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IMPACT OF AI- ENABLED RECRUITMENT PRACTICES ON CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE AND PERCEIVED FAIRNESS

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Abstract

The employment of AI within the recruitment industry has revolutionized the hiring process in terms of the impact on organizational performance and the perception of candidates. This paper focuses on examining the effects of AI-based recruitment practices on candidate experiences and their perceptions of fairness within the recruitment process. The purpose of this research is to understand how candidates interact with AI-based systems and how this interaction affects their overall perception of the recruitment process.

The research design was quantitative, and the collected data involved 130 participants that had been previously exposed to the use of AI recruitment tools. For the collection of the data, a Likert scale questionnaire was used. The collected data were analyzed by means of descriptive statistics and correlation.

The results indicate that AI-enhanced recruitment practices have a positive impact on the candidate experience, especially its efficiency, communication, and usability. But the impressions of fairness are rather medium, and the issues associated with transparency, prejudice, and inadequate human interaction are raised. Another positive correlation that the study establishes is between the experience of the candidate and the perceived fairness, where the better the experience during recruitment the higher the perceptions of fairness. Besides, it is also determined that candidate experience mediates the correlation between AI recruitment practices and perceived fairness.

The paper shows the relevance of balancing AI-oriented recruitment systems with human-centered design. It is implied that organizations are to pay attention to enhancing transparency, fairness, and

human components to make the recruitment process more satisfying and trustworthy to the candidate.

Keywords: AI Recruitment, Candidate Experience, Perceived Fairness, Recruitment Technology, Human Resource Management

1.1 Introduction

Due to the increased usage of artificial intelligence (AI), there have been many changes made to the operations in organizations, particularly in the field of human resource management. Recruitment and selection, an activity that has always involved human decision making, is gradually complemented by AI technology. Applicant tracking system, automated resume analysis, AI video interviewing, and chatbot are some examples of AI technology used by organizations to facilitate their recruitment and selection process as well as make the decision-making process more efficient (Davenport and Ronanki, 2018; Upadhyay and Khandelwal, 2018). This technology allows organizations to deal with large numbers of applicants and minimize time spent on the process.

One of the important constructs in the current research on recruitment is candidate experience, which is defined as the total impressions, feelings and responses of job seekers during the hiring process (Hausknecht et al., 2004). Favorable candidate experience leads to better employer branding, greater applicant satisfaction, and to a greater chance of being employed. On the other hand, a negative experience may harm the image of the organization and scare away would-be applicants to the company. System usability, responsiveness, transparency, and perceived fairness of the decision-making processes are the factors affecting the candidate experience in the context of AI-driven recruitment (Suen et al., 2019).

Another dimension that is critical in determining attitudes of candidates towards recruitment systems is perceived fairness. Gilliland (1993) suggests that procedural justice, which involves consistency, transparency, and chances of the candidates to show their skills, is the main determinant of fairness in selection processes. Recruitment systems based on AI are thought to be objective because they are grounded in data-driven algorithms, but studies indicate that candidates

might not be convinced that such systems are fair because of low levels of transparency and explainability (Black and van Esch, 2020). Many AI systems are black boxes in nature and therefore they are not easily understood by the candidates on how decisions are made, thus lowering the trust and acceptance factor.

Additionally, the presence of issues related to bias in algorithms is also another challenge that has contributed to the discussion around AI usage in recruitment. It is evident from various studies that the algorithms in use can replicate any inherent biases in data available in history, leading to discriminatory outcomes unintentionally (Raghavan et al., 2020). Not only are such issues related to ethics, but they have also been found to adversely affect the way candidates perceive the concept of fairness in the organization.

The latest studies identify the mutual dependence of AI-assisted recruitment, experience of the candidates, and perceived fairness. The positive experiences of the applicants with the AI-based systems are more likely to make them regard the recruitment process as fair, and negative experiences may cause dissatisfaction and mistrust (Langer et al., 2019). This implies that candidate experience can be a major process by which AI can affect the perception of fairness, and as such, it is a significant research topic.

The use of AI in the hiring process is also becoming very popular in emerging economies like India due to the rising digitalization and competitive talent market. Nevertheless, differences in the level of technological awareness, digital literacy, and cultural expectations could also impact the perception of the applicants regarding the hiring processes powered by AI (Upadhyay and Khandelwal, 2018). Nevertheless, there is still little empirical research that studies these relationships in these contexts.

Thus, in the present research, the impact of the use of AI in recruitment processes on candidate experience and perceptions of fairness, as well as the role of candidate experience as a mediator of the relationship between the two variables mentioned above, will be examined. It can be argued that through the implementation of candidate-centric practices, which will be based on a review of existing knowledge in the field, it will be possible to create more transparent and efficient recruitment systems.

In other words, the importance of this research lies in the fact that it may lead to the bridging of the gap between technological development and human-oriented management practice. In particular, in view of the fact that there is a trend towards using AI in the recruitment processes of organizations, the use of technology must meet certain requirements and provide a better candidate experience, ensuring transparency, respect, and a sense of justice. Such knowledge may help companies build their reputation and ensure higher candidate satisfaction and trust in their brand.

1.1.2 Evolution of AI in Recruitment: A Historical Overview

The context for current AI recruiting can be viewed against the backdrop of the evolution of technology in HR over time. The timeline below illustrates the significant developments in each period.

Time Period	Key Development	Technology Features
Early Stage (Pre-2010)	Online job portals (Naukri, LinkedIn, Monster) emerge; basic ATS for resume storage and keyword matching; email-based recruitment communications	Keyword matching algorithms; database management systems; basic automation of job posting and candidate tracking.
Growth Stage (2010–2018)	Social media recruitment; video interviewing platforms; psychometric assessment tools; early machine learning for resume screening; candidate CRM systems	NLP-based resume parsing; structured video interview platforms; online psychometric assessments; predictive analytics for candidate fit modelling

Advanced Stage (2018–Present)	AI-powered full-cycle recruitment platforms; chatbot-based candidate engagement; facial and voice analysis in video interviews; AI-driven diversity sourcing; real-time bias detection tools	Deep learning for candidate matching; sentiment analysis; computer vision for facial expression scoring; conversational AI chatbots; explainable AI dashboards for recruiters and candidates

Table 1.1: Evolution of AI in Recruitment

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

AI technology is becoming increasingly popular in the hiring processes, allowing companies to operate more efficiently, saving time and dealing with vast numbers of job seekers. The use of automated resume screening, virtual interviews, and decision-making algorithms exemplifies some of the ways in which AI technology has started to be used extensively within various industries. While there are numerous benefits associated with using AI technology, there are also new difficulties that arise with regards to how candidates perceive the hiring process, which has been largely overlooked by academic literature on the topic.

One of the main problems that have emerged with the use of AI technology in the hiring process is a lack of transparency when it comes to how decisions are made. Algorithms can review resumes, without fully comprehending how they assess each candidate's suitability for the position. Furthermore, the lack of human interaction throughout the process might result in negative emotions among applicants, as the hiring process lacks personalization and responsiveness towards job seekers' needs.

Perceived fairness is a crucial predictor of attitudes and behaviors of the candidates, such as their readiness to take employment offers and their perception of the organization in general. Although AI systems can be viewed as objective and consistent, the concept of algorithmic bias, absence of explainability, and no feedback mechanisms can compromise the perception of fairness.

Prospective candidates might be wondering whether artificial intelligence is effective in determining their competence and experience or whether the algorithms are biased.

Moreover, the candidate experience has become a prominent concept in the current recruitment practices, affecting the branding of employers and talent acquisition performance. Positive experience has the opportunity to boost the reputation of an organization whereas negative experience may discourage potential candidates and create negative word of mouth. Nevertheless, not much empirical research studies the specific impacts of AI-enabled recruitment practices on candidate experience and the influence that this experience has on the perception of fairness.

While there has been an increasing number of studies conducted on the utilization of AI in recruitment procedures, most of the existing research has emphasized its advantages for organizational efficiency rather than the effect it may have on the job candidates themselves. This problem appears to be even more pronounced in emerging markets, where new technologies have begun to penetrate into all aspects of business life. However, not much research has been devoted to studying the consequences this development may have for those involved in the recruiting process.

This paper aims to analyze how AI-based recruiting processes affect candidates' experiences and fairness perceptions and determine whether there is any mediation effect in this respect. Such an analysis may prove helpful for companies trying to adopt new technologies in their recruiting practices in order to become more efficient, ethical, and transparent.

Furthermore, it is necessary to pay attention to the topicality of this research topic in the context of increasing interest in digital recruiting solutions, because the balance between technological poise and humanistic values becomes especially important in this case. Businesses that ignore attitudes of potential employees may face challenges related to issues of trustworthiness, participation, and reputation of the employer. This research will allow for enhancing awareness about how artificial intelligence can be used productively in recruiting procedures without neglecting such aspects as justice and satisfaction of applicants.

1.3 Review of Literature

1.3.1 Artificial Intelligence in Recruitment

Introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) to the recruitment process has altered the traditional way recruitment is conducted in most sectors. Applicant tracking system, automatic resume filtering, chatbot, and AI-assisted video interview are some of the applications of AI used to make the recruitment process more effective (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). The technology makes it easier for organizations to process massive numbers of applications, cut down time to hire, and ensure uniformity during the screening process.

AI-based systems have a number of benefits, specifically, they can be used to automate repetitive activities and enhance the precision of candidate screening. Suen et al. (2019) claim that AI can effectively handle large volumes of data and help recruiters to pick the right candidates according to pre-set parameters, enabling recruiters to concentrate on more important areas of recruitment. Moreover, automation reduces human error and increases consistency in the assessment that is usually linked to more objectivity in the recruitment process. Predictive analytics can also be used to reinforce the decision-making process since patterns and trends in candidate data can be identified.

However, there are some challenges associated with integrating AI technology into the recruitment process. The problem with the transparency of algorithmic decisions is among the major ones. According to Black and van Esch (2020), a considerable number of AI programs are classified as black boxes, meaning that future employees cannot understand how their applications are evaluated. This aspect can result in a decline in trust and cause uncertainty among the applicants. In addition, companies might be unable to provide the necessary feedback to the applicants, which will worsen the situation.

Algorithms bias is another problematic concern. Even though AI systems can reduce human bias, they have the potential to reproduce the biases inherent in historical data utilized to develop algorithm training (Raghavan et al., 2020). It may lead to discriminatory practices and this can bring a question of ethics as far as using AI in hiring is concerned. Researchers have insisted on the need to create ethical AI frameworks in order to promote fairness, accountability, and

transparency (Martin, 2019).

Moreover, the increasing use of AI also has consequences on the position of human recruiters. Although automation is beneficial in creating efficiency, it diminishes the chance of personal contact, which is a crucial process in recruitment (Nikolaou, 2021). Human judgement is still necessary in the interpretation of the contextual information, in the concerns of the candidates and in the fairness of the decisions. Thus, companies have to balance both technological efficiency and human input in the recruitment processes.

1.3.2 Candidate Experience in Recruitment

Candidate experience is described as the general perceptions, feelings and responses of applicants during the recruitment process (Hausknecht et al., 2004). It has been one of the main factors that affects employer branding, organizational attractiveness, and results of talent acquisition. A good candidate experience builds a good image of an organization and high quality candidates are likely to be attracted as opposed to a negative experience which can lead to dissatisfaction and discouragement of future applications.

Candidate experience has been transformed in a major way with the growing use of digital technologies. The human touch is minimized in online recruitment sites and AI-enhanced services and can influence the emotional involvement of the candidates and the sense of connection to the organization (Nikolaou, 2021). Although the technologies enhance efficiency and accessibility, they can lead to a feeling of impersonality during the recruitment process, which might adversely affect the attitudes of the candidates and their satisfaction rates.

According to research, there are various factors that affect candidate experience in AI-based recruitment situations. They are the usability of the system, communication clarity, responsiveness, and perceived personalization (Suen et al., 2019). The candidates would have a positive attitude towards the organization when they find the system user-friendly and transparent. On the other hand, frustration and poor experiences can be caused by complex systems, lack of direction, and poor communication.

Availability of feedback and chances to interact with the candidate is another significant factor in candidate experience. Applicants appreciate prompt information on the status of their applications and effective communication (Bauer et al., 2001). When AI is used in recruitment, and many of the decisions are automated, lack of a feedback mechanism can decrease satisfaction and create uncertainty. Such communication deficiency may lead to the impression that the organization does not appreciate the effort and time of the candidate.

Moreover, behavioral outcomes have high implications of candidate experience. The positive experiences are linked to increased job acceptance, organizational commitment, and positive word-of-mouth, whereas negative experiences may result in negative withdrawal in the recruitment process and a negative reputation (Hausknecht et al., 2004). This brings into awareness the strategic value of coming up with recruitment systems that put a lot of emphasis on candidate experience coupled with operational efficiency.

1.3.3 Perceived Fairness in Recruitment

Perceived fairness is a central concept of recruitment research and is a critical factor in influencing candidate attitudes and behaviors. It is usually reviewed in the context of organizational justice, especially procedural fairness, which is the perceived fairness of the ways decisions are made (Gilliland, 1993). Consistency, transparency and opportunity to perform are some of the factors necessary in the perceptions of fairness.

It has been shown that when candidates feel that the recruitment process is fair, they tend to accept the results of the process, regardless of whether they were chosen or not (Bauer et al., 2001). Perceptions of fairness are not only determined by the results but also by the procedures that are involved in arriving at the results. Thus, there is need to be transparency, communication and consistency in upholding fairness.

Regarding AI-enabled recruitment, both technological and human factors affect the perception of fairness. Although AI systems can increase consistency and minimize human bias, their non-transparency and lack of explainability might have a negative impact on the perceptions of fairness (Black and van Esch, 2020). It is possible that the candidates will not be able to trust the decisions

made by systems which they do not know and they will not accept the results so much.

Also, the issue of algorithmic bias further makes perceptions of fairness more complicated. Research indicates that AI systems can lead to biased results when they are trained on past data that are representative of the current inequalities (Raghavan et al., 2020). This brings up ethical issues and shows why organizations need to be fair in their decision-making procedures that are driven by AI. To ensure trust and credibility the following issues must be addressed.

1.3.4 AI Recruitment, Candidate Experience, and Perceived Fairness

Research on the connection between AI-enabled recruitment, the experience of the candidates, and perceived fairness has been on the rise. According to Langer et al. (2019), perceptions of fairness and transparency have a significant effect on the reaction of candidates to AI-based interviews. In the same vein, Acikgoz et al. (2020) point out that candidate experience is an important factor in AI-mediated recruitment process attitudes.

There is evidence that candidate experience is a mediating variable between AI recruitment practices and perceived fairness. In the event that the applicants enjoy positive experiences with AI systems, they will view the recruitment process as being fair. On the other hand, bad experiences may cause lack of trust and satisfaction despite the system being efficient technically.

As more research is carried out, there is also a lot left to explore. The research tends to focus more on the organizational benefits such as efficiency and saving costs, but the results that relate to the candidates do not receive sufficient consideration (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). In addition, research that combines the use of AI for recruitment, the experience of the candidates, and fairness is yet to be carried out.

Another limitation of the existing literature is that it centers more on the developed countries. Only a few studies have been conducted in the emerging countries such as India, where cultural attitudes, digital literacy, and technological familiarity might differ from other countries.

Apart from all of this, the need for critical examination of the balance between technical success

and human-focused recruitment approach has become ever more important. While automation provides efficiency and consistency, relying too much on technology makes the recruitment lose its human touch which is necessary for building trust between people. That is why companies have to focus on using both automated tools and human judgment in order to ensure efficiency and justice.

1.3.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is created, according to the analysis of the literature available, to demonstrate how AI-enabled recruitment practice, candidate experience, and perceived fairness are interconnected. The scheme implies that AI recruitment practices have a direct impact on candidate experience, which in its turn has an impact on perceived fairness. Also, perceived fairness can also be directly influenced by AI-enabled recruitment. Candidate experience is hence suggested to be a mediating variable in this relationship. The study is based on this framework to conduct the empirical investigation.

What is more, the increased use of AI in hiring processes points to the necessity to research how candidates changed their psychological and behavioral reactions to technology-based procedures. Though AI systems are created to improve efficiency and objectivity, applicants can judge them by their trust levels, perceived power, and knowledge of the process. It has been revealed that people tend to embrace technology more when they feel that it is open, dependable and is in line with their expectations (Davis, 1989). Where there is no control over the process and less chance to meet the decision-makers in recruitment situations, less confidence in the system may be developed in the candidates.

Also, communication is a more significant aspect of AI-enabled recruitment. Timely updates, instructions, and meaningful feedback may go a long way in enhancing candidate perceptions and lessening uncertainty. Companies that successfully implement a coordinated approach to communication and AI technology are more prone to improving the experience and the perception of fairness among candidates. It shows the importance of developing recruitment mechanisms that not only capitalize on technological capabilities but also address the needs and worries of people as individuals.

Another aspect worth considering is the implications of using artificial intelligence for recruiting. Not only can unfavorable recruiting experiences result in short-term implications, but they may also influence candidates' intentions to apply in the future and organizational reputations as well. Therefore, organizations need to develop a balanced approach, which will allow combining efficiency and humanism. It helps emphasize the importance of the research on candidate experience as one of the links between AI recruitment and fairness perceptions.

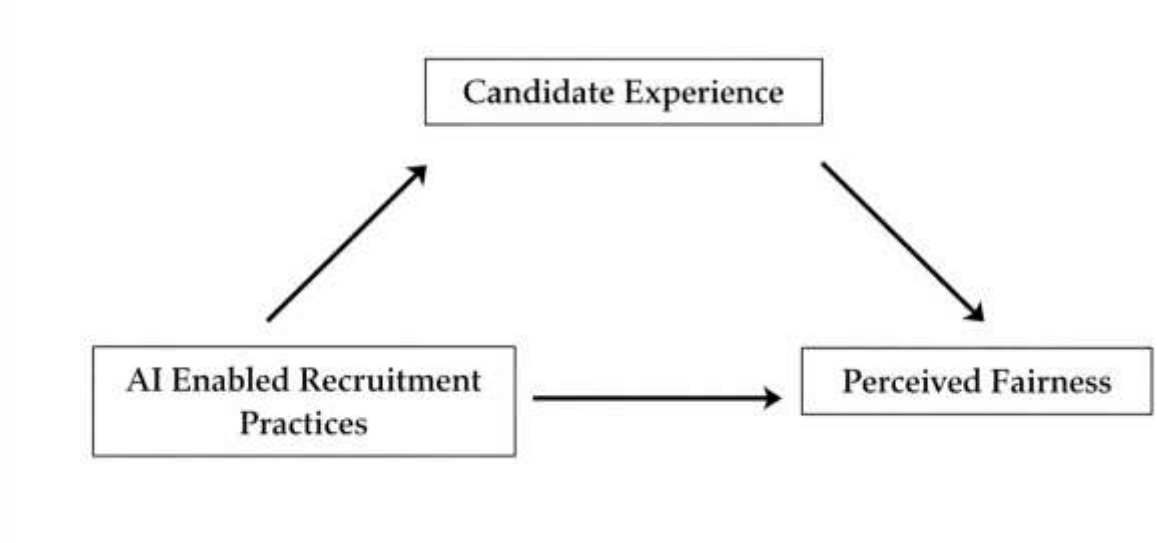


Fig 1.1 : Conceptual Framework of the study

1.4 Identification of Research Gaps

Following are the research gaps found from the existing literature review on AI-based recruitment processes:

1. **Need for an overall examination of AI tools:** Current research efforts are centered on examining single applications of AI technology used in the hiring process. Examples include chatbots and resume-screening tools. This approach misses out on the reality that recruitment processes today use several AI tools simultaneously.
2. **Shortage of attention paid to emerging markets :** Most of the studies done in the past have considered developed nations. As a result, the results found may not be relevant to

other settings such as emerging economies like India, where candidates may have varying digital and technological experiences.

3. **Mediation analysis missing:** Even though the two constructs have received a lot of attention from scholars, not many empirical studies have looked at the mediation role that candidate experience plays in the link between AI-supported recruitment processes and perceptions of fairness.
4. **Unbalanced focus on organizational vs candidate interests:** Previous research in this area has largely focused on the gains of organizations using technology for recruiting, including gains in terms of effectiveness, cost savings, and efficiency. However, little has been said about candidate-focused outcomes.
5. **Use of combined theoretical frameworks with limited scope**

   Very few studies have used a theoretical framework by employing theories like TAM and organizational justice theory to explain technological adoption and perceptions of justice in recruitment processes that use AI technology.

6. **Absence of quantitative evidence from real-life settings:** Most of the literature employs qualitative research design or experimental designs that do not give an accurate picture of the situation candidates face in the actual recruitment process. Quantitative evidence is necessary to establish these connections.

To address these challenges, this study intends to explore the effect of AI in the recruitment process on candidate experience and fairness perception, focusing especially on the mediating effect of candidate experience in India.

1.5 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The research draws on popular models that discuss technology utilization and fairness perceptions within the organization's processes. The research will employ a model combining the Technology Acceptance Model and Organizational Justice Theory to understand the views of candidates regarding artificial intelligence recruiting. Such an approach provides a focused and holistic foundation for understanding the relationship between AI recruiting and fairness.

1.5.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

In accordance with Davis (1989), the TAM states that attitudes towards innovations depend upon two major dimensions, namely, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness means the level of belief that the usage of the system enhances the efficiency of the user, while the term perceived ease of use has been taken as the absence of effort in using an innovation (Davis, 1989).

In the case of AI-driven recruitment processes, candidates tend to benefit from such systems if they are user-friendly and accurate. AI technologies that simplify the entire application process, offer immediate feedback, and increase decision accuracy greatly help to boost candidates' experience. Otherwise, complex technologies will be resisted by candidates.

Therefore, TAM offers significant theoretical justification for studying the relationship between AI-driven recruitment and candidates' experiences.

1.5.2 Organizational Justice Theory

Organizational Justice Theory describes individuals' perception of fairness in organizational procedures and results. There are several aspects of it; however, procedural justice is especially applicable in the context of recruiting people. In procedural justice, there is a need to ensure that the process of making the decision is fair in terms of consistency, clarity, and impartiality (Leventhal, 1980).

Recruitment based on artificial intelligence requires fair evaluation of candidates in relation to transparency and objectivity. However, candidates do not know the methods utilized in AI and have very little interaction with other humans; therefore, feelings of unfairness and lack of transparency develop. Additionally, there are concerns related to the presence of bias in algorithms.

In this context, the significance of Organizational Justice Theory in the analysis of recruiting fairness based on AI can be seen clearly.

1.5.3 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

This technology acceptance model is known as the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) proposed by Venkatesh et al. (2003). It describes the technology acceptance process through four significant determinants namely, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions.

With respect to AI-based recruitment processes, all four elements play a vital role in determining how candidates feel about using this technology. The performance expectancy refers to how useful a candidate believes the technology to be when assessing evaluation and selection criteria. The effort expectancy is determined by the level of ease in dealing with such technology while social influence is concerned with the perception of the candidate influenced by peers or other professional relations.

While UTAUT offers an improved perspective on technology acceptance, this research is based mainly on TAM for the sake of a streamlined and concise theoretical lens to better capture the candidate's experience.

1.5.4 Integration of Theories with the Study Model

The combination of TAM and Organizational Justice theory will form a clear theoretical base for this study. TAM will help to explain how candidates interact with AI technologies and what factors are involved in forming a particular experience. The efficiency, simplicity, and reliability of the AI tools will determine whether or not they produce a positive candidate experience.

Organizational Justice theory will help to understand how people perceive fairness within the process of organizational operations. Particularly, Organizational Justice theory suggests that individuals perceive fairness by assessing the transparency, consistency, and unbiased nature of a certain process.

Therefore, combining both theories, a logical relationship between candidate experience with technological tools used during the recruitment process and perceptions of candidate experience emerges. AI recruitment practices can affect candidate experience, and it, in its turn, determines how fair applicants find the procedure.

Consequently, candidate experience becomes the mediating factor between recruitment practices and candidate experience. It forms the basis for analyzing interconnections between the main variables in the study.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Scope of the Study

This research will explore the effect of AI-enabled recruitment procedures on candidate experience and perceptions of fairness. Today, more organizations are utilizing intelligence to improve human resource management functions. In particular, AI is used by many organizations to conduct recruiting activities in different ways. This research will explore how AI impacts the perceptions that candidates hold about the recruitment process and its fairness.

The research will focus on individuals who have been involved in AI-powered recruiting processes. These are processes characterized by the use of AI in various capacities such as resume screening systems, AI chatbots, virtual interviews and algorithmic decision-making software. The study will interview candidates and obtain information from their experiences rather than opinions alone.

The participants in this research will be individuals in India that have undergone recruitment via AI technology. It will be done on this population because India is fast adopting AI recruitment technologies without having adequate studies on the impact on candidate perceptions. This will fill a research gap by focusing on the perceptions of a relatively new audience in terms of AI.

The analysis investigates three factors – AI-enabled recruitment strategies, candidate experience,

and candidate perception of the fairness of recruitment processes. The author explores the relationships between these variables and particularly focuses on the impact of candidate experience on the other two variables. This research allows drawing conclusions regarding the impact of technology on candidates' perceptions of justice.

The study uses quantitative data. For that, the researcher employs a structured survey among respondents. The cross-sectional design is used meaning that the study analyzes one-time data collection. The aim of the analysis is to obtain an overview of candidates' opinions and experiences and assist organizations in building advanced recruitment systems.

Although the study has several limitations related to the sampling technique used (only a part of the population) and the fact that not all possible AI tools were explored, there are also many positive aspects of the study. For example, the study demonstrates the changes AI introduced in recruiting processes and its impact on candidates.

2.2 Research Objectives

The main purpose of the research is to investigate the effect of recruitment using AI technology on the candidate experience and perception of fairness in the recruitment process. Considering the increased application of artificial intelligence in the hiring process, there is a need to understand the effects that these innovations have on the candidate's experience and perception. The following are the specific purposes of the research:

1. To investigate the influence of AI-driven recruitment processes on the experience of candidates, especially concerning system usability, effective communication, and quality interactions.
2. To explore the effect of AI-driven recruitment processes on fairness perception, including transparency, consistency, and lack of discrimination during the recruitment process.
3. To analyze the association between candidate experience and fairness perception in AI-driven recruitment processes.
4. To determine the mediating effect of candidate experience on the link between AI-driven recruitment processes and fairness perception.
5. To comprehend the candidate perception of AI-driven recruitment processes in an Indian

setting.

2.3 Framing of Research Hypotheses

The development of the research hypotheses in this study will be guided by the findings from the existing literature and the theoretical background behind the topic. The deductive method is used to develop hypotheses using existing theories such as TAM, Organizational Justice Theory, and UTAUT (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). These theories help to understand how the candidates perceive and react to AI-driven recruitment processes.

H1: The use of AI in recruiting practices affects the experience of job applicants.

The use of AI in recruiting practices may also influence how fair applicants perceive the selection process to be. According to Organizational Justice Theory, transparency, consistency, and absence of bias are crucial considerations when perceiving fairness (Gilliland, 1993). However, since AI technologies are not always explainable, uncertainty arises. Hence, the second hypothesis is:

H2: AI-powered recruiting techniques have a considerable effect on perceived fairness.

Candidate experience is yet another factor that affects the perception of fairness. When candidates have a positive experience when going through the recruiting process, their trust and acceptance increase, thus, resulting in fairness (Hausknecht et al., 2004). Thus, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H3: Candidate experience has a considerable effect on perceived fairness.

Lastly, according to current literature, the candidate's experience is found to be a mediator between AI-enabled recruitment methods and perceptions of fairness.

H4: The candidate's experience acts as a mediator in the relation between AI-enabled recruitment practices and fairness perceptions.

The above-mentioned hypotheses will be tested empirically during the course of this research study.

2.4 Research Design

In the present study, the use of a quantitative approach in investigating the relationships among the use of AI in hiring processes, the experiences of the applicants, and the perceptions of fairness is envisaged. The adoption of the approach is thought to be justified since it facilitates systematic data collection in numeric form, making it possible to utilize statistics in analyzing the interrelationships between variables (Creswell, 2014).

The current research is both descriptive and explanatory in nature. First, since it is a descriptive study, the research aims at describing the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of those candidates who have undergone the process of AI-driven recruiting. In this respect, the research will provide a detailed account of the attitudes and experiences of candidates towards AI tools used in recruiting and also the perception of fairness in the recruitment process. Moreover, being an explanatory research, the current research will try to establish the causal relationships between independent and dependent variables, which are the focus of the research.

Since the collection of data will only be done once from the subjects in the study, cross-sectional research design has been considered suitable in this case. Cross-sectional research design is very good for collecting data associated with perception and experience since there is no need to consider any change in the observation that will take place within the duration of conducting the study (Saunders et al., 2019). In addition to being fast, the cross-sectional research design is very resourceful and thus can easily fit within an academic study.

In this study, a deductive approach has been adopted. This involves developing hypotheses on the basis of theoretical perspectives and empirical validation. There are many theoretical perspectives used in this study including Technology Acceptance Model, Organizational Justice Theory, and UTAUT. Hypotheses have been developed by basing on the theory that the adoption of artificial intelligence recruitment process creates perceptions and experiences that can be validated by the different theoretical perspectives (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

The primary data was obtained by means of a structured questionnaire that was used to measure the perceptions on justice in the adoption of artificial intelligence recruitment process.

Data analysis is done using the methods of statistics, such as correlation analysis and regression

analysis to identify relationships among variables. Additionally, mediation analysis is performed to measure the effect of the indirect relationship between the impact of AI-based hiring processes on the perception of fairness among candidates. The application of these methods makes it possible to analyze the direct and indirect relationship.

In general, the choice of the methodology for this study can be considered quite adequate since it includes theoretical foundations and empirical analysis, providing an opportunity to collect and analyze data systematically.

2.5 Methods for Data Collection & Variables of the Study

In this case, the current research will be based on the premise of acquiring primary data because this will enable the researcher to gather information directly from individuals who have been recruited using the AI system. It should be noted that the process of gathering primary data will be appropriate in this research because primary data gathered will always be relevant to the purpose of the research as stated by Creswell (2014).

For collecting data in this study, a structured questionnaire was used, which is known as an excellent instrument of research in quantitative research studies. Structured questionnaires help in standardizing responses of participants, thus making it easier to analyze them statistically. Structured questionnaires are more clear, unambiguous, and easy-to-answer questions compared to open-ended ones. In this study, the structured questionnaire was distributed using online channels. Specifically, Google Forms were utilized for distributing the questionnaire. There are various reasons why the use of the online channel is beneficial for this study. First, the online channel makes it easier and cheaper to distribute the questionnaire among potential respondents. Second, online data collection enables one to reach people all over the world rather than just local respondents. This strategy is appropriate in this study because the target population had participated in recruitment activities driven by digital technology.

The questionnaire is divided into four main sections. The first section captures demographic information, including age, gender, and educational qualification. This section also includes a screening question to ensure that only respondents who have experienced AI-enabled recruitment processes are included in the study. This step helps maintain the relevance and validity of the data

collected.

Secondly, this section aims to capture the independent variable, which is AI-based recruitment methods. The variable is described as the use of artificial intelligence technology in recruitment processes such as the use of automated resume filtering, chatbots, AI-enabled video interviews, and decisions from algorithms. The questions in this section aim to evaluate the level of effectiveness, efficiency, usability, and clarity associated with the use of such AI tools. The above dimensions are in accordance with the Technology Acceptance Model, which focuses on the usefulness and ease of use of technology as critical factors in determining its acceptance (Davis, 1989).

The third variable is candidate experience, which works both as the dependent variable and as the mediating variable in this study. Candidate experience refers to the overall perceptions, emotional state, and level of satisfaction of an individual in the recruitment process from start to finish. The measurement scale for candidate experience is based on the ease of interaction, effectiveness of communication, engagement, level of comfort, and level of satisfaction. The mediating influence of candidate experience as one of the variables in this study can be attributed to the assumption that the impact of AI on perceived fairness in recruitment depends on candidate experience.

The fourth set evaluates fairness perception, which is the main dependent variable of this research. Fairness perception involves the degree to which the job applicants feel that the recruitment process is unbiased, transparent and fair. The variables are rated according to various dimensions such as procedural fairness, transparency, equality of treatment and belief in the process itself. The dimensions have been selected based on Organizational Justice Theory where fairness forms an important element in influencing behavior (Gilliland, 1993).

Variables in the research are assessed using the five point Likert Scale that runs from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Likert, 1932). The technique gives respondents an opportunity to rate how much they agree or disagree with certain statements, thus making it possible to quantify qualitative information into data form. The application of Likert scale in behavioral studies is common owing to the ease associated with it.

Validity and reliability were guaranteed by using several questions to measure every construct, taking into account their multiple dimensions while reducing possible errors. Moreover, the questionnaire was checked in terms of clarity, relevance, and logical coherence before distributing it.

The gathered data will be analyzed statistically applying different approaches, including correlation analysis and regression analysis. Besides, the mediation analysis will be performed to estimate the indirect influence of AI recruitment practices on the sense of fairness in candidates through their experience. Such an approach allows analyzing both direct and indirect relations between the selected variables.

On the whole, the used data gathering procedure and variable measuring strategy in this research project create a well-organized framework for investigating the effect of AI-enabled recruitment practices on candidates' experiences and sense of fairness.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 Techniques for Data Analysis

In the current research, a quantitative analysis method has been used to examine the influence of recruitment methods that leverage AI technology on the candidates' experience and perception of fairness.

A quantitative approach is considered the most suitable one for use in this research because it allows for measuring the variables and statistically testing the relationships among them. The data for this research were gathered using an online questionnaire that was self-administrated by the participants. A total of 130 responses were obtained from people who have experienced the use of recruitment technology based on AI.

Before proceeding to analyze the data, a filtering process was used to determine the validity and completeness of the data set. The data set was checked for any missing, inconsistent, or invalid entries to ensure the quality of the data. Once the data were filtered, the cleaning, coding, and organization processes were performed before conducting statistical tests on the data.

Data analysis was done in three separate stages. In the first stage, descriptive statistics were utilized to describe and define the basic nature of the data. Variables were examined based on frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Descriptive statistics offered a snapshot of the demographics of the respondents and showed the general trend of their responses toward artificial intelligence-based recruitment strategies.

Internal consistency reliability tests were performed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient during the second stage of the research to determine internal consistency of scales employed in the research. All three constructs, including AIRP, CE, and PF, were tested for internal consistency of their items measuring the constructs. The test was considered acceptable when Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reached values equal to or above 0.7.

The third stage of the research entailed conducting statistical inferential analysis in order to test the hypothesized relationships and the relationships between variables. The association and the direction between the variables were measured using Pearson correlation analysis while linear regression analysis was applied to examine the effects that the employment practices involving the application of artificial intelligence have on the candidate experience and perception of fairness. In addition to this, mediation analysis was conducted based on the guidelines set by Baron and Kenny (1986). These guidelines include four steps necessary for establishing whether there is a mediating effect of the variable on the relationship between others.

The statistical tests were performed using PSPP software and Python (Jupyter Notebook, Pingouin). These tests ensure that the analysis is correct, versatile, and strong. The integration of the three types of studies will provide full insight into the relationship between the variables in the study and justify the accuracy of the findings of the study.

3.2 Hypotheses Testing and Methods

Hypotheses guiding the current research are based on the following theoretical constructs that include TAM and Organizational Justice Theory. The mentioned theories have been used to

investigate relations between AI-based recruitment processes, job candidate experience, and perception of fairness. Hypotheses formulated below aim at evaluating both direct and indirect relationships between the discussed factors.

The hypotheses are stated as follows:
H1: AI-assisted recruitment practices have a positive effect on candidate experience.
H2: AI-assisted recruitment practices have a positive effect on perceived fairness.
H3: Candidate experience has a positive effect on perceived fairness.
H4: Candidate experience acts as a mediator between AI-assisted recruitment practices and perceived fairness.

To test these hypotheses, suitable statistical methods were used in an organized manner. First, there was a simple linear regression used to analyze the direct relationship between these variables. In hypothesis one, the independent variable is AI-based recruiting processes, whereas the dependent variable is candidate experience. Such an analysis will be instrumental in arriving at a judgment on whether AI-based recruitment programs influence the candidate's experience.
Likewise, hypothesis two was tested by a different regression analysis whereby the independent variable is AI-based recruiting processes, while the dependent variable is the fairness of such processes. The aim was to ascertain whether candidates perceive AI-based recruiting processes to be fair and unbiased.

As for H3, there is a necessity of conducting regression analysis and Pearson correlation analysis. The reason is that Pearson correlation analysis enables one to determine if there is any link between the experience of a candidate and fairness perception. This link is further analyzed through regression analysis to determine its predictability with respect to perceptions of fairness.

The test for H4 was carried out using mediation analysis based on the four-stage procedure outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). Mediation analysis requires the conducting of several regressions that will help in determining whether mediation is present. The first step in this process entails testing whether there is a significant relationship between the independent variables (AI-based hiring

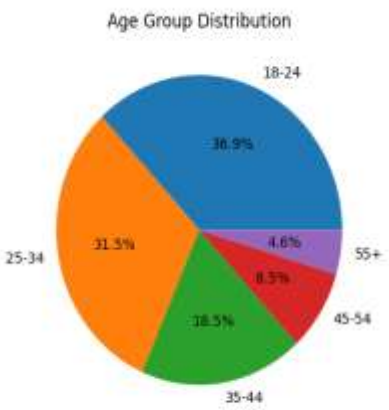
procedures) and the mediator (candidate experience). The second step involves checking whether the mediator predicts the dependent variable (perceived justice). The third step is where the independent variable predicts the dependent variable significantly. The fourth step is where the inclusion of both the independent variable and the mediator reduces the strength of the relationship between them.

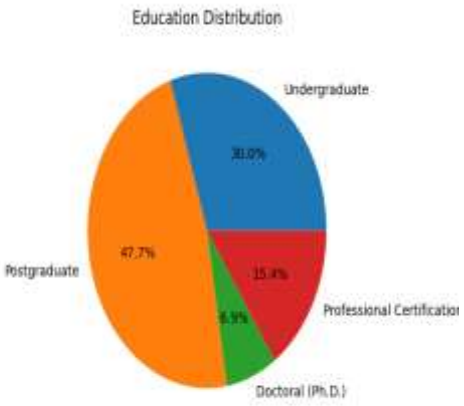
Moreover, the significance of regression coefficients and goodness-of-fit indicators was analyzed in order to ensure the reliability of results obtained. Statistical significance was evaluated based on the correct confidence level, which amounted to 95% ($p<0.05$). All calculations were carried out using such tools as PSPP and Python (with Jupyter Notebook and the Pingouin library).

On the whole, the application of regression and correlation analysis combined with the methodology of mediation analysis can be considered quite effective for testing hypotheses, allowing one to understand both direct and indirect relationships between variables under study.

3.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

3.3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents





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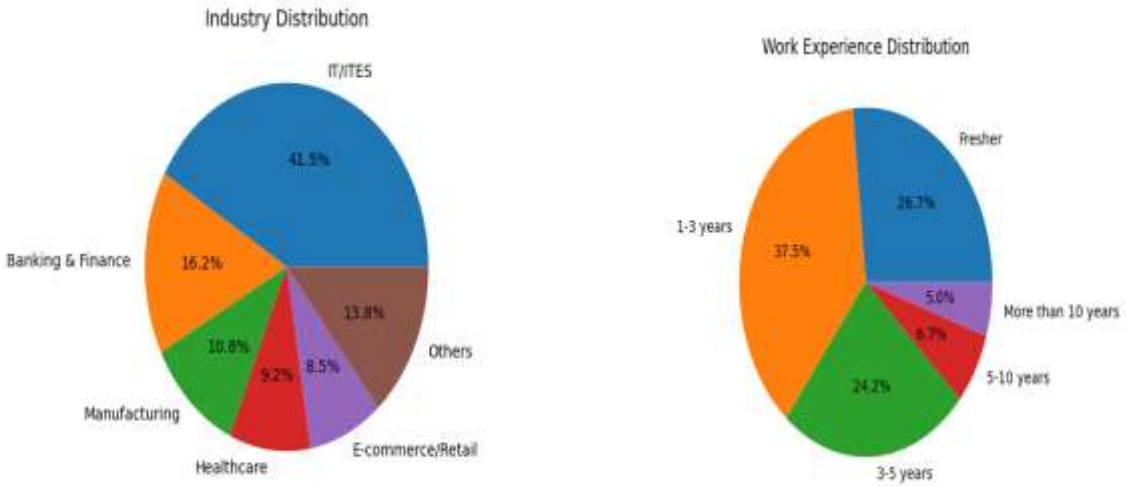

Fig 3.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

According to the demographic profile of the participants, there is a predominance of youth with high education among the sample population, whereby a good number of the participants belong to the 18-34 years age bracket. The above scenario suggests a demographic group that would most probably be aware of and embrace the use of AI technologies in recruitment. There are many participants who have obtained their bachelor's and postgraduate qualifications.

3.3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3.1 below demonstrates descriptive statistics for each of the three constructs studied in this research project by considering their average values and standard deviations. First of all, it should be noted that, in relation to the AI-Enabled Recruitment Practices construct, its average rating was 3.89 (SD = 0.74). In other words, respondents are relatively positive about the use of artificial intelligence in recruiting practices.

Secondly, as regards the Candidate Experience construct, it should be admitted that its average rating was even higher and amounted to 4.04 (SD = 0.78). Thus, candidates have a relatively positive attitude towards artificial intelligence-based recruiting procedures.

Finally, with regard to the Perceived Fairness construct, its average value was 3.68 (SD = 0.81).

Construct	No. of Items	Composite Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
AI-Enabled Recruitment Practices	6	3.89	0.74	Generally Positive
Candidate Experience	7	4.04	0.78	Positive
Perceived Fairness	7	3.68	0.81	Moderately Positive

The analysis of each of the AI-Enabled Recruitment Practices items revealed two factors that received the highest appreciation of the interviewees: automated status update (M = 4.27) and AI-based job matching (M = 4.16). In addition, the efficiency in terms of speed (M = 4.12) that can be achieved using AI technology received high ratings from the vast majority of participants (85.38% noted the increase in speed). In addition, the effectiveness of AI-based video interviewing (M = 3.63) is viewed differently as 25.81% did not feel comfortable with it.

As for the Candidate Experience area, the top-ranked AI application practices include ease of interaction with the recruiting process (M = 4.19) and company's image (M = 4.21). Thus, the convenient AI system may be highly useful for improving the attitude towards future employer. Respondents also showed their willingness to recommend AI tool usage (M = 4.08), while 77.69% said they would do that. As far as anxiety level in comparison with the conventional hiring technique is concerned, its value (M = 3.77) is quite diversified.

In regard to the dimension of Perceived Fairness, both work evaluation (M = 3.99) and decision-making consistency (M = 3.87) showed positive attitudes towards AI technologies. The right to

appeal against AI decision-making, however, showed the lowest perception score (M = 3.30). This can be considered a disadvantage of the procedural aspect of the fairness dimension. Also, there is inconsistency in the evaluation of transparent decision-making (M = 3.61) and decision-making biases (M = 3.55).

3.3.3 Cronbach's Alpha Test

3.3.3.1 Reliability Test on AI Recruitment Practices

Cronbach Alpha's reliability coefficient was determined for all the three measuring instruments. One of the types of reliability that is used widely in social science research studies is the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. The acceptable values lie above 0.70, the good values lie above 0.80, and the excellent values lie above 0.90 (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 3.2: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients

Scale	**No. of Items**	**Cronbach's Alpha (α)**	**Interpretation**
AI-Enabled Recruitment Practices	6	0.87	Good
Candidate Experience	7	0.89	Good
Perceived Fairness	7	0.91	Excellent

All three measures possessed satisfactory to good levels of reliability. Specifically, the AIRP measure possessed an alpha value of 0.87, while the CE measure demonstrated an alpha value of

0.89; hence, it is clear that both measures have managed to meet the threshold value of 0.80 and have thus been shown to possess internal consistency. On the other hand, the PF measure was able to demonstrate its ability to be reliable through the value of $\alpha = 0.91$.

3.3.4 Regression Analysis – Hypotheses H1 and H2

A total of two simple linear regressions were estimated using PSPP to test the predictive effect of AI recruitment practices on (a) candidate experience, and (b) perceived fairness. The independent variable in both regressions was the AIRP scale, while CE and PF were dependent variables in Model 1 and Model 2 respectively.

Table 3.3: Linear Regression Analysis Summary

Model	Dependent Variable	R^2	F-value	p-value	β (Standardised)	Result
Model 1 (H1)	Candidate Experience	0.48	47.83	< 0.001	0.54	H1 Supported
Model 2 (H2)	Perceived Fairness	0.41	38.17	< 0.001	0.48	H2 Supported

In accordance with Model 1, the degree of correlation between AI usage in recruiting employees and experience is extremely high ($F = 47.83$, $p < 0.001$). The rationale behind the extremely high positive correlation is a degree of statistical significance in terms of the standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.54$), giving $R^2 = 0.48$, meaning that AI usage in recruiting employees comprises 48% of the experience.

Moreover, in the second situation, the results were obtained because of the presence of a moderate positive correlation between the usage of AI in hiring and fairness ($F = 38.17$, $p < 0.001$). In this connection, considering the value of the regression beta coefficient equal to 0.48, and the determination coefficient being $R^2 = 0.41$, it becomes possible to state that the usage of AI in hiring is responsible for over 41% of the variance in fairness. Other important factors include biases, transparency, and consistency.

3.3.5 Pearson Correlation Analysis -Testing H3

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships among all three constructs.

Table 3.4: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	AI Recruitment Practices	Candidate Experience	Perceived Fairness
AI Recruitment Practices	1.000	0.531	0.487
Candidate Experience	0.531	1.000	0.612
Perceived Fairness	0.487	0.612	1.000

$p < 0.01$ (two-tailed)

From the results obtained in the correlation analysis, there seem to be three important bivariate relationships. First, the relationship between AI-Enabled Recruitment Practices and Candidate Experience ($r = 0.531$, $p < 0.01$) suggests that there exists a moderately positive correlation between these two variables. This means that the more AI-enabled recruitment practices are employed in the recruitment process, the more satisfied the candidate experience will be. Second,

another important bivariate relationship exists between AIRP and Perceived Fairness ($r = 0.487$, $p < 0.01$), showing that there is a contribution from AI toward the perception of fairness. On the other hand, hypothesis H3 seems to show that the strongest relationship exists between Candidate Experience and Perceived Fairness ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.01$).

3.3.6 Mediation Analysis - Testing H4

To test hypothesis 4 which states that the experience of the candidate mediates the relationship between AI-aided recruitment practices and perceived fairness, mediation analysis was conducted using Python software (Jupyter Notebook and Pingouin library) following the four-step process outlined by Baron & Kenny (1986). The variables include X – AI Recruitment Practices, M – Candidate Experience, and Y – Perceived Fairness.

Table 3.5: Mediation Analysis Results (Baron & Kenny Framework)

Path	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Significance	Interpretation
Path a: AI Practices → Candidate Experience	0.714	< 0.05	Significant	Strong direct effect
Path b: Candidate Experience → Perceived Fairness	0.581	< 0.05	Significant	Strong direct effect
Total Effect (c): AI Practices → Perceived Fairness	0.483	< 0.05	Significant	Direct unmediated effect

Direct Effect (c'): AI Practices → Fairness (controlling M)	0.268	< 0.05	Significant	Reduced but remains significant
Indirect Effect (a × b): Via Candidate Experience	0.415	< 0.05	Significant	Partial mediation confirmed

The first condition in support of the mediation hypothesis (step 1) is met due to the strong effect of AI recruitment on candidate experience ($\beta = 0.714$, $p < 0.05$). The second condition for the mediation hypothesis (step 2) is also met due to the strong effect of candidate experience on the perception of fairness ($\beta = 0.581$, $p < 0.05$). Step three is met since there is the strong effect of the total effect of AI practice on the perception of fairness ($\beta = 0.483$, $p < 0.05$). Step four involves testing the effect of the inclusion of the mediator on the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Therefore, the effect of candidate experience on the perception of fairness ($c' = 0.268$, $p < 0.05$) is lower compared to the total effect ($c = 0.483$).

However, the former is still statistically significant. This trend in findings indicates that there is partial mediation. Hence, the AI recruitment practices affect the perceived fairness through the candidate experience improvement both directly and indirectly. It can be said that the null hypothesis H04 is not accepted because H4 is accepted.

3.3.7 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesi	Statement	Test Used	Key Statistic	Result

s				
H1	AI practices → Candidate Experience	Linear Regression	β=0.54, R^2=0.48, p<.001	Supported
H2	AI practices → Perceived Fairness	Linear Regression	β=0.48, R^2=0.41, p<.001	Supported
H3	Candidate Experience → Perceived Fairness	Pearson Correlation	r=0.612, p<.01	Supported
H4	CE mediates AIRP → PF	Baron & Kenny Mediation	Indirect β=0.415, p<.05	Partially Supported

Table 3.6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

First, each of the four research hypotheses can be proven based on the conducted empirical study; therefore, the application of artificial intelligence within the recruitment process contributes to the positive development of the candidate experience and the recruitment process itself, becoming one of the major contributors to the latter. According to the results of the empirical study, the implementation of AI contributes to the improvement of the performance and usability of the

recruitment process, which, in turn, positively affects candidates' interaction with and attitude toward the recruiting firm.

Second, the results of the empirical study show that the application of AI recruitment practices does positively affect candidates' fairness perceptions, indicating that candidates realize that there is an objective criterion used for hiring decisions. However, there is no direct link between artificial intelligence and fairness perception, as the empirical data suggests that candidate experience serves as a mediator between them.

Moreover, another factor contributing to the importance of the findings is that the results of the mediation test have proven that candidates' experience serves as a mediator to the effects that artificial intelligence technology has regarding recruiting processes. That is, it is vital to acknowledge the fact that even though the employment of AI technologies affects the perception of fairness in an independent way, its effect may be amplified by improving candidates' experience.

In conclusion, based on the results obtained in the research paper, it should be said that organizations cannot rely solely on the efficiency of technological tools and, thus, must focus on recruiting processes that are fair and candidates-oriented.

4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Research Outcomes and Findings

From the results obtained after analyzing descriptive statistics, it can be concluded that aspects such as automated update process (M = 4.27), intelligent job matching service (M = 4.16), and efficiency of the process in general (M = 4.12) received high agreement levels from participants.

All of the above elements help make the recruiting process transparent, responsive, and convenient; and they are crucial to creating a good experience for the candidates.

The findings found here have a lot in common with the Technology Acceptance Model proposed by Davis (1989). According to Davis (1989), perceived usefulness and ease of use impact the attitude toward the technology greatly. As per the findings of this study, candidates that perceive AI tools as being effective and easy-to-use had higher levels of satisfaction. Additionally, the process itself, which was conducted effectively, created a positive image of the organization for candidates.

However, it is important to emphasize that not all components of AI recruitment were equally accepted. The low average ratings for AI video interviews indicate that some types of AI use can still be met with a degree of uneasiness or ambiguity by candidates. Thus, when implementing AI in organizational processes, employers should be careful not to cause any unnecessary inconvenience or unpleasantness for job applicants.

It is worth noting the fact that AI-driven recruiting processes have a significant positive effect on perceived fairness (H2 Supported).

The second major result obtained during the current study was that AI-driven recruiting processes have a considerable and positive impact on perceptions of fairness ($\beta = 0.48$, $R^2 = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). These results demonstrate that perceptions of fairness in recruiting processes depend considerably (by 41%) on AI-driven recruiting practices.

The findings showed that overall, the hiring process using AI technology was considered to be

more standard and consistent. The variables linked to the relevance of job testing (M = 3.99), consistency of decision making (M = 3.87), and fairness to job applicants (M = 3.84) were scored positively. This shows that the hiring process based on AI technology is less prone to bias than decisions made by humans.

Lastly, the findings from the study are in line with the expectations raised by the Organizational Justice Theory. As per this theory, procedural justice is essential in people's fairness judgments. This means that if the hiring process is seen as consistent and impartial, it will be deemed a fair procedure. To promote procedural justice, the employment of AI technology would be helpful.

It is important to highlight the fact that the results have confirmed the significant positive effect of AI-enabled recruitment practices on perceptions of fairness (H2 Supported).

The second key finding of the study demonstrates that AI-enabled recruitment practices have an important positive effect on the perceptions of fairness among applicants ($\beta = 0.48$, $R^2 = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, one may state that about 41% of the variability in perceptions of fairness are determined by the use of AI-based recruitment practices.

Based on the data obtained during the course of this study, one may conclude that the participants mostly perceive AI-enabled recruitment practices in a highly positive way since they consider that these practices increase the consistency, standardization, and impartiality of the recruiting process. The metrics regarding the job-relevant evaluation (M = 3.99), decision-making consistency (M = 3.87), and equitable treatment of applicants (M = 3.84) were estimated rather highly.

Such an observation conforms to Organisational Justice Theory, which points out the importance of procedural justice as a determinant of an individual’s perception of an event. In cases where recruitment procedures are viewed as being consistent, transparent, and unbiased, individuals are more likely to consider them as just. An AI system that is properly designed can achieve this by applying the same set of criteria to all the applicants.

In effect, this reflects the model put forward by Hausknecht et al. (2004) whereby the significance of the applicant’s response to recruitment activities is emphasized. By perceiving the whole

process as respectful, informative, and effective, the individual is likely to form a positive impression about it regardless of the nature of the technology.

The lesson here is that apart from the technical aspects of designing effective AI systems, other aspects like communication and friendliness of the system itself should be considered.

Finding 4 Candidate Experience Partially Mediates the Relationship Between AI Practices and Perceived Fairness (H4 Partially Supported)

Lastly, one more interesting finding was made in the course of the research proving the fact that candidate experience plays a role of partial mediator in the relationship under consideration. The indirect effect found in the mediation model ($\beta = 0.415$, $p < 0.05$) and the direct effect ($c' = 0.268$, $p < 0.05$) prove that the impact of AI-enabled recruitment practices on perceived fairness can be both direct and indirect (via candidate experience).

As far as the partial mediation is concerned, one can conclude that although AI recruitment practices are able to have an independent influence on the target variable, part of its impact on fairness perceptions is delivered through candidate experience. Thus, the fact is that AI helps to increase perceptions of fairness by being consistent and objective as well as by providing better experiences of interacting with the process to candidates.

Such two-fold impact should not be underestimated for practical applications since it means that organizations should not rely solely on technological opportunities provided by AI tools. They have to take into account both aspects at the same time.

It is worth noting that these findings indicate that improvements related to candidate experience (such as better communication, reduced waiting time, and ease-of-use interfaces) can further improve the positive influence of the application of AI on the perception of fairness. Simultaneously, the persistence of a significant direct impact suggests that design factors such as transparency, explainability, and bias minimization remain relevant.

Overall, the conducted study provides convincing empirical evidence regarding the significant

impact that the application of AI can have on candidate experience and perception of fairness. More importantly, it demonstrates that candidate experience serves as an important mediator between technological practices and fairness perceptions. The implications of these findings include the necessity for businesses to strike a balance between technology and human-centric approaches in designing their recruiting practices.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

The present research can be seen as contributing to the growing body of literature at the intersection of AI and human resource management. As AI technology continues to revolutionize recruitment methods and practices across developing countries like India, it becomes imperative to examine its importance using theoretical lenses. From this research, it is evident that the outcomes validate the applicability and further development of theoretical models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and Organizational Justice Theory in the area of recruitment.

First and foremost, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989) is well substantiated in this research. According to the findings, job seekers' evaluation of AI-based recruitment tools depends on the perceived usefulness and ease of use of those technologies, significantly impacting their overall experience. The statistically significant predictive power of the association between AI recruitment and candidate experience ($R^2 = 0.48$) indicates that TAM can be applied in organizations' structured environments where users may not have much choice regarding the adoption of technology.

Also, the results obtained from the experiment prove the applicability of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). Based on this theory, there are several factors that influence user behavior. They include performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. From this point of view, the efficiency of recruitment procedures, accurate job matching, and ease of navigation of the website represent performance and effort expectancies that contribute to improved user experience. Finally, the increased application of AI in recruitment processes within IT and banking sectors represents the effect of

social influence on the behavior of candidates. It therefore proves that the application of UTAUT theory in predicting candidate behavior in relation to AI is very effective.

Furthermore, the study provides empirical evidence supporting the Organizational Justice Theory (Gilliland, 1993) especially in the field of fairness perceptions regarding AI-based hiring practices. Empirical results have highlighted the significance of components of procedural justice including consistency, relevance to the job, and absence of bias in fairness perceptions. However, the fact that there is comparatively less fairness perception about the experiences of candidates signifies that factors like transparency, explainability, and disputability need to be included in the evaluation of fairness under the AI framework. In this regard, it may be concluded that the study offers a new dimension to the theory of justice in relation to AI.

Moreover, another important contribution of this paper to the theoretical body is the identification of the partial mediation effect, with candidate experience being a mediator variable between the AI-enhanced hiring processes and fairness perception. It creates a two-fold model where AI affects candidates' perceptions of fairness not only directly but also indirectly through their experience. Thus, the identified finding adds to theoretical knowledge by looking at candidate experience as an instrument rather than a mere variable.

To conclude, this study advances the theoretical understanding of the topic under consideration by linking the technology acceptance model with organizational justice theory and then applying them in the field of AI-enhanced hiring. This shows the need for future studies to investigate further how the factors discussed interact to affect candidates' perceptions.

4.3 Managerial Implications

There are many actionable lessons drawn from the results obtained in this study that can be used in practice by human resources managers and organizational leaders in the process of using or developing AI-enabled recruitment processes. In particular, organizations should focus their efforts on developing candidate-friendly AI recruitment tools and continuously improving them.

First and foremost, organizations should put much effort into creating a better candidate experience through AI recruitment solutions. The analysis of the results indicates that candidate experience is the key factor in determining the perceptions of fairness in recruitment processes ($r = 0.612$). Moreover, candidate experience is significantly impacted by AI recruitment approaches ($\beta = 0.54$). Hence, the development of user-friendly interfaces and communication channels would enable organizations to achieve certain benefits from these actions. The results indicate that candidates positively evaluate automated feedback mechanisms ($M = 4.27$) and accurate job matching ($M = 4.16$).

In addition, the relative dissatisfaction with AI video interviews ($M = 3.63$) highlights another crucial aspect requiring improvement. Many applicants may feel that such an interview is impersonal or stressful because of the absence of face-to-face communication. This problem could be solved through the implementation of hybrid recruitment strategies in which the initial stage of the interview is conducted using artificial intelligence and the following step involves an interview with a human interviewer. The relatively poor level of satisfaction regarding the possibility of appealing to and clarifying the decisions made by AI ($M = 3.30$) reveals another weak point.

Fairness issues like the visibility of decision-making criteria ($M = 3.61$) and lack of bias ($M = 3.55$) need to be taken into consideration as well. While it is important for Human Resource personnel to ensure that they use highly technological AI recruiting solutions, they must also ensure that these technologies are easily understood by their users. By making the decision-making process clear to candidates, including the criteria involved, fairness issues would be resolved. Companies must conduct periodic audits of their AI technology in order to uncover any possible bias in decision making. This is a bigger problem in India because of its socio-economic and linguistic diversity.

In addition, based on the partial mediating role in terms of fairness perception as identified in this study, enhancement in AI technology alone is not enough in order for the perceptions of fairness to be maximized. One aspect that may act as a mediating factor in terms of candidate experience

must be managed accordingly. Organizations can make sure that the process they develop in terms of recruitment becomes pleasant by using elements like guidance, update, and empathic communication in the process.

Lastly, organizations have to use an integrated way of developing AI technology in terms of recruiting candidates. Although it makes the process cheaper and easier through automation, it does not mean that AI technology alone is capable of replacing the importance of human presence. Human intervention is needed for establishing the relationship based on trust and a good corporate image. Through this integrated approach, organizations can reach their objectives.

4.4 Limitations of the Study

Though the current research makes a number of valuable contributions, there are certain limitations inherent in the paper, which need to be acknowledged when evaluating the obtained results. It is important to take into consideration these limitations in order to determine further research priorities.

First of all, the research has used a cross-sectional methodology, which means that the perceptions of the candidates are analyzed at a single point in time. Though the use of such a methodology is quite helpful for revealing various correlations between different factors, the researchers cannot account for any potential changes in candidate perceptions that might happen during the process of familiarization with the AI-driven recruiting system.

Secondly, the sample size of 130 respondents, although adequate for the analysis conducted, limits the generalizability of the results obtained. The sample largely consists of young, educated, and city dwellers, and therefore are likely to have greater affinity and familiarity with technological applications and AI-enabled platforms. As such, the results will not adequately capture the experiences and perceptions of candidates with varying demographic characteristics, especially those from semi-urban and rural settings, and who may lack familiarity with technology. It is important that future studies consider using more diverse samples.

Thirdly, the research only relies on self-reporting of perceptions, which are prone to common

method variance. Respondents might have provided socially desirable responses when rating such critical areas as fairness and bias in the use of AI. Besides, individual perceptions do not always translate into how fair or otherwise the use of the AI platform is. This issue can be addressed through future studies incorporating different types of data, including behavioral data, system metrics, and even experimental setups.

Moreover, although the study examines different AI-driven recruitment approaches employed to screen candidates, such as resume screening, chatbots, video interviews, jobs matching, updates automatically, and communication devices, it fails to draw the distinctions in terms of how each tool affects the candidate's experience and perceived fairness. In this regard, AI-driven recruitment is viewed as a single phenomenon that complicates the task of pinpointing specific technologies responsible for success and/or failure. Future studies might employ a more refined strategy for assessing the efficiency of certain AI-driven tools designed to enhance certain steps in the process of recruitment.

Finally, it should be noted that the present study was conducted in the context of India, and thus, its results cannot be generalized, since there can be some discrepancies between other cultures or organizations. In this connection, factors like technology infrastructure, labor markets, and perceptions of fairness should be considered.

4.5 Conclusion

For the Indian labor market setting, the paper provides compelling empirical evidence for the positive and significant effect of artificial intelligence-based recruiting methods on candidates' experience and perceptions of fairness. Artificial intelligence methods have a significant direct effect on candidates' experience ($\beta = 0.54$) and perceptions of fairness ($\beta = 0.48$) based on all the four hypotheses set forth in the paper. Also, candidates' experience has been found as the best predictor of perceptions of fairness ($r = 0.612$), partially mediating the relationship between perceptions of fairness and artificial intelligence recruiting methods.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Organizational Justice Theory, and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) form the basis for the analysis of the main theories

used in the research. They have been expanded to include AI recruitment technology as an innovative approach. According to the theories, the candidates' perception and acceptance of such technology depend on its effectiveness, usefulness, and fair application.

The main conclusion of the study is that the efficiency of artificial intelligence usage in recruitment goes beyond its effectiveness and accuracy. On the contrary, it depends mainly on the quality of the candidate's experience. The attitude towards AI as an innovation is positive when the software used is easy to understand and communicate with, corresponds to the requirements stated in the vacancy description, and works in accordance with the assessment procedure. Otherwise, even high-quality technical performance and the lack of interaction with people may cause suspicion among candidates.

However, in the real world, one can observe that an approach that combines both people-oriented approach and technology is required. While AI may help to speed up the recruiting process, minimize biases, and make decisions faster, people will always be necessary in order to guarantee fairness and build trust. Companies are likely to strengthen their employer brand and attract good candidates if they focus on transparent communication, feedback mechanisms, and candidate involvement in the entire recruiting process.

Overall, the continuous development of artificial intelligence in recruitment requires businesses to treat it not only as a way to become more efficient but also as a means of ensuring fair and positive candidate experience. In line with candidate and ethics expectations and capabilities of AI,

4.6 Scope for Future Research

The current paper points to several areas that merit further exploration in relation to AI-based recruiting. First, longitudinal designs are recommended for use in future research on changes in candidates' attitudes towards AI-powered recruitment over time. Individuals may grow more accustomed to the process of automated recruiting and feel comfortable using such technologies, mitigating any fears of discrimination, bias, and transparency in the hiring process as a result of repeated exposure to the AI system. Future longitudinal research may help understand whether individuals develop trust in artificial intelligence systems after consistent use of the technology.

Second, further cross-cultural and cross-industry comparative research is needed to establish the transferability of the findings beyond the Indian context. Cultural factors such as perceptions of technology, authority, and fairness play an essential role in shaping candidates' attitudes toward the hiring process based on AI technologies. Furthermore, industry characteristics may influence the effectiveness of the use of AI-based solutions. For instance, job seekers within particular industries may have different expectations regarding recruitment procedures, making the hiring process more challenging for AI systems.

Third, instead of treating AI recruitment technologies as a unified construct, future research should focus on disentangling their impact. A more insightful and practical set of findings could be derived by examining the distinctive impacts of each of the technologies, including chatbots, CV scanning software, AI video interviewing technology, and job matching algorithms. In this way, organizations will be able to identify which technologies make the most positive contributions to candidate experiences and perceptions of fairness.

Fourth, future research would benefit significantly from the inclusion of objective measures alongside subjective measures. It can be determined whether positive perceptions of applicants translate into tangible organizational results through an analysis of various variables, such as time to hire, the quality of hires, acceptance rate of offers, and recruitment effectiveness.

Finally, some possible topics for future research may consist of the following moderating variables that can affect the perception and reaction of job candidates toward AI-driven recruitment platforms: digital literacy, past experience with artificial intelligence technology, and demographic traits. It is much easier to comprehend individual differences regarding technological adoption in light of such results.

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