents the theoretical framework, focusing on technological transformation, human–AI collaboration, and ethical governance. *Chapter 4* outlines the methodological approach, including research design, data collection, and analysis. *Chapter 5* presents the empirical findings and analysis. *Chapter 6* discusses the results in relation to the research questions, concludes the study, and provides contributions as well as recommendations for recruiters, organizations, policymakers, and future research.

## 2 Theoretical Frame of Reference

Recruitment has traditionally been understood as a multi-stage process comprising job analysis, candidate sourcing, screening, interviewing, selection, and onboarding (Breugh, 2008). Each stage involves human judgment, from assessing qualifications to evaluating organizational fit. However, the increasing incorporation of AI has altered these stages, particularly in screening, matching, and initial candidate engagement (Black & van Esch, 2020). AI-enabled systems automate CV screening, conduct chatbot-based pre-interviews, and provide predictive analytics for candidate success. While these developments promise efficiency and objectivity, they also raise concerns about fairness, transparency, and the changing role of recruiters as intermediaries in talent acquisition (Raghavan et al., 2020).

AI in recruitment is broadly defined as the application of machine learning, natural language processing, and algorithmic decision-making to support or automate recruitment processes (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). Scholars note that AI enhances efficiency by processing large applicant pools quickly, reduces time-to-hire, and provides data-driven insights that supplement human decision-making (Biradar et al., 2024). However, other studies emphasize the risks of algorithmic bias, lack of explainability, and over-reliance on data proxies, which may replicate or amplify discrimination (Bogen & Rieke, 2018; Seppälä & Małecka, 2024).

The transformation brought by AI cannot be fully understood without considering role transformation and competence shifts among recruiters. Johnson, Stone, and Lukaszewski (2022) argue that the recruiter's role is evolving from administrative execution toward strategic oversight, where professionals must not only interpret AI outputs but also ensure ethical and compliant use of technology. Competencies are no longer limited to interpersonal and evaluative skills but increasingly include digital literacy, critical reflection on algorithmic outcomes, and governance responsibilities (Nawaz, 2023). This transformation aligns with broader debates in human resource management, where technology augments but does not replace human agency (Strzelec, 2024).

To be able to analyze the research questions on how recruiters adopt and interact with AI, this study draws on three theoretical perspectives Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Social Judgment Theory (SJT) so as to offer a multidimensional critique of the way the integration of AI reshapes recruitment processes and the profession of the recruiter.

The selection of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Social Judgment Theory (SJT) as the theoretical foundation for this thesis is motivated by the need to capture the complex, multi-layered nature of how recruitment is changing. Unlike a single-theory approach, these three theoretical framework allows to investigate the recruiter's role not just as a user of a tool, but as a professional navigating organizational pressure and ethical dilemmas.

The use of TAM is motivated because it addresses the most immediate hurdle in the recruitment pipeline: the technological shift. As the thesis explores how AI reshapes sourcing and screening, TAM provides the necessary tools to measure perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). In the context of this study, this theory motivates the search for findings concerning recruiter's possible acceptance of AI because it provides a clear strategic advantage by automating repetitive tasks, thereby allowing them to focus on high-level human interaction. Without TAM, the study would lack a baseline for understanding why recruiters choose to engage with these systems in the first place.

However, technology adoption does not happen in isolation, which motivates the inclusion of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). While TAM address the tool, TPB makes it possible to analyze the environment. This theory is essential for this thesis because it accounts for subjective norms, the social and organizational pressures recruiters feel to stay competitive (Ajzen, 1991). TPB makes it possible to analyze the observation that a recruiter's intention to use AI is heavily influenced by their perceived level of control and the training provided by their organization. This aligns with the thesis's emphasis on new competencies, suggesting that the transformation of the recruiter's role is as much about organizational support and personal confidence as it is about the technology itself.

The inclusion of Social Judgment Theory (SJT) is perhaps the most critical motivation for the ethical dimension of the study. Most adoption models ignore the internal values of the user, but SJT allows us to analyze how recruiters act as active mediators. By utilizing Sherif and Hovland's (1961) concepts of anchors and latitudes of acceptance, the thesis is able to analyze why recruiters remain skeptical of black-box algorithms, i.e., a process whereby the internal logic, decision-making process, and weighting of data are invisible or unintelligible to the human user. It makes it possible to evaluate recruiter's pre-existing commitment to fairness acts as a psychological anchor, causing them to reject AI outputs that fall outside their latitude of ethical acceptance.

These three theories are used in combination to evaluate the balance of TAM, TPB and SJT and how they are managed, also evolving into a mediator who must balance technological efficiency (TAM), organizational expectation (TPB), and ethical integrity (SJT).

## **2.1 Artificial Intelligence**

There are interests growing to apply AI to various applications from customer services, learning, web site support (Shawar and Atwell, 2007), insurance, banking services, health, tourism, retail, and communication (Singh et al., 2019). However, AI is variously explained from author to author. Generally, AI is human intelligence that are demonstrated in machines (Huang and Rust, 2018). It makes the computer or system gain ability to perform tasks that are usually explained as human mind (Tambe et al., 2019) including understanding and learning outside information that are ultimately utilized to accomplish given tasks through flexible adaptation (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2019).

AI is now a functional technology revolutionizing industries like human resources (HR), healthcare, finance, and manufacturing. Essentially, AI is employed to describe systems or computers replicating human intellect for the purposes of executing activities like learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making (Chen, 2023). AI technologies borrow their momentum from a vast pool of methodologies, like machine learning (ML), deep learning (DL), natural language processing (NLP), and reinforcement learning, each of which has contributed massively in their wide applicability across numerous industries (Seppälä & Małecka, 2024). AI can be expressed from the point of view of the process as practice and theory of developing system that starts from input and transforms the input to output and attempted to give the best possible outcome (Paschen et al., 2019; Paschen et al., 2020).

AI has gained much attention on the basis of its ability to analyze and process large volumes of data with speed and precision, capabilities that exceed human capabilities across most sectors. In recruitment and business, AI has gained much praise on the basis of its potential of making decision-making processes easier by enhancing the ability of data processing, increasing efficiency of the operation, as well as elimination of human bias during the recruitment process (Hewage, 2023). AI is best at handling repetitive work and thus free human workers for the handling of complex, value-generating work. AI has also been shown to be revolutionary beyond the recruitment sector, particularly healthcare and clinical trials. In healthcare, AI is being used for enhancing diagnostic accuracy, predicting patient outcomes, and creating treatment plans. AI has the potential for analyzing medical data, including imaging, patient information, and genetic information, for the purpose of

making accurate and timely decision-making by healthcare workers (Lu et al., 2024). Similarly, for the purpose of clinical trials, AI is being utilized for simplifying the process of recruitment of patients, matching patients with relevant clinical trials on the basis of appropriate matches, and sifting data from the trials for faster approval of new drugs and treatments (Chen, 2023). These innovations for healthcare reflect the vast potential of AI for making healthcare fields that heavily rely on data analysis and decision-making revolutionary.

Barring the bright future of AI, it also poses serious issues that it needs to confront as the application of AI grows. Among these is the ethical implication of the application of AI for making decisions. The possibility of AI taking on responsibilities normally the domain of humans, such as hiring, is a source of worry for the potential for the loss of human judgment. AI systems, as effective as they can be, lack the emotional intelligence, empathy, and moral judgment of human decision-makers. The gap calls for a careful consideration of the model of human-AI interaction, whereby AI assists human decision-makers but does not replace them entirely (Strzelec, 2024). Integrating humans into AI-based decision-making processes ensures that ethical considerations and contextual sensitivity are incorporated, upholding the human-centricity of these technologies.

## **2.2 AI in Recruitment**

Hunkenschroer and Luetge (2022) described AI hiring as any activity that makes use of AI to help organizations make recruitment and selection. Human Resource Management should be vibrant as it is working with manpower as one of the key determinants of production that determines the performance of organizations, and that is the greatest factor among all activities (Geetha and Bhanu, 2018).

Organizations are keen on reaching as many good active potentials as possible (Black and Esch, 2020). However, most are passive potentials as they are not searching or seeking employment (Smith and Kidder, 2010).

AI has been implemented during various stages of talent acquisition (Hassan and Ibrahim, 2019; Albert, 2019; Heric, 2018). In recruitment, studies were carried out to study the use of AI during the stage of recruitment (Nawaz and Gomez, 2019; Albert, 2019), the benefit and the business process implication (Upadhyay and Khandelwal, 2018), impact on diversity recruitment efforts (Altemeyer, 2019), and the job candidate perception of AI-based recruitment (Van Esch et al., 2018).

Furthermore, there will inevitably be a large number of applications because digital recruitment is frictionless, and AI can be used to conduct screening procedures efficiently, which results in a shorter time to hire and a victory in the talent war (Black and van Esch, 2020).

Finding the best prospects is frequently only half the work; the other half involves persuading them to apply by crafting compelling job descriptions. AI could assist in this by producing objective job descriptions that do not utilize gendered terminology to discourage job seekers from applying (Mann & O'Neil, 2016). Depending on how the job post is worded, AI software providers employ methods that can assess its effectiveness (Lee, 2018).

AI answers the issue of long questionnaires given to applicants (Chwastek, 2017). AI is also being used to auto-fill an application form within an organization from an analysis of unstructured documents, including CVs of the applicants (Chwastek, 2017). For the recruiter, AI can sift the initial batch of applicants to be processed manually by the recruiter possessing limited capacity and hence save time and resources (Polli, 2019).

AI can already replace a human recruiter during an interview by asking pre-prepared questions (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2016). Moreover, AI is now able to measure the applicant through their risk-taking tendency, planning orientation, tenacity, and motivation (Lee, 2018). In the selection and hiring process, to create a psychological candidate picture, AI is able to dig and scan social media pages of the applicants (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2016).

Attracting suitable applicants constitutes only part of the recruitment process; the other equally important task involves motivating them to apply through engaging and inclusive job descriptions. AI can support this process by reducing bias at the outreach stage, for instance, by identifying and eliminating gendered language that might discourage certain groups from applying (Mann & O'Neil, 2016). Moreover, AI-driven recruitment tools employ predictive methodologies to evaluate how effectively a job advertisement is likely to perform based on its wording and structure (Lee, 2018). These systems are trained on large datasets of prior job postings to refine their predictive accuracy. Lee (2018) characterizes this application of AI as part of the outreach phase, in which organizations actively seek and attract potential candidates.

In recruitment to a position, AI systems end the problem of long questionnaires on the web eating up resources and time of applicants (Chwastek, 2017). They are also used to automatically fill up a

company's application form by parsing non-formally structured material, i.e., CVs of applicants (Chwastek, 2017). For the recruiter, AI can potentially shortcut the initial pool of applicants that otherwise would be processed manually by an ability-constrained recruiter and hence save resources and time (Polli, 2019). Although companies are yet to relinquish using human recruiters to finally make the decision, evidence had been provided earlier by Fernandez- Martinez & Fernández (2020) and Yarger et al. (2020) that more recruitment work was being performed by algorithms. In spite of the fact that the use of AI is not just to automate recruitment work, but also to exclude human recruiters from doing them, here it should be noted that this does not necessarily require recruiters to be removed from the picture altogether (Rigotti & Fosch-Villaronga, 2023).

### **2.3 Role Transformation**

The integration of AI into recruitment is driving a fundamental shift in the recruiter's role, transitioning the profession from a process-heavy administrative function to a strategic, human-centric discipline. When tasks, responsibilities, and professional identity are rearranged due to structural or technological change, this is referred to as role transformation (Kulik et al., 2021). By automating repetitive tasks (like screening CVs) and enhancing strategic ones (like relationship-building and employer branding), AI is changing the division of labour in the hiring process. As organizations increasingly adopt AI-based algorithms to innovate and streamline employment procedures, the primary impact is the automation of routine, high-volume tasks that previously dominated the recruiter's workload. Parmar et al. (2025) observe that this technological integration has revolutionized traditional hiring by offering unparalleled efficiency in candidate sourcing and screening, which allows for faster and improved decision-making.

Specifically, AI tools such as CV screening algorithms and predictive analytics can process vast datasets to identify suitable candidates based on qualifications, significantly reducing the manual labor required for initial selection. Recruiters must acquire new skills in digital literacy, ethical reasoning, and governance as a result of this shift (Nawaz, 2023). Theoretically this enables recruiters to step away from repetitive administrative duties and refocus their efforts on high-value activities that require human judgment, such as relationship building and assessing cultural fit.

Consequently, the recruiter's value proposition is evolving into that of a strategic talent advisor who works in tandem with intelligent systems. Paramita and Okwir (2024) highlight that the speed and efficiency provided by AI tools are crucial for securing top talent, but they also necessitate a reconfiguration of the

recruitment team, where fewer personnel are needed for manual screening and more focus is placed on interpreting AI outputs. In this new landscape, the recruiter serves as the critical human in the loop, responsible for validating automated recommendations and exercising professional skepticism. Cekic and Svan (2025) emphasize that despite the efficiency of AI in drafting advertisements and screening, human oversight remains a regulatory and ethical necessity, particularly to ensure compliance with frameworks like the GDPR and to maintain trust in the hiring process.

Furthermore, this transformation demands that recruiters acquire new technical and ethical competencies to navigate the risks associated with automation. Almeida et al. (2025) argue that the successful adoption of these technologies relies heavily on the recruiter's ability to perceive the utility of AI, transforming digital literacy into a core professional skill. Beyond technical operation, recruiters are now the gatekeepers of fairness; as Albassam (2023) notes, while AI offers cost savings and quality improvements, it also introduces risks of algorithmic bias that recruiters must actively monitor and mitigate. Therefore, the role of the recruiter is not being replaced but rather elevated, requiring a sophisticated balance between leveraging machine efficiency and applying the ethical, empathetic judgment that defines human resource management.

## **2.4 Hiring Process**

The hiring process is the organized series of steps used by businesses to find, recruit, evaluate, and choose job candidates. Although the terms are frequently used interchangeably, researchers define hiring or selection as the stages of evaluation that result in a job offer, and recruitment as the process of drawing in applicants (Taylor & Collins, 2000). Each step of the process, which usually consists of job analysis, recruitment, screening, interviewing, decision-making, and onboarding, affects the results and the perceptions of the applicants (Breaugh, 2008; Gatewood, 2019).

According to theory, the hiring process integrates a social exchange where candidates assess organisational culture, fairness, and transparency with a decision system that looks for validity and predictive accuracy (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998), (Hausknecht et al., 2004). While signaling theory explains how employer branding shapes applicant expectations, person-job and person-organization fit theories emphasize precise role specification. AI is being used more and more in chatbots, predictive analytics, and CV screening. While this increases efficiency, it also presents issues with bias, accountability, and transparency (Black & van Esch, 2020; Hunkenschroer & Kriebitz, 2023).

The necessity of governance, training, and human oversight is emphasized by ethical frameworks like the EU Artificial Intelligence Act (2023). Therefore, the hiring process is best described as a methodical, morally guided procedure that strikes a balance between effectiveness, legitimacy, and equity when establishing employment relationships.

## **2.5 Ethical Responsibility and Transparency in AI Hiring**

Recruitment works best not as a collection of disparate activities but as a socio-technical pipeline converting strategic talent requirements into successful work relationships. Both an information system conveying signals between employers and candidates and a judgment system in which both parties process signals, test compatibility, and make successive decisions with final impact upon results are roles it takes on. To counter ethical challenges, researchers endorse a human-in-the-loop approach, where the recruiter thoroughly vetted AI-suggested recommendations (Dastin, 2023). This ensures that AI supports, and not dictates, hiring decisions in accordance with ethical human resources management processes (Smith & Kumar, 2023).

AI holds out the promise of increased efficiency, objectivity, and scalability in recruitment but at very high ethical costs, particularly in fairness, accountability, and potential biases. A primary concern is the replication and amplification of previous biases through algorithmic decision-making. Because AI systems are trained on past hiring data, they can perpetuate current societal and organizational biases unintentionally. This can result in the systematic exclusion of minority background candidates who are highly qualified, thereby violating the principle of equal opportunity (Deshpande et al., 2023; Mujtaba & Mahapatra, 2019; Lacroux & Martin-Lacroux, 2022).

Algorithmic hiring research cautions that many vendor claims about "bias removal" lack rigorous proof; bias may necessarily develop unless it is actively tackled and controlled (Raghavan et al., 2020). At the assessment node, structure is the reliability and fairness lever. Reviews of interviews show that structured interviews standardized questions, anchored rating scales, trained raters outperform unstructured versions on validity and reduce adverse impact (Campion, Palmer & Campion, 1997). New AI-mediated assessments (e.g. asynchronous video analysis, behavioral micro-features) are difficult to validate or explain; several have been withdrawn under scrutiny. If used, they require pre-deployment validation, explainability to candidates, and ongoing disparate-impact monitoring (Raghavan et al., 2020).

This lack of transparency creates issues in compliance with legal and ethical needs, particularly due process and informed consent within the workforce policies. Organizations have an ethical responsibility to embed AI programs that are not just data efficiency but also bring human oversight to the table. A balance ensuring that it serves to complement human intuition rather than replace it is paramount in determining candidate capacity based on human as opposed to numbers-based decisions (Wilfred, 2018; Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022).

## **2.6 Conceptual Framework**

To analyze how AI transforms recruitment, this study applies a theoretical framework grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Social Judgement Theory (SJT). Together, these theories capture some key element of the technological, organizational, and ethical dimensions of AI adoption. These dimensions are significant because AI in recruitment is not merely a technological innovation but also a behavioral and ethical transformation within organizations.

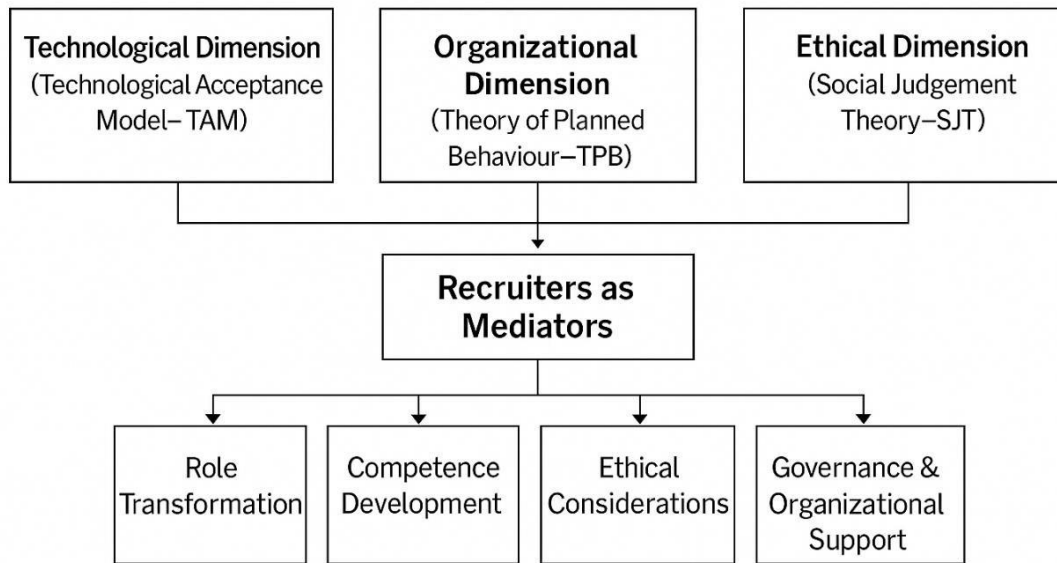
The technological dimension (Technological Acceptance Model – TAM) highlights how recruiters’ perceptions of usefulness and ease of use shape their willingness to adopt AI tools. The organizational dimension (Theory of Planned Behaviour – TPB) emphasizes the influence of attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioral control within the workplace, which affect how recruiters integrate AI into their routines. The ethical dimension (Social Judgement Theory – SJT) provides insight into how recruiters form perceptions of fairness, transparency, and trustworthiness when using algorithmic technologies for decision-making. Comprehensively, these perspectives offer a complete understanding of AI’s impact on both the operational and ethical aspects of recruitment transformation. Building on these perspectives, the framework positions recruiters as active mediators who navigate between technological innovation, shifting professional roles, and ethical responsibility.

Four interrelated dimensions structure this analysis:

- i. Role Transformation – the shift from administrative to strategic functions.*
- ii. Competence Development – digital literacy, interpretive skills, and collaboration with AI.*
- iii. Ethical Considerations – fairness, transparency, and accountability in AI use.*
- iv. Governance and Organizational Support – training, policies, and leadership enabling responsible adoption.*

As illustrated in *Figure 1*, these dimensions interact dynamically within the broader transformative influence of AI in recruitment, positioning recruiters at the center of change while highlighting the balance between efficiency, competence, and ethics.

### Conceptual Framework – A Recruiter’s Perspective on Role Transformation



**Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework – A Recruiter’s Perspective on Role Transformation.***

This framework illustrates how recruiters function as mediators between the technological, organizational, and ethical dimensions influencing the adoption of AI in recruitment. The model emphasizes the interaction between these theoretical perspectives and four interrelated areas of change – role transformation, competence development, ethical considerations, and governance and organizational support.

In summary, the conceptual framework aim to integrate technological, organizational, and ethical perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of how AI transforms recruitment. By combining TAM, TPB, and SJT, the framework highlights how recruiters’ perceptions, organizational norms, and ethical judgments interact to shape AI adoption. It underscores recruiters’ evolving role as mediators between innovation and responsibility, emphasizing the balance between efficiency, competence, and ethics in AI-driven recruitment.

## **3 Method**

This study adopts a qualitative research design in order to explore the lived experiences of recruiters as they navigate the integration of AI into recruitment processes. Since the research questions focus on how recruiters perceive role transformation, a qualitative approach is most appropriate to capture subjective meanings, nuanced practices, and contextual factors that cannot be reduced to numerical measures (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **3.1 Research Approach**

The study followed an abductive approach, which combines inductive sensitivity to empirical insights with deductive engagement with theory (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). While prior theories such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Social Judgment Theory (SJT) provided conceptual guidance, the analysis was not bound to them. Instead, empirical findings were iteratively interpreted in light of these frameworks, allowing new insights on role transformation and competencies to emerge.

### **3.2 Participant Selection**

Participants were selected through a purposive sampling strategy to ensure relevance to the research focus (Palinkas et al., 2015). The study included ten professional recruiters working in various industries, such as banking, consumer retail, food industry, public sector, HR consulting and tech industry, across both multinational corporations to self-employed. The inclusion criteria required that participants had at least two years of recruitment experience and had interacted with AI-based tools (e.g., applicant tracking systems with algorithmic screening, chatbots, or predictive analytics). This ensured that participants could provide informed reflections on how AI shaped their work. Recruitment of participants was conducted through social media outreach and professional networks, ensuring diversity in terms of gender, years of experience, and organizational context.

*Inclusion Criteria:* HR professionals, recruitment consultants or people in human resources with at least two years of experience in recruitment. These are people who have worked in the recruitment sector, obtaining first-hand knowledge of finding, interviewing, and employing candidates.

Because of their experience, they are able to comprehend the subtleties of the hiring process and potential difficulties. They are experienced in locating, assessing, and selecting talent for organizations and companies and identifying qualified applicants for different job openings. These are individuals who have worked with AI-driven recruitment tools (e.g., CV screening, candidate ranking, chatbot- assisted pre-screening and advertising). These individuals have actual knowledge or know-how of how AI systems are being used to increase recruitment effectiveness.

*Exclusion Criteria:* Recruiters and junior HR staff with no experience or know-how in using AI-based hiring systems. These are entry-level staff members who manage applicant databases, schedule interviews, and keep track of employee information. They are not directly involved in strategic hiring or the application of AI technologies. A sample size of 10 participants were targeted, ensuring data saturation is reached (Guest et al., 2006).

### **3.3 Interview Guide**

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore key themes related to recruiters' role transformation due to AI in recruitment. The questions are designed to balance consistency across interviews while allowing for flexibility and depth in participant responses (see *Appendix 1*).

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, a method that offers flexibility to explore participants' perspectives while maintaining consistency across predefined themes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The interview guide was developed by operationalizing key concepts from the theoretical framework: role transformation (changes in responsibilities and competencies), ethics (bias, fairness, and governance), and adoption factors (ease of use, usefulness, and organizational norms). Interview questions were organized into three thematic clusters: (1) perceptions of AI in recruitment, (2) changing roles and competencies, and (3) ethical and organizational challenges. Participants were recruited through social media platforms and professional networks. To ensure accessibility and convenience, all interviews were conducted online using the video conferencing platform Zoom. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, allowing sufficient time for in- depth discussion. With participants' explicit informed consent, all interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Prior to participation, all individuals were informed about the study's objectives, their rights, and how the data would be used.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step process: familiarization with data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Transcripts were first read multiple times to gain familiarity. Initial codes were then created to capture meaningful patterns, focusing on how recruiters described their changing roles, competencies, and ethical concerns.

Codes were clustered into broader categories such as efficiency gains, competence shifts, ethical dilemmas, and governance practices. These categories were refined into final themes that aligned with the research questions. To enhance transparency, a coding table was constructed, showing the progression from raw data (quotes) to codes, categories, and themes. Example:

Quote from Transcript	Initial Code	Category	Theme
<i>“AI takes care of CV screening so I can focus more on interviews.”</i>	Automation of repetitive tasks	Efficiency gains	Role transformation toward strategic functions
<i>“I need to understand the system outputs to explain them to candidates.”</i>	Interpreting AI results	New digital competencies	Competence shifts
<i>“I worry about hidden bias in the algorithms.”</i>	Concerns about fairness	Ethical dilemmas	Governance and compliance challenges

**Table 1: Example of coding table structure (adapted from Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014)**

This iterative coding process allowed the data to speak while keeping the theoretical framework in view, ensuring both empirical richness and theoretical grounding.

### **3.6 Quality Criteria**

To ensure methodological rigor and enhance the trustworthiness of the study, the framework developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was applied throughout the research process. This framework includes the four key criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, which are considered the qualitative equivalents of reliability and validity in quantitative research (Shenton, 2004; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Various strategies were employed to satisfy these criteria during data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Credibility refers to the degree to which the research findings accurately represent participants' perspectives. In this study, credibility was strengthened through triangulation, achieved by comparing the data gathered from interviews with insights from the existing literature. This approach allowed patterns and consistencies to be identified across multiple sources, ensuring that the interpretations were grounded both in empirical data and in current scholarly discourse (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability concerns the stability and consistency of the research process over time. To ensure dependability, a detailed audit trail was maintained, documenting methodological decisions, coding procedures, and analytical reflections. This systematic documentation increased transparency and provided a basis for evaluating how interpretations evolved, demonstrating that the findings were derived from a coherent and replicable process (Nowell et al., 2017).

Confirmability addresses the need for findings to reflect participants' views rather than researcher bias. In this study, confirmability was supported through ongoing reflexivity, with the researcher maintaining a reflexive journal throughout data collection and analysis. This journal captured personal assumptions, reflections, and potential biases, ensuring self-awareness and minimizing undue influence on interpretation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Transferability pertains to the extent to which findings may be applicable in other contexts. Although qualitative research does not seek statistical generalization, transferability was enhanced through thick description. Detailed accounts of participants' organizational settings, professional experiences, and interactions with AI in recruitment were provided, enabling readers to determine the relevance of the findings to their own contexts (Shenton, 2004; Tracy, 2010).

Building on these principles, the data analysis process involved several stages. The interview transcripts were first systematically reviewed to generate initial codes, which served as labels for recurring ideas related to role transformation, competencies, and ethical considerations. These codes enabled the segmentation of complex narratives into meaningful units. Next, the researcher searched for themes by examining relationships among the codes, clustering them into broader categories that captured the underlying meaning of the data. This process led to the identification of five central themes:

*1. Background and AI Exposure, 2. Recruitment Tasks Most Affected, 3. Role Changes and Competencies, 4. Ethics, Bias, and Accountability, and 5. Future of Recruitment.*

The final stage involved reporting the results according to these established themes. Each theme was supported by illustrative quotations and examples drawn directly from participants' statements, grounding the analysis in authentic experiences. These methodological steps, guided by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, enhanced the study's rigor, reduced bias, and ensured interpretative accuracy. Together, they provide a reliable and transparent foundation for understanding how AI is transforming recruiters' roles, competencies, and ethical responsibilities in AI-driven hiring contexts.

### **3.7 Research Ethics**

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017), with particular attention to informed consent, confidentiality, data security, and the right to withdraw. Informed consent was obtained orally prior to the interviews. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, how their data would be used, and that participation was voluntary. They were also reminded that they could decline to answer questions or withdraw at any time without facing consequences.

Confidentiality was ensured by referring to participants only by their first names in the analysis and presentation of results. No additional personal identifiers were included, thereby reducing the risk of identification while still preserving the personal dimension of their accounts. Data security was maintained by storing interview recordings and transcripts on a password-protected server accessible only to the researcher. This prevented unauthorized access and ensured responsible handling of sensitive information.

Finally, the researcher bore responsibility for maintaining transparency and minimizing power dynamics during the interviews. Efforts were made to create an open and respectful atmosphere, to clarify the researcher's role, and to pose questions in a neutral and non-leading manner. By addressing these considerations, the study ensured respect for participants' autonomy, privacy, and well-being, while aligning with the ethical standards of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017).

### **3.8 Summary Methodology**

This methodology ensures rigorous, ethical, and systematic data collection and analysis. The qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis and ethical safeguards provides in-depth insights into the transformation of recruiters' roles in AI-driven hiring.

## 4 Empirical Findings

This section presents the empirical findings on how AI adoption is transforming the role of recruiters in the hiring process, aligning with the research objectives established in the introduction and problem formulation, this data was gotten from ten (10) respondents in the field of recruiting with knowledge of AI-driven recruitment technologies. **Emmanuel** (Nigeria) is in banking. **Heidi** (Finland), **Karl** (Sweden) and **Lisa** (Sweden) are in consumer retail. **Niclas** (Sweden) is in the food industry. **Khatima** (Sweden) is in public sector. **Lars** (Sweden), **Rebecca** (Sweden) and **Maleek** (Nigeria) are in HR consulting, and **Quym** (Nigeria) is in tech industry.

### 4.1 Background & AI Exposure

Participants ranged from junior-level recruitment officers to managers and directors of HR and had varying levels of exposure to AI in recruitment. Career experience among participants ranged from 2 to more than 20 years.

Junior-level recruitment officers, e.g., Emmanuel (banking), indicated AI app use, e.g., CV screening, while HR professionals and recruitment officers, such as Maleek (HR consulting) and Quyum (tech industry), used AI candidate sourcing, CV parsing, and algorithmic automation in CV screening. Mid-level HR, e.g., Karl and Heidi (consumer retail), indicated daily app usage of AI features, e.g., ChatGPT in testing advertisements, checking on applications, and testing AI recruitment solutions.

Senior HR managers and directors, e.g., Lars (HR consulting) and Lisa (consumer retail), indicated having had AI use in organizational recruitment processes, i.e., AI use in bulk hiring, candidate sourcing, and automation in CV screening, characteristic of strategic implementation of AI in organizational workflow. Public sector participants, e.g., Khatima, indicated little direct use of AI but acknowledged AI capability in recruitment job matching of and recruitment efficiency. Independent recruitment practitioners, e.g., Rebecca, indicated AI use in largely advertisement optimization of jobs as compared to screening or sourcing. Theme 1 table:

<i>Theme 1</i>	Emmanuel	Heidi	Karl	Khatima	Lars
<i>Background &amp; AI exposure</i>	Junior recruiter, banking; 2 yrs with Zoho AI for CV screening	Senior HR professional; 15+ yrs; piloted AI tools in recruitment	HR Business Processes; uses ChatGPT daily; tests job ads & applications	HR in public sector; limited AI use; aware of AI in job-matching	HR Director; 20+ yrs; introduced AI sourcing & screening in org
<i>Theme 1</i>	Lisa	Maleek	Quyum	Niclas	Rebecca
<i>Background &amp; AI exposure</i>	HR Manager; dept. used AI for screening in bulk hires	HR Specialist; uses AI for sourcing, CV parsing	Recruiter; uses LinkedIn AI features, screening algorithms	HR Manager; AI for job ads, minimal screening	Independent recruiter; uses AI for ads only

**Table 2: Thematic Matrix –Background & AI exposure**

Data show range of AI usage in recruitment, from awareness, exploratory usage, to full usage and daily organizational operational use, in consistency with organizational context and respondent's status.

## 4.2 Role Transformation in AI-driven Recruitment

A dominant theme across the interviews was the transformation of recruiters’ roles. Several (five out of ten) participants emphasized that AI automation of repetitive tasks, such as CV screening, reduced their administrative workload and allowed them to focus on strategic responsibilities. One recruiter in a multinational technology firm remarked:

*“AI takes care of the first CV scan. Before, I spent hours going through hundreds of applications, now I can actually focus on interviewing and relationship building.” (Karl)*

Similarly, recruiters in smaller firms noted that while AI simplified early-stage screening, it simultaneously shifted expectations toward more strategic contributions, such as employer branding and workforce planning. However, it is important to note that for specialist or niche roles, the reliance on AI remains less prevalent. These positions often require a nuanced understanding of the industry and human judgment that AI currently struggles to replicate effectively. Consequently, while AI

provides immense benefits in enhancing efficiency and responsiveness in recruitment, the need for human insight remains critical for certain roles. As one participant explained:

*“There is a sense that because AI does the basics, I have to bring more value by understanding the business, aligning with managers, and thinking long term about talent.” (Maleek)*

Thus, the role transformation is perceived not only as a reduction in administrative work but also as an expansion of strategic expectations. Theme 2 table:

<b>Theme 2</b>	Emmanuel	Heidi	Karl	Khatima	Lars
<i>Recruitment tasks most affected</i>	CV screening	Screening & initial candidate matching	Early-stage screening; standard communication automation	Shortlisting from large applicant pools	Screening, sourcing, talent matching
<b>Theme 2</b>	Lisa	Maleek	Quyum	Niclas	Rebecca
<i>Recruitment tasks most affected</i>	CV screening; some AI interview trials	Sourcing, parsing, ranking	Profile matching & shortlist creation	Ad creation; streamlining admin	Initial contact now AI- driven, less human

**Table 3: Thematic Matrix –Recruitment tasks most affected**

### 4.3 New Competencies and Skill Requirements

Recruiters across all organizations described a need for new competencies, particularly digital literacy and the ability to critically interpret AI outputs. Many participants stressed that recruiters cannot remain passive recipients of algorithmic recommendations but must learn to interrogate and explain AI results. Additionally, openness to integrating new technological tools into their processes has been repeatedly highlighted as a key factor for success. This adaptability is especially important, as the recruitment field continues to evolve rapidly.

Moreover, maintaining traditional relationship-building skills remains vital, as the human element of recruitment is irreplaceable. Many professionals have observed a notable generational gap in these areas, with younger recruiters often demonstrating greater comfort and agility in adapting to new technologies and methods compared to their more experienced counterparts. This shift suggests a need for ongoing training and development, enabling all recruiters to bridge the gap and thrive in a technology-driven environment.

*“I need to know why the system ranks candidates the way it does, because candidates ask me, and I can’t just say ‘the computer decided.’” (Lars)*

This shift required recruiters to develop what participants called a “translation skill,” mediating between AI insights and human candidates or managers. Others expressed anxiety about insufficient training:

*“There’s pressure to understand these systems, but most recruiters I know don’t get proper training. We learn on the job, and that’s not always enough.” (Emmanuel)*

Competence shifts thus include not only technical proficiency but also new relational skills, such as communicating algorithmic outcomes transparently. Theme 3 table:

<b>Theme 3</b>	Emmanuel	Heidi	Karl	Khatima	Lars
<i>Role changes &amp; competencies</i>	Tech literacy essential; older generations adapt slower	Need to interpret AI results; combine with human intuition	More time for candidate engagement; experimental mindset	Analytical judgement crucial to avoid over- filtering	Strategic oversight; ensure fairness; adapt processes
<b>Theme 3</b>	Lisa	Maleek	Quyum	Niclas	Rebecca
<i>Role changes &amp; competencies</i>	Openness key; basic system skills needed	Data interpretation; prompt engineering for better results	Ability to tune AI filters to match job context	Must master tools but keep judgement	Need to detect AI- generated applications; source criticism

**Table 4: Thematic Matrix –Role changes & competencies**

#### 4.4 Ethics, Bias and Accountability

Ethical concerns were present in nearly every interview. Recruiters expressed worries about algorithmic bias and the risk of reinforcing discrimination. These concerns were particularly strong among participants with higher professional involvement in diversity and inclusion. Conversely, others expressed concerns about the inherent risks of exclusion. They cautioned that AI systems, if trained on rigid or biased criteria, could inadvertently marginalize candidates who possess the skills and potential but do not fit the predefined molds. This could lead to a lack of diversity and opportunities for those who may not conform to conventional expectations, further entrenching inequalities.

*“I know the AI is supposed to be objective, but I’ve seen cases where women or minority candidates are ranked lower. That’s worrying because it’s hard to challenge the system.” (Heidi)*

Transparency was also a recurring theme. Recruiters wanted to understand not only how the system operated but also how to explain it to candidates and managers. As Lisa explained:

*“We need more explainability. Right now, it’s a black box. If I can’t explain it, I don’t fully trust it.” (Lisa)*

Ethical concerns thus served as a moderating factor: while recruiters acknowledged AI’s usefulness, unresolved issues around fairness and transparency created resistance. Theme 4 table:

<b>Theme 4</b>	Emmanuel	Heidi	Karl	Khatima	Lars
<i>Ethics, bias &amp; accountability</i>	AI executes orders; bias comes from design	Risk of bias from historical hiring data; recruiter accountable	Risk over-reliance; recruiter responsible	Concern about excluding atypical but capable candidates	AI must be transparent; HR responsible
<b>Theme 4</b>	Lisa	Maleek	Quyum	Niclas	Rebecca
<i>Ethics, bias &amp; accountability</i>	HR & manager share accountability; keep human review	AI bias possible; diverse data needed	Bias risk if filters too narrow; joint HR responsibility	AI may reinforce recruiter biases	AI reinforces preferences; risk of excluding candidates

**Table 5: Thematic Matrix –Ethics, bias & accountability**

## 4.5 Future of Recruitment

There was broad consensus among industry experts that AI will become profoundly integrated into recruitment workflows in the near future. Many participants predicted that the early stages of the hiring process, such as CV screening and initial candidate assessments, could see full automation, significantly reducing the time taken to identify suitable candidates. However, others emphasized the importance of a strategic repositioning of recruiters, shifting their focus towards evaluating cultural fit and fostering human engagement throughout the hiring process. Despite the anticipated advancements in automation, the prevailing view was that human oversight will remain a critical component.

*"Recruitment agencies may reduce staff, as AI handles more search and selection."*  
(Lisa)

*"Risk of full automation – and more exclusion of certain candidates."* (Rebecca)

Recruiters will still be essential for interpreting AI-driven insights, ensuring diversity and inclusion, and building meaningful relationships with candidates – tasks that require emotional intelligence and nuanced decision-making that machines cannot replicate. This balance between automation and human involvement is expected to shape the future of recruitment significantly. Theme 5 table:

<b>Theme 5</b>	Emmanuel	Heidi	Karl	Khatima	Lars
<i>Future of recruitment</i>	AI will expand to decision-making; must adapt early	More automation in screening; recruiters focus on culture fit	Shorter processes; shortlist top candidates; still human contact	AI as standard tool but human review essential	AI mainstream; recruiter role more strategic
<b>Theme 5</b>	Lisa	Maleek	Quyum	Niclas	Rebecca
<i>Future of recruitment</i>	Less CV screening, more strategic HR	AI as everyday tool; recruiters as “process curators”	AI integral to ATS systems; human role in final fit	AI inevitable but human element vital	Risk of full automation; more exclusion

**Table 6: Thematic Matrix –Future of recruitment**

## 4.6 Summary of Findings

While participants acknowledged the considerable efficiency benefits that AI brings to recruitment, especially for high-volume roles, they unanimously stressed the ongoing importance of human expertise in evaluating intangible qualities, ensuring equitable hiring practices, and making final decisions. The collective insights indicate that the most effective recruitment strategies will adopt a hybrid model, leveraging AI for repetitive, high-volume tasks while safeguarding human judgment for strategic and relational aspects of the hiring process. In the ten interviews, there were revealing similarities in what recruiters saw as the influence of AI on recruitment work. There was near-unanimity in reply to the first research question: almost all (eight out of ten) interviewees confirmed that AI streamlines routine work like résumé screening and scheduling, freeing time for the strategic and interpersonal parts of their work. There was also widespread agreement on new necessary skills, namely digital literacy and the capacity to interpret and justify AI-based decisions. Moral issues were also an area of agreement, with all the recruiters—whatever their hoped-for potential of technology acknowledging threats of bias, lack of explainability, and the limitations of substituting human judgment. Finally, all participants placed strong value on governance and compliance, but only some gained access to proper structures within their organizations.

Concurrently, significant distinctions became apparent. Recruiters from bigger organizations with mature AI policies were more confident in these technologies, while others from smaller organizations were doubtful and unsure. Senior recruitment staff positioned AI as an agent of strategy, but junior staff saw it more as intimidating or possibly a threat to their employment. Whereas efficiency advantages were the main cause of celebration amongst some (four out of ten) participants, others (five out of ten) discussed more ethical challenges, an individual value dimension and organizational culture notwithstanding. Training and familiarity also generated fissures, with users with high levels of training being confident in AI, while users with little were held back and dependent on external technical help. While all were equally aware of AI's transformative potential, their level of trust, readiness, and moral unease varied considerably and indicate how organizational background, degree of experience, and individual orientations help determine how they go about their organizational transformation through AI technologies.

## **5 Discussion**

This chapter aims to discuss main findings on the impact of AI adoption in recruitment and how it is reshaping the role of recruiters. The findings of this study reveal that the integration of AI in recruitment is not merely a question of technological adoption but a catalyst for profound role transformation among recruiters. Four central themes emerged - role transformation, competence shifts, ethical concerns, and governance - which can be critically interpreted through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Social Judgment Theory (SJT). The research demonstrates that AI has fundamentally altered the recruitment process by automating candidate screening, reducing bias, and improving efficiency.

### **5.1 Role transformation and Technology Acceptance**

The initial acceptance of AI for automating routine tasks like CV screening and scheduling aligns with the perceived usefulness construct of the Technology Acceptance Model, as established by Davis (1989), where the primary driver of adoption is the enhancement of job performance. However, the results indicate that this utility is inextricably linked to a broader role reconfiguration, supporting Strzelec's (2024) contention that AI adoption in HR must be understood as a shift in professional identity rather than simple tool usage.

The ten (10) respondent's accounts collected for this study immediately verifies the theoretical consistency with the Technology Acceptance Model described above. The empirical evidence from the ten respondents illustrates how these theoretical constructs manifest during day-to-day recruitment activities.

The empirical findings of this study provides support for the theoretical assertion that AI is fundamentally reshaping the recruiter's professional identity from an administrative function to a strategic discipline. All ten respondents confirmed that the integration of AI tools has significantly reduced their workload regarding repetitive tasks, specifically CV screening and candidate scheduling.

This unanimous consensus directly corroborates the work redesign concept described by Tay Che Enn et al. (2024), who argue that automation liberates human resources for higher-value activities by removing the burden of high-volume processing.

Specifically, the ten participants described this shift not merely as a change in tasks but as an enhancement of their professional value, which effectively validate the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that *perceived usefulness* is a primary determinant of adoption. This transition from operational execution to strategic oversight corroborates the work of Johnson, Stone, and Lukaszewski (2022), who argue that the automation of administrative functions necessitates a strategic pivot where recruiters focus on high-level tasks such as employer branding and relationship management.

Furthermore, the findings that recruiters are using this newfound time to focus on qualitative candidate assessments echo Seppälä and Małecka's (2024) observation that AI serves to liberate professionals for complex, value-generating work that requires human empathy and cultural interpretation.

**Karl** explicitly qualified this benefit, noting that AI serves as a critical support tool capable of reducing a pool of 100 applicants to the top 3–5, thereby allowing him to redirect his focus toward face-to-face interactions. This empirical evidence mirrors the findings of Almeida et al. (2025), who observed that 38% of recruiters in their study similarly highlighted the reduction of manual labor as the primary driver for AI acceptance. However, a divergence from the theory was noted; while the literature often assumes a linear path to acceptance, two respondents expressed initial hesitation regarding the reliability of automated ranking. This suggests that while the *usefulness* (TAM) is recognized, the *trust* component (SJT) plays a critical moderating role in how fully the strategic transformation is embraced in daily practice.

According to the empirical findings, all ten respondents agree that recruiters are beginning to see AI as a way to free up administrative work so they can participate in the hiring process more strategically, and this is in agreement with the theoretical findings of Technology Acceptance Model. Recruiters clearly acknowledged AI's value in increasing efficiency and candidate screening, which is consistent with TAM's construct of perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989). While all ten respondents acknowledge AI efficiency gains, the empirical results demonstrate an extension of TAM, specifically six out of the ten respondents interpreted the usefulness of AI not merely as a time saver but as a mechanism for professional repositioning towards strategic functions. Strzelec's (2024) contention that the adoption of AI in HR should not be viewed as a mere acceptance of technology, but rather as a process of role reconfiguration. One of the strongest trends is the move away from exclusively administrative functioning.

AI now takes care of the mundane procedures like screening of CVs, schedules, and shortlisting of prospects, freeing up the recruiters to handle more people-oriented aspects of their work. This supports the findings from Six out of ten respondents who actively reframe their professional identities as a result of artificial intelligence to prioritize relationship-building, employer branding, and strategic oversight rather than being passive tool adopters. In **Rebecca's** words:

*"Before AI, I spent hours going through CVs manually, but now the system does that in minutes. My focus has shifted to understanding the candidate as a person and how they might grow with the company."*

Such a testimonial captures the productivity gain that AI has to offer as it opens the doors to the recruiter's renewed efforts towards qualitative decisions. But the transformation is also by no means just that of increased efficiency. According to the findings from all the respondents, they all agree that recruiters also have to develop new skills in order to work in harmony with the systems of AI with increased efficiency. Data interpretation and comprehension of output of the algorithm as also technical expertise became the professional skills set of their trade. According to the opinion of **Khatima**:

*"I would think technical ones, maybe? But I think that is also something you learn as you go with your work. And you see in your daily tasks that you kind of lose that human touch from the start. I would say it is actually reducing that skill because you rely too much on the tool."*

Here it proposes a two-sided mandate: harnessing the AI for speed but with cultural and ethical fit staying in place. The research also validated that the emerging role of recruiters is to become the moral guardian of AI. While research cautions against algorithmic bias and the transparency issue, the interviews gave empirical evidence of how recruiters take the initiative to manage the risks in the workplace. **Rebecca** explained:

*"I think that when you use AI a lot, you get quite lazy, and you might not review the applications you receive, but AI doesn't have the whole truth. You must always check. For example, if you're recruiting for a programming position, you might send out a test: "How would you solve this problem?" If you, as the recruiter, don't have the technical skills needed to assess the answer, you might just pass it through."*

Such practice indicates the emerging role of recruiters as human shields against the risk of algorithmic failure. The research also shows the trend towards organizations embracing strategic influence. Rather like shifting away from spending most of their time on transactional work, recruiters are being made partners in the designing of talent strategies and organizational culture. Such is in sync with the literature that views AI as a tool that frees recruiters of touch-intensive work to develop high- value-added roles (Seppälä & Małecka, 2024).

Nonetheless, the move is problematic in practice. Some of **Heidi** and **Niclas** feared over-reliance on AI as much as the threat of depersonalization of recruitment, which is in disagreement with the theoretical findings that recruiter's role is changing towards more strategic functions from administrative fictions. **Heidi** summed it up, adding:

*“Staying up to date with what’s possible, but also resisting the temptation to adopt new tools just because they’re new focusing on what’s actually needed. Integration with existing systems is often tricky.”*

What this does is illustrate the ongoing requirement on the part of recruiters to have the human touch in recruitment, something with which AI cannot comply. Overall, based on the empirical results, which is supported by the theoretical models, the findings revealed that the role of the recruiter in the era of AI is no different, but redefined. Recruiters are becoming strategic guides, moral guardians, and relationship intermediaries, without stopping to guarantee the accountability-based deployment of technology. All this requires on-going upskilling, reflectiveness, and human-centeredness so that the AI supplements help support, but never substitutes the fundamental aspects of recruitment.

## **5.2 New Competencies and Skill Requirements**

The needs for new competencies, particularly digital literacy and the ability to critically examine results of algorithms, emerged as an overriding finding. This is paralleled in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) notion of perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991), in which recruiter intentions to implement AI were influenced by self- confidence in navigating its complexities. In cases in which training and organizational support were lacking, recruiters self-reported confusion, which then detracted from their intentions to leverage AI independently. Recruiters with stronger digital competencies, on the other hand, showed greater self-confidence and receptiveness. This highlights an important omission in existing research: while the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and TPB also privilege ease of use, the study at

hand suggests that ease considered is directly related to the acquisition of competencies and organizational investment in recruiter training. The theoretical justification of digital literacy is empirically corroborated by the participants' accounts, which highlight an emerging gap in terms of tools availability and workforce preparedness. The following empirical evidence aims to show how these competence requirements are viewed by recruiters. **Maleek**:

*“You know before you can get a job as a recruiter or as an HR person, you need to have a degree in HR or possibly a related field. But now, if based on the use of AI, apart from being an HR expert, you need to also learn about digital aspects, learning more about software, learning more about how to use applications and tools that can help in recruiting.”*

This is just one of the larger such trends wherein the recruiters aren't only end-users of but also decision-makers of AI technology, such that their output is proportional to organizational demands. In addition to technical abilities, there is also the growing demand that the recruiters are analytical. Collaboration with data, identifying patterns, and converting insights into recruitment plans to be implemented is the most important role of their work in today's era. Ethical competence also emerged as a critical skillset in the AI-driven recruitment system. Recruiters understood their role as the custodians of fairness and transparency in the recruitment system. **Lars** explained:

*“There's a fear of removing the human aspect, and also a fear about how much AI can know about you. But if you exclude personal identifiers like names or ethnicity, AI can be more objective.”*

Such logic is in accordance with writing on the ethical challenges posed by AI, whereby human oversight is necessary to avert the concretization of system biases. Ethical literacy and the ability to identify and control risks have thus become essential skills. Not less important are communications and relationship-building skills, valuable in the age of technology. Once the bureaucratic function of recruitment is processed by AI, as the recruiters noted, the human side of recruitment communication, empathy, and persuasion of the candidate was prized even more highly. **Khatima** confirmed this:

*“You usually will get the answer that “we had other suitable candidates”, and I think it doesn't matter if you have AI or not – actually AI is just helping that – because AI would just strengthen that this person has the profile that fits.”*

What this suggests is that, instead of devaluing soft skills, the role of AI makes the necessity of recruiters to dazzle with clearly human qualities even greater. Beyond that, studies also put their focus on continuing learning and adaptability as meta-skills. Recruiters also have to be ready to reskill and upskill due to the rapidly changing nature of the AI tools that need so. **Emmanuel:**

*“Yes, absolutely. As a matter of fact, we get training subsequently, the reason being that these technologies are very advanced and one single update might change a whole lot of things, this therefore is basically why the organization put in a lot of effort to make sure we get proper training on them.”*

Such adaptability can make it easy for recruiters to be consistent with constantly varying technology scenarios, stay productive and relevant. Overall, the study indicates that the shift towards AI-based recruitment has brought in a new profile of recruiter competency with the capabilities of working with AI literacy, data interpretation, moral awareness, communicative skill, strategic thinking, and adaptability. Not only can such capabilities enable recruiters to work more effectively with the assistance of AI, but also enable them to occupy the top spot in maintaining fairness, human touch, and strategic direction in recruitment. Overall respondent experience supports that even while AI-based recruitment practices have been operative, it has further increased the onus on recruiters to remain technologically updated, morally aware, and strategically involved professionals.

The empirical finding that digital literacy is now a prerequisite for effective AI adoption aligns with Long and Magerko’s (2020) conceptualization of AI literacy, which they define not merely as technical proficiency but as a set of competencies enabling individuals to critically evaluate and collaborate with algorithmic systems. This direct link between competence and adoption intention supports the breakdown of the Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Taylor and Todd (1995), who argue that facilitating conditions specifically organizational training and resource allocation are critical antecedents that directly influence an individual's perceived behavioral control.

The transition to AI-driven recruitment has created an immediate demand for new competencies, a finding that links directly to the theoretical discourse on digital literacy and the human-in-the-loop framework. The study reveals that technical proficiency is no longer optional; all ten participants indicated that interacting with AI tools requires a distinct set of skills previously associated with data analysts rather than HR professionals.

This validates the arguments of Paramita and Okwir (2024), who contend that the modern recruiter must act as a mediator between algorithmic logic and human candidates.

A significant empirical contribution of this thesis is the identification of what **Lars** termed a translation skill - the specific ability to interpret complex algorithmic outputs and explain them to stakeholders who lack technical expertise. This finding extends the theoretical work of Almeida et al. (2025), who emphasize that digital literacy must now be considered as a core competency. Furthermore, the data highlights a critical gap in organizational readiness: **Emmanuel** expressed significant anxiety regarding insufficient training, noting that he often felt unprepared to fully leverage the tools provided. This aligns with the warning by Nawaz (2019) that the availability of AI tools often outpaces the preparedness of the workforce, creating a competence gap that threatens the efficacy of the theoretical human-in-the-loop model.

**Khatima's** insight that AI amplifies the value of the human touch illustrates the AI Paradox described in recent leadership literature, where the automation of technical tasks commoditizes hard skills, thereby making communication intelligence including empathy and trust-building the defining competitive advantage for human workers.

**Emmanuel's** emphasis on the necessity of constant upskilling to keep pace with updates aligns with Patel and Mehta's (2020) findings on the shift toward continuous learning cultures, where employees must actively manage their professional growth to remain relevant in rapidly evolving technological landscapes. Consequently, the empirical data suggests a divergence in adaptation, while some digitally fluent recruiters adapt independently, the broader theoretical benefits of augmented recruitment are difficult to fully realize across the workforce without structured training programs.

### **5.3 Ethical Considerations and Accountability**

Ethical issues, especially algorithmic bias and non-transparency, emerged in almost every interview (eight out of ten). These results are consistent with SJT's focus on anchors and latitudes of acceptance (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Recruiters with high engagement in fairness and diversity challenges had smaller latitudes of acceptance, reporting skepticism unless AI systems had bias audits and explainability built-in features. This implies that ethical anchors powerfully influence how recruiter's assess AI adoption. The assimilation and contrast effects SJT foresaw were present: recruiter's assimilated positively when there were governance mechanisms in place but contrasted vigorously

against claims of neutrality or objectivity when there were nontransparent systems. These results apply SJT's framework to the HR tech domain, illustrating the utility of SJT for explaining why adoption differs while tools are functionally similar. The skepticism that Social Judgment Theory predicted is apparent within the recruiter's focus on ensuring that human oversight is maintained within the outputs of these "black box" systems. The empirical findings below outline the manner in which respondents construct ethical boundaries to address these opaque systems:

According to eight of the respondents, the empirical discussion on ethics reveals a sharp contrast between the theoretical promise of unbiased AI and the practical reality experienced by recruiters. While literature by authors such as Albassam (2023) suggests that AI has the potential to democratize hiring by removing human prejudice, the participants in this study expressed profound skepticism toward this claim. Eight out of ten respondents raised specific concerns about the black box nature of algorithmic decision-making, fearing that automated systems might inadvertently perpetuate hidden biases, this is in agreement with the overall conclusion where six respondents shows concerns around bias, they perceived to be worried that AI decision making may incidentally re-inscribe gender, ethic or age discrimination if data inputs harboured biases.

This skepticism supports the critical perspective offered by Cekic and Svan (2025), who warn that without transparency, AI can obscure rather than eliminate bias. Crucially, the findings show that recruiters are actively developing informal governance mechanisms to counter this risk; **Heidi**, for example, described a process of manually auditing rejected piles of CVs to ensure the AI had not unfairly excluded qualified candidates. This behavior empirically demonstrates the human oversight requirement mandated by ethical frameworks like the GDPR and aligns with the findings of Parmar et al. (2025), who argue that human intervention is the only fail-safe against algorithmic error.

**Emmanuel's** stance confirms that despite the automation of administrative processes, recruiters view themselves as the final moral authority in the hiring chain, which is supported by the conclusion for research question 2 that recruiters transition from being administrative executors to mediators, focusing on data-driven decision-making, candidate experience optimization and ethical oversight. This aligns with the Human-in-the-Loop requirement emphasized in regulatory frameworks discussed by Cekic and Svan (2025), where human oversight is a non-negotiable legal and ethical safeguard.

Ultimately, the findings suggest a spectrum of engagement, while some recruiters, two of the respondents risk becoming passive users due to over reliance, many others, six of ten respondents actively position themselves as protective barriers, ensuring that the efficiency of AI does not come at the cost of moral correctness and human fairness.

The finding that all respondents feel personally accountable for AI-driven decisions contradicts the theoretical fear of diffusion of responsibility; instead, it indicates that legal and ethical liability drives recruiters to maintain strict vigilance, effectively rejecting the notion of fully automated hiring. **Lisa** said:

*“If AI is set up to consider only experience and competence, it can make hiring more equitable. Naturally, if it is biased, it will generate the same results as a human would.”*

All of this echoes current literature that has cautioned that AI will inevitably reproduce current social biases embedded in historic recruitment data. A recruiter's task, in turn, is not to blindly make use of AI but to actively verify and correct for output bias.

Interviews also showed that the recruiters have an intensified personal feeling of responsibility in employing AI in a responsible way. **Emmanuel** explained the feeling of responsibility by saying:

*“Typical, I'm always careful with decision because I feel it will be very odd if I leave decision making to AI. Like there's no way I'll allow AI hire someone for me, because at the end of the day the human touch is still very much needed. There are some instances where we did a little test run with on decision making and the result was poor.”*

In such a way, it is a confirmation that even with the automation of so many processes by AI, the recruiters are still the final decision-makers and are accountable for fairness and moral correctness. Such findings are a reflection of the human psyche towards the application of AI, in that the recruiters have the sense of bulwarks and not controllers on the side-lines.

## **5.4 Challenges and future perspectives**

One important element influencing recruiters' experiences was the function of organizational governance. According to TPB's focus on subjective norms, industry-level or organizational expectations frequently made recruiters feel pressured to embrace AI. However, whether adoption was seen as empowering or burdensome, it was greatly influenced by the quality of governance, which was

achieved through training, bias audits, and ethical guidelines. By highlighting the function of governance as a determinant of professional trust and identity, rather than just as a compliance mechanism, this supports earlier research on AI adoption (Hunkenschroer & Kriebitz, 2023).

According to the empirical results, the responses from the respondents indicates that the future of recruitment is not merely determined by technological capability, but by the robustness of organizational governance, a finding that directly intersects with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as discussed further in conclusion. The interviews reveal that whether this adoption is viewed as empowering or burdensome depends to a great extent on the quality of governance structures, such as training and ethical guidelines. This supports the research of Hunkenschroer and Kriebitz (2023), who argue that governance is a determinant of professional trust, not just compliance.

Looking toward the future, the consensus among the ten respondents challenges the dystopian theoretical narrative of AI replacing human recruiters, instead favoring a hybrid intelligence model. Participants unanimously viewed the future of recruitment as a collaboration where AI handles data processing while humans retain exclusive control over final judgment and relationship building. This empirical vision strongly supports the Augmented Intelligence framework discussed by Parmar et al. (2025), which posits that AI is most effective when it amplifies rather than replaces human capability.

However, **Karl** and **Lars** highlighted a practical challenge often underrepresented in optimistic theoretical models: the learning curve and the pressure to constantly adapt. **Karl** and **Lars** pointed out that the rapid pace of software updates creates a state of perpetual adaptation, which can lead to change fatigue. This discrepancy between the theoretical promise of seamless integration and the empirical reality of implementation friction indicates that future models of AI in recruitment must account for the psychological toll on the workforce.

As noted by Tay Che Enn et al. (2025), the *relative advantage* of technology is only realized when the users feel competent and supported; thus, this study concludes that the sustainability of the role transformation depends as much on change management as it does on the software capabilities themselves. While the theoretical expectation of the potential of AI in the field of recruitment tends to be positive, the actual experiences of the respondents show the significant operational hurdles involved.

The following feedback from the interviewees reflects the big gap between the expected advantages of the use of artificial intelligence and the actual complexity of the process:

**Quyum** said: *"AI is a software. You have to be careful while are you applying the software in sorting CVs and everything."*

This is a testament to the broader "black-box" problem associated with AI, where employers do not understand how to reconcile efficiency with accountability. Algorithmic bias also became a recurring issue. Several respondents stressed that biased data would perpetuate structural injustices.

**Khatima** said: *"The system might exclude good candidates just because the data it learned from was biased. If I don't step in, talented people might never get a chance."*

This echoes ethical arguments in the literature and the ongoing difficulty of inclusion and balance. Recruiters face the challenge of ongoing upskilling from a professional perspective. Given how quickly technology is developing, it is necessary to be adaptable and eager to learn.

**Emmanuel** reflected: *"These technologies are very advanced and one single update might change a whole lot of things, this therefore is basically why the organization put in a lot of effort to make sure we get proper training on them."*

To this extent, it underlines the necessity of lifelong learning, but also raises attention to forthcoming developments where adaptability is a key professional skill. The other challenge lies with the human aspect of staffing. A number of respondents were worried that a reliance on too much AI could depersonalize candidate experiences.

**Rebecca** said: *"Staying up to date with what's possible, but also resisting the temptation to adopt new tools just because they're new, instead of focusing on what's actually needed. Integration with existing systems is often tricky, the human meeting can't be replaced. AI may sort out candidates based on the system's logic, but it can't identify the most developable person. Sometimes the perfect-on-paper candidate will leave quickly, while someone with gaps could be a great long-term hire. AI can suggest candidates, but humans still need to have the conversations and assess fit."*

This means that future recruitment practices must find a fine balance between efficiency and empathy, so that AI does not diminish but rather augment human interaction. Future visions also point to the necessity of stronger governance and compliance architectures. Recruiters emphasized the role of organizations to establish clear guidelines for ethical application of AI.

**Heidi** repeated: *"I'd say regardless of AI or not, we already have strict processes around what data we collect and how we handle personal data—this should go hand in hand with any AI use. GDPR compliance is essential."*

It shows a future where governance and organizational accountability will be central to ensuring trust and accountability in AI-driven recruitment.

Finally, respondents highlighted the importance of future-proofing recruitment roles by embracing strategic contributions. Freed from repetitive tasks, recruiters see their future role as more aligned with organizational development and workforce planning.

**Karl** noted: *"AI will be a support tool, helping to shorten recruitment processes significantly. AI could reduce 100 applicants to the top 3–5 for interviews. But we'll still need to meet candidates in person."*

This reflects a broader shift where recruiters envision themselves as mediators rather than administrative actors.

In short, the findings reveal that while AI is bringing significant challenges such as bias, opacity, depersonalization, and relentless learning, it also offers opportunities for rethinking hiring.

The recruiters' vision of the future reflects a more balanced model where AI plays the role of an assistant, businesses improve governance, and recruiters take on more strategic and people-driven roles. By addressing these challenges head-on, the recruitment industry can anticipate a future where AI enhances rather than diminishes fairness, efficiency, and the personal touch of recruitment.

## 5.5 Summary Discussion

The discussion presented in this chapter synthesizes the empirical findings from ten semi-structured interviews with the theoretical frameworks of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Judgment Theory (SJT), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The integration of Artificial Intelligence into recruitment is driving a fundamental reconfiguration of the profession, shifting the recruiter's professional identity from an administrative executor to a strategic talent advisor. This transformation, analyzed through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model, reveals that while the automation of repetitive tasks such as CV screening drives perceived usefulness, the primary value of AI adoption lies in liberating professionals to focus on high-value activities like relationship-building and complex decision-making.

However, this operational shift necessitates the urgent acquisition of new competencies, where digital literacy and the specific translation skill the ability to interpret and explain algorithmic outputs to human stakeholders have become mandatory pre-requisites for effective practice. The Theory of Planned Behaviour highlights a critical tension in this area, as insufficient organizational training often undermines recruiters' perceived behavioral control, creating a competence gap that can lead to workforce anxiety despite the availability of sophisticated tools.

Furthermore, ethical considerations serve as a decisive moderator in the adoption process, as eight out of ten respondents expressed profound skepticism toward 'black box' systems and the potential for algorithmic bias. Applying Social Judgment Theory, the findings detailed previously in Section 4.4 indicate that recruiters possess narrow latitudes of acceptance for opaque technologies, compelling them to assume the role of moral guardians who actively audit AI recommendations to ensure fairness and prevent the replication of historical discrimination.

Consequently, the future of recruitment is unanimously envisioned not as a displacement of the human element, but as a Hybrid Intelligence model where AI handles data processing while humans retain exclusive control over ethical oversight and final judgment. Ultimately, the sustainability of this role transformation depends heavily on robust organizational governance to manage the psychological toll of continuous adaptation and change fatigue, ensuring that technological efficiency does not come at the cost of the human empathy central to the profession.

## 6 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate how recruiters perceive and deal with the change of their roles and responsibilities during the integration of AI in recruitment. As discussed in Chapter 5, this transformation reflects not only technological implementation but broader professional reconfiguration. Following the research questions;

1. *How do recruiters perceive and navigate the transformation of their roles and responsibilities in the context of AI in recruitment.*
2. *To what extent does the integration of AI in recruitment changes the strategic functions and professional roles of recruiters and how effectively does these address challenges of administrative change, bias and strategic involvement.*

### 6.1 Research Question 1

Even though the results are based on a small qualitative sample of ten recruiters, they provide compelling evidence of more general trends in AI-driven hiring. The findings are given analytical strength by the consistency of responses across a diverse sample, even though they are not statistically representative. This suggests that the observed changes and ethical dilemmas, described in detail in Sections 5.1 and 5.3, probably have implications outside of the immediate study environment.

Empirically, respondents reported a reallocation of work activities, in which AI technologies execute candidate sourcing, CV screening, and initial evaluations, as analyzed in Section 5.1. It resulted in a significant time shift towards interpersonal and strategic work, including relationship management, employer brand, and long-horizon workforce planning. Some respondents highlighted that AI technologies improved decision-making quality due to faster and more correct candidate insights, but some complained about dark box algorithmic decisions that could not be explained to candidates, a concern explored further in Section 5.3.

Recruiters also cited increasing requirements for emerging skills, including data literacy, familiarity with ethical AI, and digital communication skills, as discussed in Section 5.2. Most noted that technical skills alone were insufficient; it became imperative to read and validate AI output critically as a skill required

in their new position. This empirical evidence signals the contradiction between delegating to AI systems and professional responsibility, a tension elaborated in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

In addition, interviews surfaced ethical concerns around AI bias and opacity, as examined extensively in Section 5.3. Respondents worried that algorithmic decision-making may, incidentally, re-inscribe gender, ethnic, or age-based discrimination if data inputs harbored biases. To prevent these dangers, respondents indicated that they took practical measures, including human review of AI-produced shortlists and transparent explanation of candidate data information practices, as illustrated through empirical examples in Section 5.3. Data evidence demonstrates how recruiters actively balance technological potential and ethical duty, and sheds empirical light onto how AI alters recruitment workflows and professional self. Whereas conceptual models provided a systematic perspective to how the work of recruiters has evolved, the empirical evidence brings complexity by describing how these evolutions are achieved in real organizational settings. Conceptually, AI will supposedly facilitate strategic work and make it more efficient; empirically, recruiters affirm these positives but in the same moment suggest challenges in retaining human judgment, fairness, and trust, as critically discussed in Sections 5.1 and 5.4.

## **6.2 Research Question 2**

The theoretical concepts proposed here are an integration of adopting AI and strategic management theories, shedding light on how the activity of recruiters is re-configured when mediated by technologies, as analytically developed in Sections 5.1–5.4.

From the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), it articulates that AI's perceived usefulness extends beyond productivity gains to strategic enablement. According to the empirical result AI sets recruiters free from mundane task work, allowing time for higher-level work like talent strategy, relationship building, and employer branding and this supports the assertion of TAM's traditional understanding by depicting that accepting technologies can alter work's character, as well as its efficiency, as demonstrated in Section 5.1.

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), it has been identified in the current research that recruiters' behavior intentions to adopt AI are shaped both by the organizational and ethical environment as well as perceived ease of use, as discussed in Section 5.2. Positive views among the respondents towards AI incorporation went hand in hand with trust in AI systems and manager support, while

skepticism arose due to issues of fairness, transparency, and bias consequently being consistent to TPB's perceived behavioral control, a dynamic illustrated in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Furthermore, by incorporating Strategic Job Transformation (SJT) and classical strategy theory (Ansoff, 1965), the analysis demonstrates that AI adoption facilitates a strategic reorientation of the recruitment function, as synthesized in Section 5.1. Recruiter's transition from being administrative executors to mediators, focusing on data-driven decision-making, candidate experience optimization, and ethical oversight, a transformation detailed in Section 5.1.

As the theoretical proposition that automation frees professionals to strategic work, the empirical evidence supports this proposition to a degree: recruiters are spending less time administrating, but their new strategic work is also partly set back due to insufficient training and a lack of AI transparency, concerns highlighted in Sections 5.2. As critically discussed in section 5.3 on ethics and accountability, considering TAM and TPB assumption on intention and acceptance, the interviews show that ethical awareness and emotional responses such as concern about losing control are equally key drivers of AI adoption behavior. Therefore, this result provides evidence that AI implementation is not just a technological implementation but a socio-ethical shift, in which human interpretation, affective work, and organizational ethics cannot be replaced, a conclusion developed in Section 5.5.

By demonstrating how AI-driven hiring shifts the recruiter's role from operational execution to strategic orchestration, the study verifies theoretical and empirical viewpoints, as synthesized in Section 5.5. According to theoretical findings, the adoption of AI is consistent with well-established models of strategic management and technology acceptance, broadening their purview to encompass identity-based and ethical aspects of professional transformation. Empirical findings offer concrete support of how recruiters perceive this shift, highlighting the rise of new skills, moral obligations, and human-AI hybrid cooperation, as evidenced through Sections 5.1–5.3.

The findings highlight the fact that human adaptability, critical thinking, and ethical governance are just as important to the future of recruitment as technological advancement, ensuring that AI enhances rather than replaces the crucial human components of hiring.

The theoretical frameworks that form the basis of this research, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and the Social Judgement Theory (SJT) are generally

supported by the empirical data provided in Chapters 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. However, these theories are also cumulatively extended by the empirical data, particularly through the summary presented in Section 5.5. The data in Chapter 5.1 provides strong evidence in favour of the TAM's "perceived usefulness" construct, showing that recruiters use AI as a professional reinvestment and as an efficient way to work.

TAM was in line with recruiters' reports of the benefits of AI automation's administrative work, which allowed them to focus more on relationship-building and employer-branding, as described in Section 5.1. However, the evidence also suggests that perceived usefulness also involves identity change, indicating that it is both symbolic and practical, which is expanding the scope of TAM. The results of Chapter 5.2 offer moderate to strong evidence in favour of the TPB theory, showing that the organizational context and the recruiters' trust in using the system both had an impact on their behavioural intentions towards AI. While those without organizational support were cautious, the digitally literate staff who had received support from the organization demonstrated high levels of acceptance, as illustrated in Section 5.2. Here, the TPB framework has been applied in the study and found difference in different contexts suggesting that applying TPB should take organizational context-specific factors into consideration.

SJT is partially supported because recruiters' acceptance or rejection of AI systems was influenced by their ethical pillars, which include fairness and transparency, as analyzed in Section 5.3. The evidence are still exploratory because of the qualitative design, even though this supports SJT's premise that judgements are filtered through preexisting attitudes. In comparison, Chapter 5.1 offers better theoretical grounding than Chapter 5.2 in terms of competencies and ethics. In summary, the empirical evidence found supports the theoretical position that AI enables efficiency and empowerment but offers fresh insights into new areas of ethics awareness and adaptation and accountability on the part of human actors, as combined in Section 5.5.

### **6.3 Theoretical Contributions**

The study extends the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by demonstrating that perceived usefulness in AI adoption is not limited to efficiency gains but also encompasses the reconfiguration of recruiter roles from administrative to strategic functions, as empirically illustrated in Section 5.1.

This moves beyond prior studies that conceptualize recruiters as passive technology adopters, highlighting instead their active negotiation of professional identity. Also the study enriches the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by showing that perceived behavioral control is strongly shaped by competence

development and organizational support, as analyzed in Section 5.2 and further elaborated in Section 5.4. While TPB traditionally frames control as individual confidence in performing a behavior, this study emphasizes that recruiter acceptance of AI depends on institutional training, digital literacy, and resources that extend beyond the individual level.

The application of Social Judgment Theory (SJT) to AI in recruitment provides new insights into ethical acceptance, as examined in Section 5.3. The findings show that recruiters with strong fairness and diversity anchors exhibit narrower latitudes of acceptance, adopting AI tools only when governance mechanisms such as bias audits and transparency protocols are present, as demonstrated in Section 5.3. Taken together, these contributions advance understanding of AI in recruitment as a process of role transformation, competence development, and ethical negotiation, offering a more comprehensive view than existing models of technology adoption alone.

## **6.4 Practical Implications**

From a practical perspective, the study provides actionable guidance for organizations implementing AI in recruitment, based on the empirical patterns identified in Sections 5.1–5.4. The findings suggest that organizations should frame AI as a supportive tool that frees recruiters for strategic and relational functions rather than as a replacement technology, as illustrated in Section 5.1. Providing structured training programs to enhance digital literacy and interpretive skills is essential to equip recruiters with the competencies needed to critically engage with algorithmic outputs, as emphasized in Section 5.2.

Moreover, organizations must develop robust governance frameworks, including bias audits, transparency protocols, and clear communication guidelines, to ensure ethical and responsible use of AI, as discussed in Section 5.3. These measures not only increase recruiter trust in AI systems but also enhance fairness and candidate confidence in the recruitment process. Finally, the study underscores the importance of positioning recruiters as active mediators between AI systems, candidates, and hiring managers, ensuring that human judgment and ethical considerations remain central in AI-enabled recruitment.

## 6.5 Limitations

Like all qualitative studies, this research is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The first limitation relates to the sample size and scope. The study included ten recruiters from mainly European organizations, which limits the generalizability of findings to broader contexts. While the sample was diverse in terms of industry and organization size, it does not capture the full range of global perspectives, particularly from regions where recruitment practices, labor markets, and AI regulations differ significantly, factors that may influence the dynamics identified in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Second, the study focused exclusively on the perspectives of recruiters, without incorporating the views of other stakeholders such as candidates, hiring managers, or system designers. Including these perspectives would provide a more holistic understanding of how AI transforms recruitment ecosystems beyond the recruiter-centered analysis presented in Sections 5.1–5.4. Candidates' experiences of fairness and transparency, in particular, represent an important area of inquiry that complements recruiters' insights into ethical concerns, as detailed in Section 5.3.

Third, the research design relied on semi-structured interviews, which allowed for rich, subjective accounts but did not include observational or longitudinal methods. As a result, the study captures perceptions at a single point in time, which may not reflect how attitudes and competencies evolve as recruiters gain more experience with AI tools. A longitudinal approach could provide valuable insights into how role transformation unfolds over time, building on the developments described in Sections 5.1 and 5.4.

Finally, while this study applied the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and Social Judgment Theory (SJT) to interpret the findings, these frameworks may not fully capture the socio-technical complexity of AI in recruitment beyond the dimensions analyzed in Sections 5.1–5.3. Issues such as power dynamics, regulatory interventions, and cross-cultural differences extend beyond the scope of these theories and represent areas where future theoretical integration is needed.

## **6.6 Future Research**

Future research should build on the limitations of this study as described in Section 6.5 above. Comparative studies across different cultural and regulatory environments could shed light on how context influences recruiters' acceptance of AI, challenges in retaining human judgement, fairness and trust, themes identified in Sections 5.2 and 5.3. Expanding the range of participants to include candidates, hiring managers, and technology providers would offer a multi-stakeholder perspective beyond the recruiter-focused analysis presented in Chapter 5.

Methodologically, longitudinal or ethnographic studies could provide deeper insights into how recruiters' roles and competencies evolve over time in response to continuous AI integration, extending the role transformation patterns described in Sections 5.1 and 5.4. Finally, theoretical work could extend beyond adoption frameworks to integrate perspectives from critical management studies, ethics, and socio-technical systems theory, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of AI's impact on recruitment and work, complementing the analytical synthesis presented in Section 5.5.

## **6.7 Ethical and Societal Implications**

The findings of this study underscore several important ethical and societal implications of AI in recruitment. While AI technologies offer efficiency gains and can reduce certain forms of human bias, they also risk amplifying existing inequalities and introducing new forms of discrimination if left unregulated. Recruiters in this study consistently expressed concerns about fairness, transparency, and accountability, indicating that ethical considerations are not peripheral but central to AI adoption in recruitment, as analyzed in Section 5.3.

From an ethical perspective, the study highlights the need for organizations to implement governance frameworks that ensure fairness and accountability in AI-assisted decision-making, echoing the empirical findings in Section 5.3. Practices such as bias audits, algorithmic transparency, and human-in-the-loop oversight are essential to prevent AI systems from functioning as opaque "black boxes," an issue discussed extensively in Section 5.3. Recruiters must be empowered to question, interpret, and, when necessary, override algorithmic outcomes. This not only safeguards candidate rights but also protects organizations from reputational and legal risks.

From a societal perspective, AI in recruitment raises questions about access to employment opportunities and the distribution of work. If recruitment algorithms are biased against particular groups, entire segments of the labor market may be systematically disadvantaged, reinforcing existing inequalities, a risk acknowledged by respondents in Section 5.3. Furthermore, the shifting role of recruiters toward strategic and oversight functions illustrates how technological change reconfigures professional identities and competencies, as detailed in Section 5.1. This raises broader questions about the future of work, the balance between human and machine judgment, and the ethical responsibilities of organizations adopting emerging technologies.

The study therefore suggests that policymakers, regulators, and organizations must collaborate to ensure that AI adoption in recruitment is aligned with societal values of fairness, equality, and inclusion. Recruitment decisions shape careers, livelihoods, and organizational cultures, making the ethical governance of AI in this domain particularly consequential. Ultimately, ensuring that AI amplifies rather than undermines the human dimensions of recruitment requires a commitment not only from individual organizations but also from society at large.

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# Appendix 1 Interview Guide

## Introduction and warm-up questions

1. *Can you briefly describe your professional background in recruitment and experience with AI-driven hiring technologies?*
2. *What types of AI-based recruitment tools have you used, and how long have you been using them?*

## Theme 1: Role transformation in AI-driven recruitment

1. *How has AI impacted your day-to-day tasks and enhanced your role as a recruiter?*
2. *Are there any aspects of your job that have become less relevant due to AI automation?*

## Theme 2: New competencies and skill requirements

1. *What new skills or competencies do recruiters need to effectively work with AI in hiring?*
2. *Have you received any training on AI-based recruitment tools, and how comfortable are you interpreting AI-generated hiring recommendations?*

## Theme 3: Decision-making and AI-human balance

1. *How do you balance AI-generated recommendations with your professional judgment in hiring decisions?*
2. *Can you describe a situation where you disagreed with an AI-based hiring suggestion and how you handled it?*

## Theme 4: Ethical considerations and accountability

1. *Have you encountered any concerns regarding bias or transparency in AI-driven hiring processes?*
2. *Who should be held accountable when an AI-based hiring decision leads to unintended consequences?*

**Theme 5: Challenges and future perspectives**

- 1. What are the biggest challenges you face when using AI in recruitment, and how do you see the role of recruiters evolving with AI advancements?*
- 2. What recommendations would you give to organizations implementing AI in recruitment to ensure a fair and effective process?*

**Closing remarks**

*Do you have any additional thoughts or experiences related to AI in recruitment that you'd like to share, and would you be open to a follow-up discussion if needed?*