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Artificial Intelligence in Recruitment, A Systematic Literature Review on Trends, Challenges, and Future Directions

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the scientific literature on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the employee recruitment process, with a focus on current trends, existing challenges, and future development directions. Using a systematic literature review approach, the study filters scholarly articles from reputable databases, applying inclusion criteria that consist of English-language publications, published within the last 20 years (2005–2025), and specifically focused on the use of AI in recruitment. Articles that are duplicated, irrelevant to the topic of recruitment, or not peer-reviewed were excluded from the analysis. Based on the synthesis of the included studies, AI applications in recruitment are found to improve screening efficiency, reduce human bias, and enhance candidate experience, as evidenced by prior empirical research. However, significant challenges also emerge, including algorithmic bias, ethical concerns, and organizational resistance to adopting new technologies. Recent trends point to a shift toward the use of machine learning, recruitment chatbots, and predictive analytics in HR decision-making. This study provides a theoretical contribution by synthesizing and categorizing prior research findings, and a practical contribution for HR practitioners in understanding the potential and risks of AI implementation. It also fills a gap in the literature by addressing the lack of a comprehensive synthesis that systematically maps the development of AI research in recruitment.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; employee recruitment; literature review; ethical challenges*

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly competitive digital era, organizations face mounting pressure to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in recruitment processes to attract top talent swiftly and accurately [40]. Inefficient and slow recruitment procedures may result in the loss of high-potential candidates, increased hiring costs, and reduced organizational productivity, making the optimization of recruitment a strategic priority. Technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI), have brought about a significant transformation in recruitment practices [41]. AI is utilized at various stages of the selection process, including automated résumé screening, AI-based video interviews, and predictive analytics to assess candidate fit. The application of AI aims to improve efficiency, reduce human bias, and accelerate decision-making in recruitment. For instance, AI systems can process thousands of applications in a short time, identifying the most suitable candidates based on predefined criteria.

However, as Ajunwa [1] explains, despite its various advantages, the use of AI in recruitment also presents a number of challenges and concerns. A major issue is algorithmic bias, where AI may reinforce existing biases in historical data, such as discrimination based on gender or race. In addition, Binns et al. [8] highlight that the lack of transparency in AI-driven decision-making can reduce trust among both recruiters and candidates. This concern is supported by a recent report [33], indicating growing business apprehension over potential misuse of AI. From an ethical standpoint, Raghavan et al. [32] emphasize that questions around fairness, data privacy, and accountability are increasingly relevant as AI adoption in recruitment grows. Several studies stress the need for rigorous auditing and regulatory frameworks to ensure that AI systems do not disadvantage certain groups and remain aligned with ethical standards.

Given the complexity and implications of AI use in recruitment, it is essential to conduct a systematic review of the existing scholarly literature. This study aims to critically examine and synthesize prior research to understand the trends, benefits, challenges, and future directions of AI implementation in recruitment processes. To achieve this objective, the study proposes three main research questions: (1) How are trends in the use of AI in recruitment examined in the academic literature? (2) What are the benefits, challenges, and ethical implications of using AI in recruitment? (3) What research gaps can be identified to guide future research agendas?

2. Literature Review

Over the past decade, advances in digital technology have driven significant transformations in human resource management practices, particularly in recruitment processes. One of the most prominent developments is the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into recruitment stages, fundamentally altering how organizations search for, screen, and evaluate potential candidates [45]. To conceptually understand these dynamics, this study adopts an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, combining perspectives from organizational technology theories and dynamic capabilities theory.

First, the adoption of AI in recruitment can be explained through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis [11], which posits that technology adoption within organizations is primarily influenced by two constructs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which individuals believe that using a particular system will enhance their job performance, while perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which they believe that the system can be used effortlessly or with minimal difficulty [25]. The TAM has been widely applied in various domains, including healthcare, e-commerce, mobile commerce, and educational technologies ([9],[19],[5]). Despite its extensive application, the model has also faced criticism, especially concerning its simplicity and the instability of the relationships between constructs. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the model's adaptability to the rapidly evolving information technology environment [26].

In the context of recruitment, organizations are more likely to adopt AI-based systems when the technology is perceived to improve selection efficiency and simplify administrative workloads for HR teams. Previous studies support this argument, demonstrating that organizations using AI systems such as résumé screening automation, recruitment chatbots, and video interview analysis often experience enhanced operational efficiency and improved quality in initial candidate screening ([3], [10]).

Moreover, dynamic capabilities theory, introduced by Teece et al. [37], emphasizes the importance of an organization's ability to adapt rapidly to external changes through the processes of sensing, seizing, and transforming. Sensing refers to the capacity to identify emerging opportunities and threats in the external environment [38]. Seizing involves mobilizing resources and implementing appropriate strategies to respond to these changes [30]. Transforming denotes the capability to reconfigure organizational resources and competencies to maintain competitive advantage and adapt to changing conditions [46].

The integration of AI in recruitment reflects organizational responsiveness in sensing shifts in the digital environment and workforce demands increasingly shaped by technology. AI enables organizations to seize opportunities in the form of enhanced efficiency and accuracy in the selection process, while also transforming traditional HR practices into data-driven, predictive approaches [18]. However, the use of AI in recruitment presents unavoidable ethical challenges. One of the primary issues is algorithmic bias, where AI models risk replicating discrimination embedded in historical data, thus threatening fairness in candidate selection [22]. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in algorithmic decision-making raises concerns about accountability and candidates' right to receive fair and understandable explanations [21]. Other challenges include potential violations of privacy, particularly when AI is used to analyze facial expressions, voice, or personal data without explicit consent. Therefore, a governance framework that emphasizes fairness, explainability, and human oversight is essential to ensure the integrity and legitimacy of AI-driven recruitment processes.

3. Method

To systematically and comprehensively address the research questions, this study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The SLR method was selected because it enables the identification, evaluation, and synthesis of relevant scientific evidence in a transparent, structured, and replicable manner. In this study, the SLR approach is employed to examine how artificial intelligence (AI) is applied in employee recruitment processes, as well as to identify prevailing research trends, key challenges, and future research directions based on existing scholarly literature.

The SLR design follows two established methodological guidelines: the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework and the SLR guidelines proposed by Kitchenham and Charters [20]. PRISMA provides a standardized structure for reporting systematic reviews, particularly through its four-stage review process and the PRISMA flow diagram, which enhances transparency and replicability [27]. Meanwhile, the guidelines by Kitchenham and Charters offer detailed procedures for planning, conducting, and reporting systematic reviews, which are particularly relevant for interdisciplinary research in information systems, artificial intelligence, and human resource management. The integration of these two frameworks ensures a rigorous and methodologically sound review process.

3.1 Database Selection

The literature search was conducted systematically using multiple academic databases and AI-assisted research tools to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant studies. The databases and tools employed in this study include Google Scholar, ResearchRabbit, Paperfinder, and Elicit. These sources were selected to support broad literature identification, citation tracing, and conceptual exploration in line with the identification stage of the PRISMA framework.

Google Scholar was used as the primary database due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journal articles across multiple disciplines, including human resource management, information systems, and artificial intelligence [7]. ResearchRabbit was utilized to expand the literature network by identifying related studies through citation mapping and topic visualization. Paperfinder and Elicit, both AI-assisted research tools, were employed to support literature discovery, relevance screening, and preliminary synthesis by recommending studies based on predefined keywords and research themes. The combined use of these tools strengthens the completeness of the identification process and minimizes the risk of omitting relevant studies.

3.2 Search Strategy

A structured search strategy was developed to identify studies related to the application of AI in recruitment. Searches were conducted using predefined keyword combinations applied consistently across all databases. The main search strings included combinations such as

"Artificial Intelligence" AND "Recruitment," "AI" AND "Talent Acquisition," and "Machine Learning" AND "Hiring Process." These keywords were derived from commonly used terminologies in prior literature and adapted to the search functionalities of each database.

The search was limited to journal articles published between 2005 and 2025, written in English, and available as open-access documents. The search strategy and criteria were designed to ensure consistency, relevance, and replicability of the literature identification process.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined prior to the screening process to ensure methodological rigor and relevance. Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2005 and 2025, reflecting contemporary developments in AI-driven recruitment; (2) written in English to ensure analytical consistency and accessibility; and (3) explicitly focused on the application of AI in recruitment or employee selection processes, from either technical or managerial perspectives.

Studies were excluded if they met any of the following conditions: (1) non-peer-reviewed publications such as editorials, opinion articles, blogs, industry reports, or other forms of grey literature; and (2) studies discussing AI technologies without direct application to recruitment or human resource management contexts, including purely technical algorithm development or AI applications in non-HR domains. These criteria ensure that only studies directly relevant to the research objectives were retained for analysis [20].

Table 1. Search Query

Description	Conditions
search query	"Artificial Intelligence" AND "Recruitment", "AI" AND "Talent Acquisition", "Machine Learning" AND "Hiring Process".
access	open-access documents only.
years	2005-2025.
source type	limited to Journals only.
language	limited to the english language.

3.4 Study Selection Process (PRISMA)

The study selection process followed the four stages recommended by the PRISMA framework: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the identification stage, all records retrieved from the selected databases were compiled. Duplicate records were then removed. In the screening stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess their relevance to the research topic. Subsequently, full-text articles were assessed for eligibility based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only studies that fully met the eligibility criteria were included in the final qualitative synthesis.

The complete study selection process is presented in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1), which provides a transparent overview of the number of records identified, screened, excluded, and included at each stage of the review.

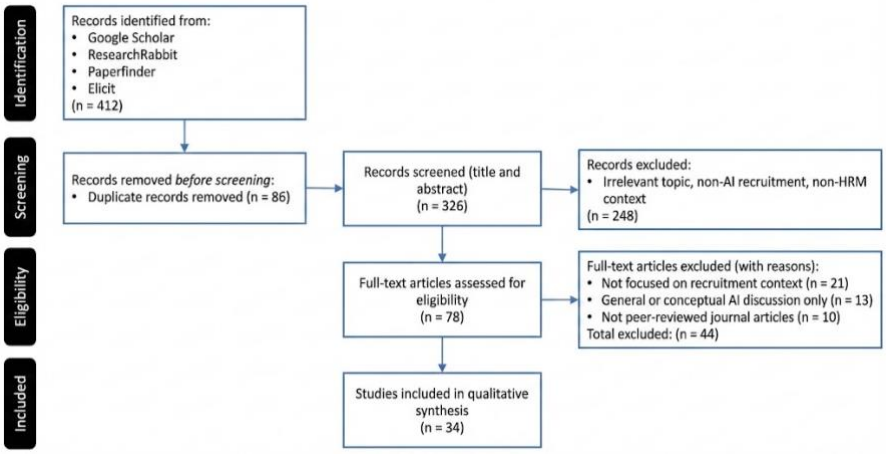

Fig. 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of The Study Selection Process

3.5 Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction was conducted after the final selection of studies. For each included article, the following information was extracted: bibliographic details, research objectives, methodological approach, AI applications in recruitment, reported benefits, implementation challenges, and research context. The extracted data were manually tabulated using Microsoft Excel to facilitate systematic comparison and thematic synthesis.

A thematic analysis approach was employed through open coding of the extracted data. The analysis resulted in three main thematic categories: (1) benefits of AI implementation in recruitment, (2) challenges associated with AI adoption, including technical, ethical, and organizational issues, and (3) AI techniques applied in recruitment, such as machine learning, natural language processing, chatbots, and automated screening systems. This analytical approach enables a structured synthesis of findings beyond descriptive summarization and supports in-depth discussion of research trends and gaps [29].

4. Results and Discussion

This study analyzes 34 peer-reviewed publications addressing the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment and human resource management. The selected studies were published between 2005 and 2025, with a strong concentration in recent years. As shown in Table 2, research interest in AI-based recruitment has increased substantially after 2018, indicating the growing relevance of AI-driven hiring practices in both academic and professional contexts.

Table 2. Descriptive Characteristics of the Selected Studies

Descriptive Aspect	Result
Total number of studies	34
Publication period	2005–2025
Dominant publication period	2018–2025
Average number of authors	2–4 authors
Main research domains	HRM, Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, Information Systems, Strategic Management

The temporal distribution of publications demonstrates a clear upward trend in AI recruitment research. Early studies (before 2010) primarily focused on foundational theories of technology acceptance and organizational capabilities. Between 2010 and 2017, research began to conceptualize AI applications in HR contexts. A notable surge in publications occurred after 2018, coinciding with advancements in machine learning, big data analytics, and generative AI technologies.

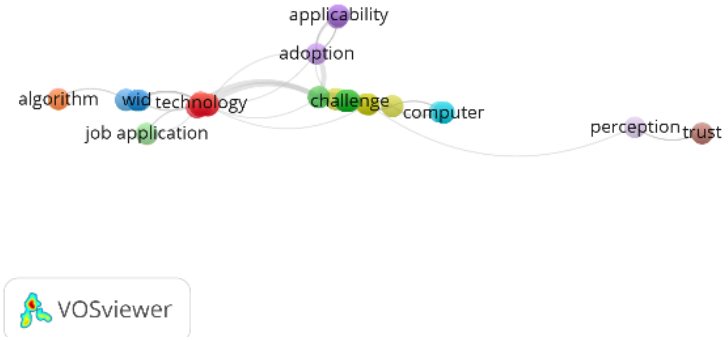

Fig. 2. Trend Topic of Research

The findings of this literature review are categorized into several key themes that systematically and comprehensively represent various aspects of AI implementation in recruitment as represent in Table 3. These categories reflect not only the technologies used but also the practical benefits, ethical challenges, and transformational impacts on HR functions within organizations. This thematic approach aims to provide a robust conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics and implications of AI integration in modern talent management.

Table 3. Thematic Classification of AI Recruitment Literature

Research Theme	Key Focus	Representative Studies
Benefits of AI in recruitment	Efficiency, accuracy, workload reduction	Geetha & Bhanu (2018); Alam et al. (2020); Gan et al. (2024)
Challenges and ethical issues	Algorithmic bias, fairness, transparency	Ajunwa (2020); Raghavan et al. (2020); Seppälä & Małecka (2024)
User perception and acceptance	Trust, fairness perception, candidate experience	Horodyski (2023); Lee (2018); van Esch et al. (2019)
Impact on HR roles	Strategic HR transformation, decision-making	Ore & Sposato (2022); Lakshmi Devi et al. (2024)
Theoretical foundations	TAM, RBV, dynamic capabilities	Davis (1989); Teece et al. (1997); Chatterjee et al. (2023)

Types of AI Used in Recruitment

Various AI technologies have been applied in recruitment processes, including machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), chatbots, resume parsers, and video interview analytics. For instance, the resume parser developed by Heakl et al. (2024) [14] utilizes large language models (LLMs) such as BERT and Gemma1.1 2B for resume classification, achieving a top-1 accuracy of 92% and a top-5 accuracy of 97.5%. Additionally, a resume screening framework based on LLMs introduced by Gan et al. (2024) [12] demonstrated significant efficiency, operating 11 times faster than traditional manual methods.

Benefits of AI in Recruitment

The main benefits of using AI in recruitment include time efficiency, reduced operational costs, and the ability to reach and assess candidates from diverse backgrounds more broadly and quickly. For example, the use of generative AI such as ChatGPT in screening processes can reduce manual workload by over 40%, allowing HR professionals to focus on more strategic functions. Furthermore, AI facilitates better skill-to-job matching, improving the quality of selected candidates ([13], [16], [2]). It also contributes to more objective and inclusive hiring decisions by minimizing human bias ([35], [17]).

Challenges and Ethical Issues

Despite its advantages, the adoption of AI in recruitment presents several challenges and ethical concerns. These include algorithmic bias, lack of transparency in selection processes, and legal implications related to privacy and discrimination. For instance, Seppälä and Małecka [36] found that while AI can reduce human bias, it may introduce algorithmic bias if the training data is unrepresentative or the algorithm is unfairly designed. Historical data containing bias can also reinforce workplace inequality.

Impact on HR Roles and Organizational Decision-Making

The implementation of AI is reshaping traditional HR roles, shifting them from administrative functions to more strategic, data-driven responsibilities. For example, AI in performance management enables more objective and real-time evaluations. However, overreliance on such technology may affect employee trust and engagement. There is an ongoing debate regarding the balance between automation and the need for human judgment, especially in decisions requiring contextual understanding and empathy ([31], [17], [23]). Thus, organizational readiness, workforce training, and ethical implementation are crucial for the successful adoption of AI in HR functions.

The findings of this study offer rich, multidimensional insights into the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment, highlighting a paradigm shift in modern hiring practices when viewed through the lenses of human resource management (HRM), organizational technology, and organizational behavior. Within the framework of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989)[11], AI adoption is strongly influenced by organizational perceptions of usefulness and ease of use. Tools such as LLM-based resume parsers, video interview analytics, and interactive chatbots are widely perceived to improve efficiency and reduce administrative burdens in early screening stages, reinforcing earlier evidence from Albassam [3] and Chen [10] on AI's positive impact on selection speed and accuracy.

From the perspective of dynamic capabilities theory [37], AI use in recruitment reflects an organization's ability to sense labor market changes, seize opportunities through automation, and transform traditional hiring into a more adaptive, data-driven system. This shift not only redefines candidate evaluation processes but also elevates HR's role as a strategic partner in decision-making. Thus, AI integration is both a technological and structural transformation within HR functions.

Compared to prior literature, this study reaffirms the growing trend of AI adoption in HRM identified by Upadhyay and Khandelwal [40], while placing greater emphasis on ethical concerns and algorithmic bias. Research by Köchling and Wehner [22] and Raghavan et al. [32] underscores that AI systems are not inherently neutral, they can replicate and even amplify historical biases in training data, raising serious concerns about discrimination based on gender, race, or socioeconomic status. This study contributes to the critical discourse by underscoring the need for human oversight, algorithmic transparency, and ethical audits in AI governance.

Furthermore, a significant gap in the literature is identified: the lack of empirical studies from developing countries. Most reviewed articles originate from North America, Western Europe, and advanced East Asian economies like Japan and South Korea. However, developing nations differ in digital infrastructure readiness, workplace culture, and labor regulations, factors that influence the effectiveness and acceptance of AI in recruitment. This imbalance highlights the dominance of Global North perspectives in AI-HRM discourse and underscores the urgent need for research grounded in Global South contexts to expand conceptual and practical understanding.

5. Conclusions

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in employee recruitment has shown significant advancements, particularly in enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of initial candidate screening. Various technologies such as large language model-based resume parsers, video interview analysis systems, and interactive chatbots have helped organizations accelerate the screening process, reduce the administrative workload of HR teams, and minimize human bias during the early recruitment stages ([13], [16]). Additionally, AI adoption in recruitment practices is driven by the technology's ability to provide more objective and measurable decisions through data-analytic approaches, aligning with the principles of dynamic capabilities theory, where organizations are required to quickly adapt to external environmental changes through innovation and resource optimization [37].

However, the implementation of AI also faces serious challenges, especially concerning potential algorithmic bias, lack of transparency in decision-making processes, and legal and ethical implications related to privacy and discrimination [36]. Studies indicate that if not properly managed, AI systems can reinforce existing historical injustices present in training data, thereby disadvantaging minority or underrepresented groups ([22], [32]). Therefore, the need for human oversight mechanisms, regular algorithm audits, and strengthened regulations are critical issues that organizations and policymakers must address.

Furthermore, this research identifies a gap in the literature, particularly the lack of empirical studies from developing country contexts. Most studies focus on developed countries in North America, Europe, and East Asia, while countries in the Global South, with their unique characteristics related to digital infrastructure, work culture, and labor regulations, remain underrepresented. This suggests that global understanding of AI application in human resource management is still largely limited to certain perspectives.

In practical terms, the findings offer important implications for organizations and HR professionals. Utilizing AI in recruitment requires not only technological investment but also changes in human resource competencies, including enhanced capacities in data literacy, technology ethics, and interpreting AI-based analytical results. Theoretically, integrating frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model, dynamic capabilities theory, and technology ethics provides a solid foundation for understanding the dynamics of AI implementation within a broader socio-technical context.

Looking ahead, research agendas should further explore the long-term impacts of AI use on employment relations, organizational justice perceptions, and corporate reputation. Cross-cultural and cross-national studies will be highly relevant to provide a more inclusive and contextual understanding of AI adoption. The development of AI governance policies in recruitment, including transparency protocols and ethical guidelines, also becomes a key priority to ensure responsible and sustainable technology use. Although AI offers great transformative potential in recruitment processes, a balanced approach between automation and human judgment remains essential to creating recruitment systems that are effective, fair, and sustainable.

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