AI-POWERED HIRING: AN ANALYSIS OF ADVANTAGES AND PITFALLS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to enhance our understanding of the potential benefits and drawbacks associated with the utilization of artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment and selection. It delves into the viewpoints of recruitment professionals within a diverse multinational organization. Employing a qualitative approach, this exploratory research conducted face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with ten professional recruiters employed by a multinational corporation. The study uncovered that AI contributes to the efficient execution of routine tasks through automation. However, the incorporation of AI in recruitment and selection introduces risks that generate apprehension and distrust among recruiters. While the effective integration of AI can enhance recruitment strategies, scepticism persists due to concerns about job displacement through automation. Despite this, participants expressed confidence in the enduring necessity of human recruiters, emphasizing the irreplaceable human element in their roles.

INTRODUCTION

The onset of the third revolution occurred in the 1970s, marked by the integration of personal computers and the internet into workplaces, leading to the automation of human tasks. Artificial intelligence (AI) is defined as a highly intelligent machine, adaptable and capable of perceiving its environment to optimize actions toward specific goals, distinct from human natural intelligence. Coined in 1956, the term "artificial intelligence" has found diverse applications, such as alleviating staff workload and pressure. In the fast-paced business landscape, swift responses are imperative, and AI plays a crucial role in collecting and analysing reliable data for company growth and daily operations. Corporations leverage AI to enhance the efficiency of tasks across various departments like Human Resources, finance, marketing, and production. AI systems aid in assessing current performance and managing day-to-day operations, with managers increasingly recognizing its value in response to growing commercial pressures. The deployment of artificial intelligence has brought societal benefits. Some of the formerly human-responsible recruitment and selection procedures have been automated by AI (Eubanks, 2018). The hiring and selection of new personnel with the requisite knowledge and competencies to help the company

achieve its targets is crucial (Amable,2003). Since, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has enabled intelligent recruitment and selection, leading to a growing adoption of these advanced technologies by numerous businesses, however, acceptance of the same has been delayed at times (Sposato, 2021). As the technology adoption is increasing at a fast pace, the implications of AI on HRM, especially the hiring and selection function, need investigation (Aycan et al., 2000).

This paper will advance knowledge of the possible benefits and drawbacks of using AI in hiring and selection, two crucial HRM tasks. It has applications in real life as well from a resource-based viewpoint. An entity could gain a competitive advantage by recruiting outstanding personnel. Ultimately, the research can aid in decision-making about the adoption and application of AI to assist organizational procedures and accomplish corporate goals (Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Barney and Wright, 1998).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The recent progress in e-recruitment technology is evident through the utilization of digital tools incorporating AI features like machine learning, natural language processing, deep learning, and neural networks (Eubanks, 2018). By integrating these technologies, numerous routine tasks in recruitment and selection can be automated, leading to enhanced efficiency (Bafna et al., 2019). Organizations are recognizing the necessity to increase investments in these modern digital HRM tools (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2016). Automation of tedious selection tasks allows human recruiters to focus on more strategic aspects of their work (Upadhyay and Khandelwal, 2018).

According to Heery and Noon (2001, p. 122), e-recruitment is defined as using "the internet to attract potential employees to an organization and then employing them." Presently, the internet serves as a recruitment tool, where jobs are posted, and online recruitment systems aid in candidate tracking, screening, and selection (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017; Stone et al., 2006). E-recruitment offers access to a global pool of candidates (du Plessis and Frederick, 2012; Mohamed, 2002). Additional advantages include "recruitment cost efficiencies" (Dhamija, 2012; reduced paperwork, faster recruitment times (Kim and O'Connor, 2009), and an increased likelihood of finding the right candidate (Lee, 2007, 2008; Voermans and van Veldhoven, 2007). It also improves the ability to attract passive candidates (McDougall, 2001).

However, Kavanagh et al. (2015) argue that e-recruitment may lead to applicants applying for roles without assessing their suitability, resulting in an increase in unqualified applicants (Faliagka et al., 2012). Stone et al. (2006) suggest that this could lead to increased workloads and the loss of valuable time for recruitment teams as they review numerous unsuitable applications.

Pan et al. (2021) have delved into contextual factors influencing implementation, such as technology competence and regulatory support fostering AI adoption. Nawaz (2019) categorized the literature into awareness creation and theory-building, highlighting the scarcity of articles exploring the recruiter's viewpoint on AI. Efficiency considerations have led to analyses of recruitment and selection practices, including e-interviewing and e-testing, revealing potential gains in efficiency and quality (Johnson Stone and Lukaszewski, 2020).

Studies have also examined organizational impacts, particularly on the traditional job application and selection process, from both the job applicant and organizational perspectives (Derous and de Fruyt, 2016; Ryan and Derous, 2016). However, a deeper understanding of e-recruitment, especially from the recruiter's standpoint, is still lacking in the literature (Allden and Harris, 2013; Anderson, 2003). Recognizing this gap, the current study aims to address the perspective of the recruiter on the function of AI technology in recruitment and selection, investigating the conditions necessary for organizations to incorporate AI practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The multinational corporation which is under investigation was selected for the study because it is a leading production firm. With branches spread across various countries there are currently over 20,000 workers worldwide. It is a legit international company that hires individuals from across various countries. The corporation, as could be assumed, has a sizable human resources department that updated its database. The recruitment module of its HR system, which is digital and cloud-based, now incorporates artificial intelligence (AI) technology. Since this will probably have an impact on hiring practices, recruiters were chosen as the study's main participants (Turulja and Bajgoric, 2018). Ten semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather data from recruiters employed at the organization who expressed willingness to take part in the study. This approach was chosen because the exploration of AI in recruitment is the primary focus of the research. All of the interviewees worked in the organization's HR department and were actively contributing towards recruiting and selecting candidates. The participants' experience with recruiting and selection ranged from 4 to 22 years, while their work tenure spanned from 1 to 11 years (avg = 6 years; SD = 2). The selection of thematic analysis as a method was based on its capacity to reduce qualitative data. Data coding was used to find recurring themes or patterns in transcripts of interviews. Theoretically adaptable, a theme approach to qualitative data analysis can be used in a variety of research contexts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The six- phase procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied with the theme approach. To maintain the authenticity of the data, the initial stage of analysis involved reviewing and transcribing audio recordings of interviews. Data codes were established based on insights gained from the literature study, following the researchers' familiarization with all data sets (Bell and Bryman, 2015). In the quest for emerging themes, additional codes were generated and thoroughly examined. Subsequently, these data codes were organized into potential themes related to the three study questions. To ensure an accurate representation of participants' opinions, data was drawn from the sets to portray a genuine perspective (Sposato and Jeffrey, 2019). Anonymity was maintained in the data, with interviewers' names replaced by codes such as REC1 through REC8.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Potential Benefits and Drawbacks for Artificial intelligence in hiring and selecting MNC recruiters expressed a positive outlook on the benefits of using AI in the hiring and selection process, emphasizing the opportunities to make a positive impact or explore new possibilities. These opportunities were organized into themes related to candidate experience, employer branding, and data analytics. However, the information also highlighted potential threats that could dampen the enthusiasm about these possibilities. Terms such as "danger," "harm," and "loss" were employed to identify variables associated with potential risks. The primary emerging threats were grouped into themes related to mistrust and fear.

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

Typically, the experience of candidate starts with the interaction between a prospective employer and job applicant. Both the firm and the candidate want to hire a great worker; thus, their goals are aligned. As a result, in order to be as appealing as possible, the company and the candidate both try to present themselves favourably (Dineen et al., 2002). It is seen that a lot of time and energy is invested by candidates in their job searches, and a number of factors affect their choice to apply. They frequently worry about sending in their job applications, getting invited to interviews, and receiving feedback from those interviews (Derous et al., 2004). Regardless of the outcome of the interview process, companies need to conduct timely and consistent application reviews and promptly deliver feedback to applicants in order to guarantee a favourable job application experience (Doherty, 2010). If there is open communication with candidates during the application process it will help with this. But given the sheer volume of applications received by recruiters for review restricts their ability to interact with applicants (Melanthiou et al., 2015). An appointed candidate may easily underestimate the stress linked with the application and selection procedures due to their excitement. However, individuals who are not selected and those who lack timely feedback may develop a negative impression of the company. This unfavourable perception has the potential to spread through word of mouth, possibly diminishing the company's attractiveness. As a result, organizations are progressively utilizing the opportunities provided by AI to improve and cultivate a more positive candidate experience. Participants emphasized the same points:

> By utilizing data analytics, we would be able to truly concentrate on the candidate experience, improving the application process and giving applicants an exceptional experience while interacting with the company (REC3).
>
> If you can complete the task more quickly and enjoyably, I believe you could enhance the candidate's experience (REC2).
>
> AI will enable us to make the most of our spare time in order to enhance the candidate experience (REC1).

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Armstrong and Taylor (2017) assert that an organization's employer branding, the favourable impression it projects in its pursuit of becoming a popular employer, is inextricably related to a satisfied candidate experience. Aspects of an employer brand may come into contact with candidates during interactions with recruiters and other corporate personnel (Miles and Mangold, 2004). A prospective candidate's decision to apply may be influenced favourably or unfavourably by these interactions—or lack thereof (Collins and Warner, 2012). The interviewees believed that AI-related efficiencies may help their employer branding initiatives, which would allow the MNC to attract more applicants to apply for jobs at the organization (Farber, 2003). The comments that follow make this clear:

> AI offers us the chance to strengthen our employer brand and showcase some of the positive attributes of the organization to prospective employees (REC1).
>
> Since the competition is mostly found there, I believe that employer branding activities will receive more of our attention. The strategy to win the talent war will be to highlight our company's culture and the benefits it may provide to potential hires (REC3).

> That, in my opinion, is a crucial area to concentrate on in order to effectively build the company brand and communicate it in order to hire the best candidate (REC4).

DATA ANALYTICS

The discipline of analysing raw data with mechanical procedures and algorithms to boost productivity through better decision-making is known as data analytics (Fitz-Enz, 2010). Numerous terms, such as HR analytics, talent analytics, workforce analytics and people analytics, are used interchangeably with data analytics in HRM. HRM support, including crucial worker insights, has been made possible by AI and machine learning tools that gather and analyse people data (McIver et al., 2018). Furthermore, data analytics on the abilities, expertise, and work history of job applicants can help with automatic screening and predicting who will be the greatest fit for a position (Rafter et al, 2000). These developments have also prompted the rise of software providers with cutting-edge AI-powered technology platforms that offer pre-screening and shortlisting services that guarantee enhancements in candidate sourcing, matching, and rating (Scholz, 2017). Additionally, vendors like Ideal and Talent Genie assert that their systems can spontaneously search through job board data, social and professional media accounts. These technologies are promoted as ways to find and get in touch with job candidates who are not actively seeking employment.

Some recruiters' thoughts on the potential use of data analytics in hiring and selection are included below:

> Perhaps hiring decisions would be improved if AI automatically reviewed resumes stored in the system and declared that the applicant was the most qualified for the position (REC2).

> Yes, it is really advantageous since it will aid in the assessment process and allow us to use the system to make better data-driven choices (REC4).

> When it comes to shortlisting candidates, it would be highly beneficial if AI could analyse the data within the system, recognize essential keywords, and subsequently assess and rank the top applicants for me. (REC6).

FEAR OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The emergence of AI technology has either preceded or contributed to the personal emotion of fear (Bryson, Winfield, 2017). Based on the claims made by the participants, it is possible that this anxiety was related to worries about data privacy, potential discrimination, and possible threats related to AI's accuracy and dependability. The recruiters also voiced concerns about the disappearance of human interaction, or the loss of recruiters entirely, as Sylva and Mol (2009) all covered. The following excerpts underline these fears:

> I have reservations about the privacy of individuals' personal data as the extent of AI capabilities remains uncertain. (REC2).

> The human recruiters will be replaced which will likely cause some worry, and some employees may even be terrified of it (REC3).

> The adoption of AI may lead to a diminishing level of human interaction, a concern that both multinational corporations and larger society should address with significant consideration. (REC4).

> Discrimination may give rise to ethical concerns, primarily because I believe AI has the ability to be biased as well (REC7).

MISTRUST OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

There was mistrust towards the technology adoption in addition to worries about using AI in hiring and selection. The issues stem from mistrusting AI's ability to make judgments free from prejudice and its accuracy. As was previously mentioned (Parry and Strohmeier, 2014), this might make people more concerned that discrimination and other unethical activities will be included in the hiring and selection process. Hurlburt (2017) cautioned, "How could AI be trusted to know that the algorithm codes were free from their own biases?" Hogg (2019) issued a warning, stating that it is questionable whether AI hiring will lead to increased efficiency and fairness. It's uncertain how to hire AI. The following statements from the participants revealed their lack of trust:

> I wouldn't have the confidence to depend entirely on AI as the only means of identifying the top prospects if it weren't trustworthy (REC8).
>
> Because algorithms may contain biases, if the person who is providing the AI with the knowledge is prejudiced towards specific individuals, the AI will also act in that way (REC6).
>
> Technology has its constraints. It is crucial to rely on validated tools, indicating that they have undergone testing to ensure they do not skew findings due to inherent human biases. Since these technologies are crafted by humans, there is a possibility of incorporating human errors into the algorithms. (REC5).
>
> AI could become biased. Although I'm not an expert in that field, I would assume that they may eventually pick up bias as well if they observe comparable programming patterns in the algorithms (REC6).
>
> Is AI truly precise and trustworthy? To produce a successful decision, it should be done without taking into consideration any biases of any kind (REC3).

In summary, participants believed that integrating artificial intelligence into the recruitment and selection processes of multinational corporations (MNCs) could be beneficial. They suggested that using data analytics to understand potential candidates or current employees might improve decision-making, aiding the MNC in developing an effective talent recruitment strategy (Bamel et al., 2014).

However, participants also recognized potential risks, expressing concerns about AI's access to extensive personal data from MNC's HR systems and other technical tools. While AI could use historical records to create highly effective candidate profiles for future job openings, ensuring fair and unbiased decision-making is essential, and the MNC should address these concerns.

CONCLUSIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The main aim of the research was to study the perspectives regarding the utilization of AI in the hiring and selection process of experienced recruiters. Findings of the study suggested that AI holds promise in mitigating bias during procedures, although the integration of human bias into machine learning algorithms may compound this issue. The automation of repetitive tasks, such as sourcing and screening, is seen as a way to boost productivity, enabling recruiters to concentrate on strategic aspects and thereby improving effectiveness. Recruiters have the chance to harness the power of data analytics, empowering

them to make more informed decisions about candidates and thereby enhancing the overall recruitment and selection process. Adopting a strategic hiring approach may also improve the candidate experience by providing timely updates on application status, aligning with efforts to enhance the company's employment brand and attract qualified applicants.

Despite the perceived advantages, concerns regarding the accuracy and reliability of AI have fostered apprehension and mistrust in its application for recruiting and selection. The potential substitution of human recruiters arose as a significant concern, emphasizing the enduring necessity of human interaction in the process. Given that AI is still a relatively recent development, there is ample room for further research. Replicating this study with recruiters from diverse nations and cultural backgrounds could address social and cultural biases. Furthermore, it is essential to carry out additional research into the specific effects of AI on different facets of the recruitment process. Employing mixed-methods approaches could provide valuable insights into how AI contributes to reducing bias, enhancing efficiency, and implementing strategic approaches in recruitment and selection.

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