Trust in Artificial Intelligence vs. Human Recruiters: Analyzing Candidate Perceptions of Credibility, Ethical Considerations and Decision-Making Transparency in Hiring Process

Submitted By:
Vansh Sharma
{23GSOB2010048}

Under the supervision of Dr Virender Dahiya
{Assistant Professor}

School of Business Galgotias University Greater Noida
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ABSTRACT

In today's fast-paced and technology-driven world, recruitment is no longer just about face-to-face interviews or personal interactions with HR professionals. With the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), many companies have started using machines and algorithms to shortlist resumes, conduct video interviews, and even make final hiring decisions. This shift has helped organizations save time, process applications faster, and reduce the human workload. But in the middle of all this, one important question is often left out—how do job candidates feel about it?

This study is based on a simple yet powerful idea: when hiring, do candidates trust AI recruiters as much as human ones? As someone studying human resource management and business analytics, I wanted to explore how candidates feel when a machine is assessing them. Do they feel it's fair? Ethical? Transparent? Or do they miss the human touch?

To understand this better, I designed a **survey-based research** using a structured questionnaire and shared it with students, job seekers, and working professionals who have experienced either human-led or AI-based recruitment. The questions focused on things like trust, transparency, ethics, and overall comfort level. I wanted to hear directly from the people going through the process.

The results showed something interesting: while many people do appreciate the efficiency and speed of AI, most still prefer to have a human involved, especially during the final stages of hiring. Many participants felt that AI lacks emotional understanding and cannot judge soft skills, personality, or cultural fit the way a human can. Others shared concerns about not knowing why they were rejected or not receiving any feedback at all when an AI was involved. This lack of transparency often leads to frustration and doubt.

Another common concern was about bias. Even though AI is meant to be neutral, candidates were unsure if the algorithms were truly fair or if they carried hidden biases from past data. On the other hand, human recruiters were trusted more in terms of understanding individual situations, asking follow-up questions, and providing feedback, even though humans, too, can be biased at times.

One key insight from this research is that most candidates would prefer a hybrid model, where AI is used for screening and filtering, but the final decision is taken by a human. This way, the process becomes faster and more efficient, but still feels personal and fair.

The purpose of this study was not to say that AI is bad or should be avoided. Instead, it's about understanding what job seekers want and feel. If companies want to attract the best talent and maintain a positive reputation, they need to think beyond speed— they need to focus on the candidate experience, too.

In conclusion, this research highlights that trust, ethics, and transparency matter just as much as efficiency in recruitment. AI is the future, but it must be used in a way that keeps the human connection alive. With the right balance between technology and empathy, hiring can be made not just smarter, but also fairer, more respectful, and more trustworthy for everyone involved.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-changing world, technology is transforming the way we live, work, and even get hired. One of the biggest changes we're seeing is in how companies manage their recruitment and selection processes. Previously, hiring was a purely human activity—people sent resumes, attended in-person interviews, and interacted with recruiters directly. But now, with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), more and more companies are using machines and algorithms to help them choose the right candidate.

AI has made many tasks in recruitment faster and more efficient. It can screen thousands of resumes in seconds, assess online tests, even conduct video interviews, and predict which candidate might be the best fit for a job. For employers, this is a big win—it saves time, reduces workload, and promises to reduce human bias. But while organizations are excited about these benefits, there's another side to the story: how do job candidates feel about all this? Do they trust the technology that's judging them?

As someone studying human resource management, I've always believed that hiring is not just about data and qualifications—it's about people, emotions, personalities, and potential. When a candidate interacts with a recruiter, they expect fairness, empathy, and communication. But when that process is handled by a machine, the experience becomes different. There's no conversation, no room for explanation, and often no feedback. This can leave candidates feeling uncertain, disconnected, or even unfairly treated.

That's where the question of trust becomes very important.

Trust is a key factor in any hiring process. Whether a candidate gets selected or rejected, they want to feel like the decision was made fairly, ethically, and with proper understanding. If candidates don't trust the system, they may lose confidence, avoid applying to certain companies, or share negative feedback about their experience. This affects not just the candidate but the company's image as well.

When AI is used in hiring, the decision-making process becomes less transparent. Often, candidates don't even know **why** they were rejected or **how** their performance was evaluated. This lack of explanation leads to **distrust**, especially

when their future depends on it. On the other hand, human recruiters, while not perfect, can explain decisions, ask follow-up questions, and understand soft skills like communication, attitude, or cultural fit.

The growing use of AI in recruitment has created a need to deeply understand how candidates **perceive** both AI and human recruiters. Do they feel AI is fairer because it doesn't show emotion? Or do they feel humans are better because they can understand situations personally? These are the kinds of questions I wanted to explore through this study.

Another major point is **ethics**. AI systems are built using data from the past, and if that data has biases (based on gender, race, or background), then AI may continue those biases without even realizing it. This makes it even more important to study whether candidates feel AI is ethical or not. Do they believe AI treats everyone equally? Or are they concerned that hidden bias might affect the outcome?

And finally, there's the issue of transparency. In traditional hiring, a candidate can sometimes ask for feedback or clarification. With AI, that's not always possible. This study aims to understand if candidates feel the recruitment process is clear and honest when AI is involved, or if it leaves them with questions and confusion.

Through this research, I want to highlight the voice of the candidates, because in the middle of all this technology, it's easy to forget that hiring is still about people. The goal is not to reject AI completely but to find out how it can be used in a way that still feels fair, respectful, and trustworthy for those applying for jobs.

As AI continues to grow in recruitment, understanding how it impacts candidate trust, ethical perceptions, and the overall experience becomes more important than ever. The study hopes to offer valuable insights that can help companies make hiring not only smarter, but also more human.

1.1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In the ever-evolving landscape of business and technology, organizations are constantly adapting to remain competitive. One of the major shifts witnessed in recent years is the growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into various business processes, including human resource management (HRM). Among all the functions of HRM, recruitment has seen the most transformation due to AI's ability to automate tasks, analyze data at scale, and reduce time-to-hire.

As someone currently pursuing a specialization in human resource management and business analytics, I've always been intrigued by the interplay between technology and people. My classroom learnings, internships, and day-to-day discussions with peers brought up a recurring thought: can technology, especially AI, truly replace human recruiters in identifying the right talent? More importantly, how do candidates feel about being assessed by a machine?

These questions form the foundation of my thesis, which focuses on analyzing candidate perceptions of credibility, ethical considerations, and transparency in hiring processes when comparing AI recruiters to human recruiters. This study is not only timely but also significant as it sheds light on how the end-users—the job seekers— perceive this technological shift.

1.1.1. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Traditionally, recruitment involved manual resume screening, face-to-face interviews, and a human-centric decision-making process. However, with globalization, the explosion of job applications, and the need for quick, efficient hiring, organizations began to explore alternatives. That's where AI enters the scene.

Today, we see companies like Amazon, Unilever, and IBM utilizing AI-driven tools to streamline recruitment. These tools can scan thousands of resumes within seconds, analyze video interviews using facial recognition, measure speech patterns, and even predict a candidate's success in a role. From AI-powered ATS (applicant tracking systems) to chatbots that schedule interviews and conduct preliminary assessments, AI is everywhere in the hiring journey.

While this tech-forward approach is celebrated for increasing efficiency and reducing human bias, it also raises new concerns. Job seekers often feel left in the dark. They're not always sure why they were rejected or whether their unique experiences were understood or even considered.

There is also the issue of trust. Human recruiters bring intuition, empathy, and emotional intelligence to the process. On the other hand, AI can seem cold and impersonal. This contrast has sparked an essential conversation: what do candidates value more—efficiency or empathy? Precision or personal touch?

And that's exactly the situational gap this study seeks to address. By exploring candidate perceptions, we aim to bring out the **real human response** to an increasingly automated process.

1.1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Artificial intelligence (AI) has fundamentally reshaped the hiring process. Although AI- driven recruitment tools offer enhanced efficiency, faster processing, and ostensibly unbiased decisions, the question of candidate trust in AI versus human recruiters remains a subject of ongoing discussion. This literature review examines diverse viewpoints on this matter, analyzing factors such as fairness, transparency, and the importance of human interaction in recruitment.

The role of AI in recruitment

AI has revolutionized recruitment by automating routine tasks, efficiently screening candidates, and mitigating hiring biases. Meshram (2023) points out that AI can swiftly analyze applications, match candidates based on their skills, and even conduct preliminary assessments. This accelerates the process, enabling recruiters to concentrate on more strategic responsibilities such as engaging with candidates and fostering relationships.

Similarly, Islam and Afrin (2023) highlight the importance of explainable AI (XAI) in fostering transparency within the hiring process. Given that many applicants harbor reservations about AI-driven decision-making, Xia seeks to enhance comprehension of AI-generated decisions, thus cultivating greater trust.

Do candidates trust AI over human recruiters?

Even though AI is efficient, people still don't trust it. Kharbanda and the team found that AI cuts down on human bias; lots of job seekers would rather talk to a real person. Why not? Because real recruiters connect on a personal level, they're emotionally intelligent, and they get cultural fit—stuff AI can't do yet.

Reddy and Saha (2025) contend that the opacity of AI systems hinders candidate comprehension of selection decisions. Conversely, human recruiters offer personalized feedback, fostering candidate appreciation and respect.

Several candidates expressed confidence in AI's capacity for impartial and unbiased initial screening. AI's objectivity, free from personal biases and subjective opinions, enhances perceived fairness. However, a majority of candidates favor

human involvement in the ultimate hiring decisions.

AI vs. Human Recruiters: finding the right balance

Many researchers propose a collaborative approach, combining AI and human recruiters, rather than replacing human recruiters entirely. Mori et al. (2024) suggest that AI could manage screening and routine tasks, freeing human recruiters to concentrate on the final hiring decisions and engaging with candidates.

Meshram (2023) highlights that AI can be a powerful tool for improving recruiter productivity, but it cannot replace human judgment. Meshram (2023) points out that AI can significantly enhance recruiter productivity, yet human judgment remains irreplaceable, particularly in evaluating soft skills and cultural compatibility. Especially in assessing soft skills and cultural fit.

1.1.3. EXPLORATORY RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN

To ground my study in real-world experiences, I engaged in several exploratory techniques:

Experience surveys: I floated a simple questionnaire among my classmates and peer network, targeting students who had recently applied for internships or full-time roles. A majority had interacted with AI systems, either through automated interview rounds or resume screening tools. While some appreciated the speed of the process, many highlighted the **lack of personal connection** and **no clarity on rejection criteria**.

All these insights contributed to shaping my research objective, methodology, and framework. They reaffirmed that there is a significant need to **understand candidate perceptions in depth** and ensure that recruitment systems, whether human or AI-led, remain fair, ethical, and transparent.

1.2. FURTHER EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH TOPIC

Understanding the research topic:

The title of my thesis is "Trust in Artificial Intelligence vs. Human Recruiters: Analyzing Candidate Perceptions of Credibility, Ethical Consideration, and Decision- Making Transparency in the Hiring Process."
To make it more understandable and relatable, let's break it down into simpler terms.

In today's job market, a lot of companies have started using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to help with hiring, whether it's screening resumes, analyzing video interviews, or even shortlisting candidates. While this can make the recruitment process faster and more efficient, it also raises some important questions:

- ✓ Do job applicants trust AI as much as they trust human recruiters?
- ✓ Do they feel AI is fair, transparent, and ethical in how it makes decisions?
- ✓ Do they still prefer the human touch when it comes to something as important as their career?

That's exactly what this research aims to explore—how candidates perceive and compare both AI-based recruitment systems and traditional human recruiters, especially in terms of trust, fairness, and transparency.

Key terms defined:

- ✓ **Trust**: In the context of hiring, trust refers to how much confidence candidates place in the decision-

making process of either AI tools or human recruiters. This includes whether they believe the process is fair, accurate, and in their best interest.

✓ **Artificial intelligence (AI) in hiring**: This refers to technologies like chatbots, resume parsers, video interview analyzers, and predictive analytics tools that help companies make hiring decisions with minimal human involvement.

✓ **Human recruiters**: traditional HR professionals or hiring managers who interact with candidates, conduct interviews, and make final decisions based on their judgment, experience, and interpersonal communication.

✓ **Credibility**: This deals with whether the candidates believe the recruiter (either AI or human) is competent, knowledgeable, and reliable.

✓ **Ethical considerations**: This relates to fairness in hiring decisions—whether biases are avoided, candidate privacy is respected, and decisions are made based on merit.

1. **Decision-making transparency**: This means how open and clear the hiring process is. For example, do candidates understand how decisions are being made? Are the criteria explained properly?

Importance of this topic

In a world where automation is growing rapidly, we need to understand its impact not just from a business point of view but also from a human one. Recruitment is a sensitive and personal process. People invest their hopes, confidence, and future into job applications. If they don't trust the system, especially an AI-driven one, it can create frustration, confusion, and even feelings of being unfairly judged. By exploring this topic, I hope to highlight not only how effective AI tools are but also how *people feel* about them. Because at the end of the day, hiring is not just about choosing the right candidate—it's also about building relationships and trust.

1.3. QUESTIONS

All research starts with curiosity, and mine was no different. I've always been intrigued by how technology, especially artificial intelligence (AI), is changing the hiring game. But while AI is fast and efficient, the real question is, do candidates trust it as much as they trust human recruiters? To dig deeper, I've structured my research questions into two parts — general questions that cover the big picture and specific ones that help test the smaller details.

1.3.1. GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

These questions guided the overall direction of my thesis:

✓ What do job seekers think about the use of AI in recruitment?

✓ Do they trust AI recruitment systems the same way they trust human recruiters?

✓ How do candidates perceive ethical behavior and transparency in both AI and human-led hiring processes?

1.3.2. SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS / HYPOTHESES

To explore the topic in more detail, I've formed specific questions (also called hypotheses) that I aim to test:

- ✓ **H1:** Candidates trust human recruiters more than AI-based hiring tools.
- ✓ **H2:** Human recruiters are seen as more ethical in making hiring decisions.
- ✓ **H3:** AI systems are perceived to be less transparent in how they select candidates.
- ✓ **H4:** The higher the credibility of the recruiter (human or AI), the higher the level of trust from candidates.
- ✓ **H5:** Past experiences with AI-based recruitment influence future preferences towards human recruiters.

1.3.3. EXPECTED RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN VARIABLES

I'm expecting some interesting patterns to show up in the results. Here's what I believe the relationship might look like:

- ✓ Candidates who find recruiters (whether AI or human) **more credible** will likely **trust them more**.
- ✓ **Transparency** in the recruitment process (like knowing why you were selected or rejected) builds **stronger trust**.
- ✓ If a system seems **unfair or unethical**, trust automatically drops, especially when it's AI.
- ✓ People who've had a **bad experience with AI recruitment** may show a stronger preference for traditional human interviews in the future.

1.3.4. CONNECTING THE DOTS

The general questions gave me a broad understanding of the issue of how AI and human recruiters are perceived. From there, I broke them into smaller, testable parts (the hypotheses) to help me understand why people feel a certain way.

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main goal of this research is to understand what people (especially job seekers) think about AI-based hiring systems compared to traditional human recruiters. We want to know who they trust more and why.

1.4.1. WHERE DO THESE OBJECTIVES COME FROM?

These objectives are directly based on the questions we've been asking ourselves since the beginning, like:

- ✓ Do candidates find AI trustworthy?
- ✓ Do they feel that human recruiters are more transparent or ethical?

We want to dig deeper into what matters to candidates when they're being judged for a job.

1.4.2. WHAT EXACTLY ARE WE TRYING TO MEASURE?

We're not just guessing or sharing opinions —we're trying to measure things. Like:

- ✓ How much trust do candidates have in AI vs. human recruiters?
- ✓ Which one do they find more ethical and transparent?
- ✓ Does their trust change based on age, experience, or familiarity with technology?

1.4.3. WHAT HAS THIS RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHED?

By the end of this study, we should be able to confidently say:

- ✓ Which method (AI or human) do people trust more, and why?

- ✓ What concerns or expectations do they have about AI in hiring?
- ✓ Whether people feel fairly judged by AI or prefer the human touch.

1.4.4. WHY IS THIS USEFUL FOR MANAGEMENT?

These insights can help companies make smarter hiring decisions. If people don't trust AI, then maybe it's time to improve how it's used or mix it with human input. On the other hand, if AI is seen as more transparent and fairer, companies might feel more confident investing in it. The results will help HR teams design better, more trustworthy recruitment processes that candidates are comfortable with.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. RESEARCH DESIGNS EMPLOYED WITH JUSTIFICATIONS

For this research, I've mainly used a **descriptive research design**, with a slight touch of **exploratory design** in the beginning. Let me explain why:

- ✓ **Exploratory design (at the start)**

Before I got into surveys and data collection, I spent time understanding the topic through literature reviews, articles, past studies, and even informal discussions with some peers. This helped me explore the topic better and refine my specific research questions and objectives. That's why there's also an element of exploratory research here, especially in the initial phase.

- ✓ **Descriptive design**

This type of research is perfect when you already know what you want to study—you're not just exploring randomly. Since my topic is about comparing trust in AI recruiters vs. human recruiters, the goal is to describe and measure people's perceptions. I want to know how much trust people have in AI, what they think about its ethics and transparency, and how it compares with human recruiters. All these things require proper measurement and description, which fits perfectly with a descriptive research design.

So, I used **exploratory research** to gain initial insights and **descriptive research** to structure the study, collect data, and analyze the results in a meaningful way.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND FORMS

For collecting data in this research, I used a **self-administered online questionnaire**. Since the topic was about understanding people's trust in AI versus human recruiters, it was important to reach job seekers, students, and working professionals easily. An online form was the best fit for that.

2.2.1. DATA COLLECTION MEDIUM – REASON FOR CHOOSING SELF- ADMINISTERED ONLINE SURVEY

I chose **Google Forms** because it's easy to design, share, and analyze. Most of the target audience is comfortable with digital platforms, so they can fill out the form at their convenience. It also saved time, reduced errors, and helped gather responses quickly.

2.2.2. ABOUT THE QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was kept short, clear, and to the point. All questions were **closed- ended**, meaning participants only

had to select from given options. This made the analysis simpler and ensured consistency in answers.

The questions were designed to gather insights on:

- ✓ Whether respondents had interacted with AI or human recruiters.
- ✓ Who do they trust more to make fair decisions?
- ✓ Who do they think is more ethical and transparent in the hiring process?
- ✓ their level of comfort with AI-based recruitment.

2.2.3. SEQUENCING OF QUESTIONS

The questions were placed in a **logical order** to make it easy for the respondents.

- ✓ **Basic demographic details** (like age, gender, and education).
- ✓ **Recruitment experience** (whether they have been part of an AI or human-led interview).
- ✓ **Comparison-based questions** on trust, ethics, and transparency between AI and human recruiters.
- ✓ **Preference-based questions** asking who they would prefer to be interviewed or selected by.

This sequence helped the respondents stay engaged and ensured a smooth flow.

2.2.4. TYPES OF SCALES USED

To measure responses accurately, I used:

- ✓ **Likert scale** (such as strongly agree to strongly disagree) to understand opinions.
- ✓ **Yes/no questions** to keep things straightforward.
- ✓ **Multiple-choice questions** with fixed options for consistency.

2.3. SAMPLING DESIGN AND PLANNING

To make sure that my research results are meaningful and relevant, I followed a proper sampling plan. Here's how I did it:TARGET POPULATION

The target population for this research included:

✓ **Job seekers**	✓ **Students preparing for placements**
✓ **Working professionals**	✓ **Freshers**

These groups were selected because they are either directly involved in hiring or have recent experience with both AI-based and human-led recruitment processes.

2.3.1. SAMPLING FRAME

Since the research was conducted online, the sampling frame mainly included the students and professionals available on platforms like LinkedIn, WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, and college networks.

2.3.2. SAMPLE UNITS USED

Each **respondent** who filled out the form was considered a **sampling unit**. This includes males and females from different educational backgrounds, mainly aged between **18 and 35 years**.

2.3.3. METHODS FOR SELECTING SAMPLE UNITS

I used a **non-probability sampling approach**, combining **convenience** and **snowball sampling** techniques. Participants were selected based on easy accessibility and availability (convenience sampling). To broaden the reach, I also encouraged respondents to share the form within their personal and professional networks, which allowed the survey to reach participants beyond my direct connections (snowball sampling).

This dual-method approach helped me collect diverse responses across age groups, educational backgrounds, and professional levels, despite the absence of a random sampling framework.

2.3.4. SAMPLE SIZE

The final sample size was **100 respondents**. This number was good enough to get general insights and understand patterns in preferences and perceptions regarding AI vs. human recruiters.

2.3.5. RESPONSE RATE

Out of around **150 people approached**, I received **100 complete responses**, giving me a **response rate of approximately 66.67%**. This is quite satisfactory for an online survey.

2.4. FIELDWORK

2.4.1. FIELDWORK PROCEDURE AND LOCATION

The fieldwork for this research was conducted entirely **online** to reach a wide and relevant audience efficiently. I created a structured **Google Form questionnaire** and shared it through different online platforms such as **LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Telegram groups, and email**.

Since the topic focuses on the trust factor in AI vs. human recruiters, I aimed to collect responses from:

✓ **Students preparing for placements**	✓ **Job seekers**
✓ **Working professionals**	✓ **Recent graduates**.

Most of the responses came from people living in **urban areas**, especially those familiar with recruitment processes, making the data relevant and relatable to the topic.

2.4.2. PRETESTING PHASE AND IMPROVEMENTS

Before launching the main survey, I conducted a **pretest** with a small group of **5–7 individuals** from my network. This trial run helped me check if:

- ✓ The questions were **clear and easy to understand**
- ✓ The **order of questions** made logical sense
- ✓ The survey can be completed within a **short and comfortable time (around 5 min).**

Based on their feedback, I made a few changes, like

- ✓ Simplifying some of the technical terms
- ✓ Making the options in multiple-choice questions more specific

✓ Re-arranging a few questions for a better flow.

This helped make the final questionnaire more user-friendly and ensured that participants could answer it easily without confusion or hesitation.

2.5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis is the process of organizing, summarizing, and examining the information collected during research to discover useful patterns, relationships, or insights. It allows researchers to move beyond just numbers or responses to make sense of what the data is telling us.

Interpretation, on the other hand, is about giving **meaning** to those findings. It's where we try to understand what the numbers imply in real-world terms, especially about our **research questions, hypotheses, and objectives**.

In simple words, data analysis answers "What did people say or select?" while interpretation goes one step further and answers "What does it mean in the context of my research?"

In this chapter, I will be presenting the analysis of the data collected through the structured questionnaire, followed by clear interpretations of the results. The focus will remain on three major areas highlighted in my research topic:

✓ **Trust** in AI vs Human Recruiters

✓ **Ethical Considerations** in AI-based recruitment

✓ **Transparency** in decision-making processes

The analysis is done in a step-by-step manner, starting from the basic demographic profile of the respondents and moving toward insights drawn from their opinions, preferences, and experiences.

2.5.1. DATA PREPARATION AND PROCESSING PROCEDURE

After designing and sharing my questionnaire for this research, the next big step was to manage and prepare the responses in a way that would make the analysis smooth and meaningful. Since the entire data collection process was done through **Google Forms**, it helped in automatically storing all responses in a linked **Google Sheet**, which saved a lot of time and effort on manual data entry.

How Was the Data Collected?

The form was circulated mainly through digital platforms like **LinkedIn, WhatsApp groups, Telegram**, and among personal and professional networks. The event was targeted at students, working professionals, and job seekers to get a good mix of people who have interacted with AI-based or human recruiters. I kept the form open for responses for around **1 week**, and by the end of the period, I had received a total of **[insert actual number, e.g., 100] complete responses**.

Initial Observations

Once I opened the response sheet, the first thing I did was **go through each response manually** just to get a feel for the data. Most of the participants had filled out the form properly, but as expected in any survey, there were a few things I needed to address before beginning the actual analysis.

Steps Taken to Clean the Data

Here's how I prepared the data for analysis:

✓ **Removed Incomplete Entries:** A few people started the survey but didn't complete all the important questions. I filtered those out to avoid partial data affecting the results.

✓ **Checked for Duplicate Responses:** Some people have submitted the form more than once (probably due to network refresh or confusion). I compared timestamps, names, and identical answers to identify and delete the duplicates, keeping only the first response.

✓ **Standardized Responses:** Some entries had inconsistent formatting. For example, under "education qualification," some wrote "MBA," while others wrote "postgraduate," or "PG." I standardized such entries into a single label to keep the categories clean and consistent during analysis.

✓ **Categorized Open Text Inputs (where needed):** For questions like "profession" or "location," participants entered a variety of responses. I grouped similar answers under one heading (e.g., "Student," "MBA Student," and "Pursuing MBA" were all grouped as "Student").

✓ **Numeric Coding for Analysis:** For Likert-scale-based questions, I assigned numerical values from **1 (Strongly Disagree)** to **5 (Strongly Agree)**. This made it easier to calculate averages and see overall trends in perceptions related to trust, ethics, and transparency.

Editing Issues and Challenges

There weren't any major issues, but a few minor challenges did come up:

✓ **Checkbox-type questions** allowed multiple selections, which made it slightly tricky to count how many times each option was chosen. I had to break them down one by one.

✓ A couple of responses had unusual combinations—for instance, a person marking "No" for awareness of AI but still answering detailed AI-related questions. I didn't remove them but kept them in mind during interpretation.

✓ A few optional fields, like "Location" and "Profession," were left blank, which was expected and didn't affect the main analysis.

Final Status of the Data

After cleaning and organizing everything, the data looked neat and ready for the next phase. I downloaded it in **Excel format**. This preparation made it much easier to start interpreting results and spotting trends as I moved into the next part of the research.

Overall, this step was all about being careful and detailed—because when the data is well-prepared, the analysis becomes more accurate and meaningful. It also gave me better confidence in the quality of my findings moving forward.

2.5.2. GENERAL STATISTICAL METHODS USED IN THE DATA ANALYSIS AND JUSTIFICATION

Since the nature of my study is focused on **understanding opinions, experiences, and trust levels** among candidates

toward AI and human recruiters, the analysis mostly involved **descriptive statistical methods**. The goal was not to test complex mathematical models or predict outcomes, but to clearly present what the data says about people's perceptions—and that's where descriptive statistics work best.

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** I used basic descriptive tools such as:

- ✓ **Frequencies** (how many people chose a particular option)
- ✓ **Percentages** (what portion of total respondents chose an option)
- ✓ **Averages (mean scores)** where Likert scale questions were used
- ✓ **Bar charts and pie charts** to visually represent the distribution of responses.

The reason behind choosing this method

There are a few good reasons why I chose descriptive statistics for this study:

- ✓ **Nature of the Data:** The data collected was mostly categorical (like gender, education level, and preferences) and opinion-based (trust levels and ethical views), which doesn't require complicated statistical tools. Instead, it needs clear summaries and visual representation.
- ✓ **Objective of the Research:** I aimed to explore and compare trust, transparency, and ethical perceptions, not to establish cause-and-effect relationships. For such studies, it's more important to show "how many people feel a certain way" than to test for deep statistical significance.
- ✓ **Audience Understanding:** Since this research is meant to provide insights that HR professionals and organizations can act on, it's best to present the results in a straightforward and accessible way. Graphs, percentages, and short summaries are easier for most readers to understand and apply.
- ✓ **Support for Interpretation:** These basic methods help connect the results clearly to the research questions and hypotheses, making it easier to interpret findings and draw useful conclusions.

2.5.3. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF SURVEY RESPONSES

This part aims to analyze the responses collected through the questionnaire and interpret what they reveal about people's trust, experiences, and opinions related to AI and human recruiters. This analysis helps connect the data directly to the research questions and gives a clearer picture of what today's candidates truly feel.

Section 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Before diving into the main part of the analysis, I felt it was important to take a step back and look at who responded to the survey. Since this study is all about understanding people's trust in AI vs human recruiters, their background and experience matter a lot. Factors like age, gender, education, and professional status can influence how someone feels about technology, especially when it's used to make decisions as important as hiring. Here's a breakdown of the people who participated in my study:

1. Age of Respondents

Figure 1: Age of Respondents

Here we can see this approximately. 50 % belong to the 23–27 age group and 46% belong to the 18–22 age group. As we know, the age group of the participants reflects a youthful and vibrant audience. Many of the respondents fall between the ages of 22 and 23, with 23% being 22 years old and 20% being 23. This suggests that the respondents are mostly students in their final years of graduation or early stages of post- graduation. The age group of 21 also had a fair representation with 10%, followed by those aged 24 (12%) and 25 (11%), who might already be in their professional journey or pursuing higher education.

A smaller number of responses came from individuals aged 18, 19, and 20, making up a combined total of 13%, indicating participation from first- or second-year college students. There were very few responses beyond the age of 26, and just 1% representation from the age group of 31. The age distribution shows that the survey primarily reached young adults, especially those navigating through academic or early career phases, making them a relevant and insightful group for the research being conducted.

2. Gender of Respondents

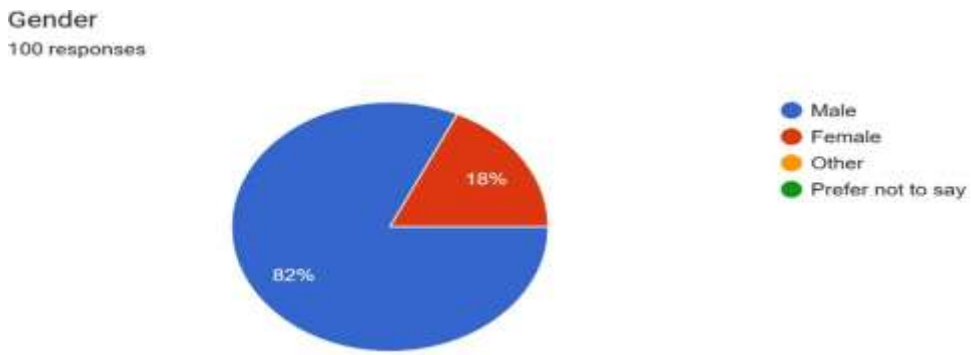

Figure 2: Gender Details

The gender distribution in this survey shows a clear skew, with 82% of the respondents identifying as male. This reflects that a large portion of the survey participants were from a male-dominated environment, possibly indicating either the nature of the group surveyed or the demographic makeup of the institution or community targeted.

Only 18% of the respondents identified as female, and there were no responses recorded under the categories “Other” or “Prefer not to say.” While the representation of female voices is limited, their participation still adds meaningful diversity and perspective to the survey findings.

This gender breakdown provides a better understanding of the respondent base, helping shape how responses can be interpreted from a gendered lens, especially when analyzing preferences, opinions, or challenges.

3. *Educational Qualification of Respondents*

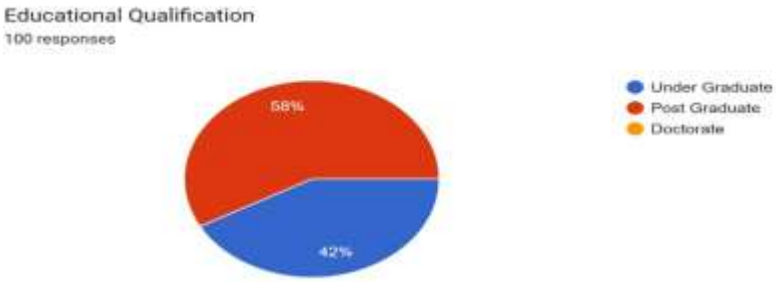

Figure 3: Education Qualification details

Among the 100 respondents, the majority, making up 58%, hold a postgraduate degree. This suggests a well-educated group of participants, many of whom may have advanced knowledge and specialized training in their respective fields. A notable portion, 42%, reported having completed undergraduate studies, indicating a balanced academic diversity in the group. Interestingly, no responses were recorded for individuals with a doctorate, reflecting either a limited presence of Ph.D. holders in the sample or the specific academic level of the target audience.

This educational profile highlights a mix of academic perspectives, with insights being shared primarily by individuals who have pursued higher education beyond the undergraduate level.

4. *Current Occupation of Respondents*

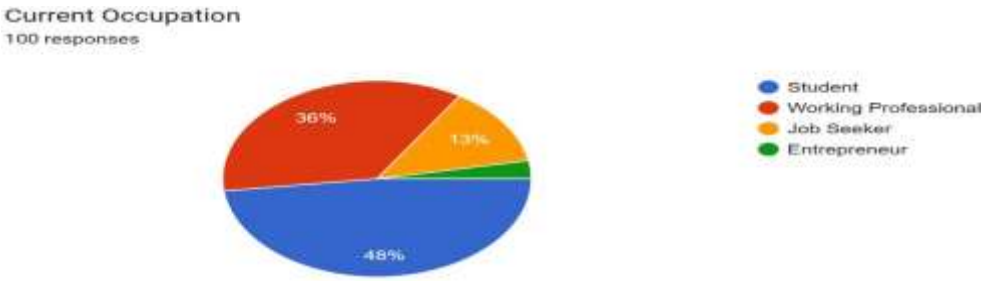

Figure 4: Respondent's Occupation

In the 100 participants, 48% identified themselves as students, indicating that nearly half of the respondents are currently pursuing their education. This could suggest an audience keen on learning and personal development. A significant portion, 36%, are working professionals, pointing toward a group with practical experience and active involvement in the workforce. This mix brings real-world perspectives to the table.

On the other hand, 13% of respondents described themselves as job seekers, reflecting a segment actively looking for new opportunities. Only 3% are entrepreneurs, a smaller yet vital group likely bringing innovation and risk-taking spirit into the mix. The distribution provides a well-rounded view of individuals at different stages of their career journey, contributing to diverse and insightful feedback.

5. *Participation in Hiring Process*

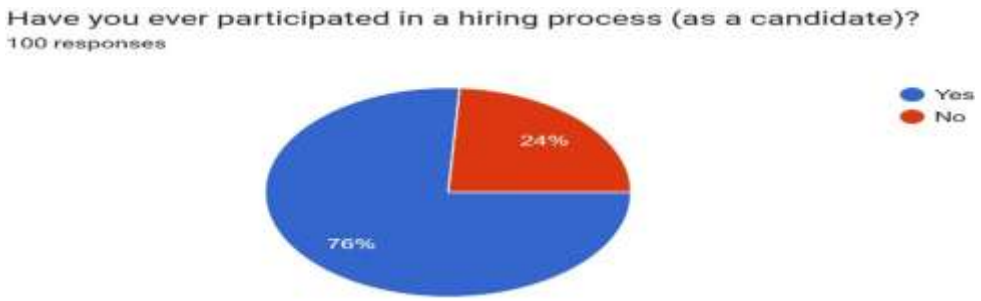

Figure 5: Participation percentage in hiring process

Out of 100 individuals surveyed, 76% shared that they have already been part of a hiring process as a candidate. This indicates that most of the respondents have first-hand experience with interviews, assessments, or other stages involved in recruitment. 24% have not yet participated in any hiring process, which might include younger students or individuals still preparing to step into the professional world. The responses suggest an experienced audience that can offer meaningful insights into hiring practices and candidate expectations.

Section 2: Understanding AI in Recruitment

Before asking people whether they trust AI or human recruiters more, I felt it was important to check if they were aware of the use of AI in hiring processes. After all, someone's opinion is only valid if they've at least had some exposure to or knowledge about the concept. So, the first few questions in my survey focused on basic awareness—things like whether they knew AI was being used in recruitment, where they heard about it, and how often they believe it's being used in real-world hiring.

1. Are you aware of the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in recruitment?

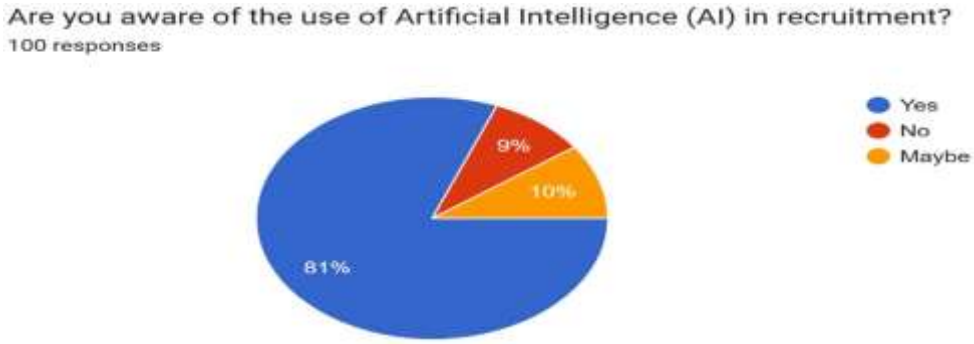

Figure 6: Awareness about AI in Recruitment

To begin my analysis, I first wanted to understand how many people are aware that AI is being used in recruitment today. Because let's be honest—if someone hasn't even heard of it, their opinion or trust level won't be fully informed.

The results were very encouraging. A strong 81% of respondents said "Yes," they are aware that AI is used in hiring processes. This shows that awareness of technology in recruitment is growing, especially among younger candidates and professionals who are actively applying for jobs or preparing for placements. Since most of the respondents were in the age group of 18–34, this response also aligns well with the digital-first generation, who are more likely to have encountered AI tools, job portals, resume screeners, or automated interview platforms.

However, 9% of people said "No," and another 10% responded with "Maybe." While these percentages are small, they're

still significant because they highlight a communication gap. Companies may be using AI in the background, but they're not always informing the candidates. And if people don't even know that AI is part of the process, how can they trust it? This also connects with one of the major concerns in my research: transparency. If candidates aren't being told when AI is being used or how their applications are being processed, it can lead to confusion, mistrust, and even rejection of the system altogether.

So, even though most respondents are aware of AI in recruitment, there's clearly still a need for better communication and transparency from the employers' side. Candidates deserve to know who—or what—is evaluating them, especially when it involves their career and future.

2. Where did you hear or learn about AI in recruitment?

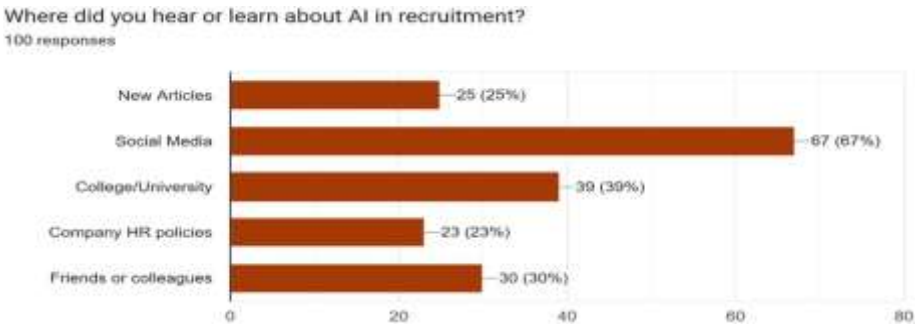

Figure 7: Source of awareness about AI in Recruitment

After confirming that most respondents were aware of AI in recruitment, I wanted to go one step deeper and understand where they were getting this information from. The responses to this question gave me some really interesting insights.

As expected in today's digital world, social media was the top source, with 67% of people saying they first came across AI in recruitment through platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, or YouTube. This shows how powerful and far-reaching social media has become in shaping not just entertainment but also professional awareness. It also highlights how recruiters, HR influencers, and career pages play a big role in spreading awareness, sometimes more than formal education or company communication. 39% said they learned about it in college or university, which shows that academic institutions are starting to talk about modern HR tools and AI in their curriculum. This is a positive sign because it means students are not only learning the theory but are also being introduced to real-world hiring trends early on.

Another 30% said friends and colleagues were their main source of information, which tells me that word-of-mouth still plays a big part. People share their hiring experiences, especially if something unusual or tech-driven happens during the process. What surprised me a bit was that only 23% mentioned company HR policies, which suggests that many organizations are using AI without clearly stating it in their communication to candidates. This adds to the transparency issue I observed earlier. If companies are using advanced tools, they should also be open about it, because not knowing who is evaluating you (a human or a machine) can make the process feel a little unfair or impersonal. 25% of respondents said they read about AI in news articles, which shows that mainstream media is also covering this topic, although maybe not as widely as social media or academic institutions. In short, this question confirmed one thing very clearly: candidates are aware, but their knowledge often comes from informal or third- party sources. To build real trust, companies need to

be more transparent and directly communicate with candidates about the use of AI in their hiring systems.

3. In your opinion, how commonly is AI used in recruitment today?

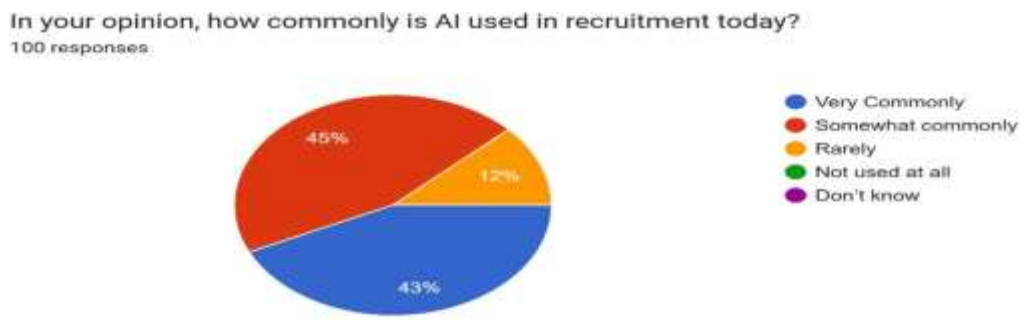

Figure 8: Common use of AI in Recruitment

Most respondents believe that AI is actively used in recruitment today, with 45% saying it's somewhat common and 43% saying it's very common. This shows that candidates are not only aware of AI but also believe it plays a real role in the hiring process. From resume screening tools to chatbots and online assessments, many have come to associate AI with a regular part of modern recruitment. Only 12% felt AI was rarely used, and no one said it was not used at all or that they didn't know—this suggests that AI has become mainstream in recruitment across many sectors. It also indicates that job seekers today are informed and observant about the processes they experience while applying, even if they don't directly interact with an AI tool. This level of awareness sets the stage for deeper questions around trust, ethics, and preferences, which I explore in the next part of the study.

4. Do you think AI can help improve the hiring process?

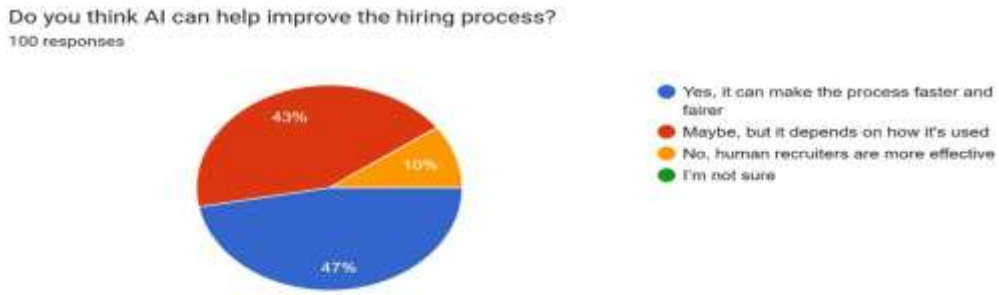

Figure 9: Percentage of AI help in the hiring process

Most respondents (47%) believe that AI has the potential to make the hiring process both faster and fairer. This is a promising outlook, as many see AI as a tool that could eliminate biases, streamline candidate screening, and ensure more consistent evaluations. It's reassuring to see that people are increasingly trusting AI to not just speed up the process but also make it more equitable, especially when considering the challenges that human recruiters may face in maintaining impartiality.

However, a significant portion (43%) is more cautious, suggesting that the effectiveness of AI truly depends on how it's used. This reflects a strong understanding that AI is not a one-size-fits-all solution and must be implemented carefully, with attention to factors like data quality and system training.

Only 10% of respondents still favor human recruiters, valuing the intuition and personal touch that a human can bring to assessing a candidate's cultural fit or soft skills. This shows that while AI is making waves, the human element still holds an important place in recruitment.

5. Which of the following tasks do you think AI is capable of performing in recruitment?

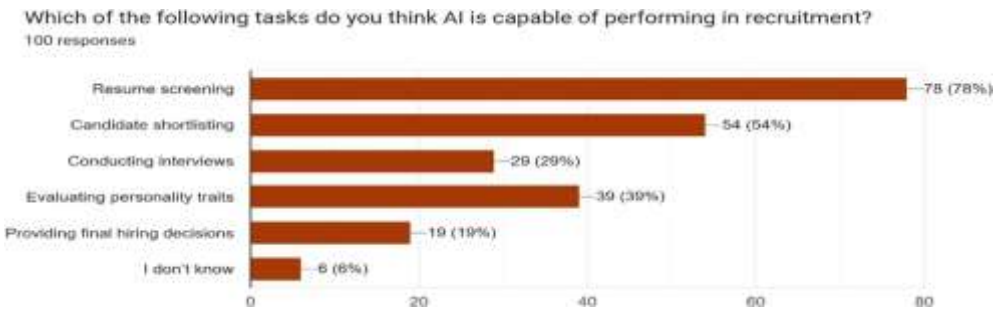

Figure 10: AI capability of performing various tasks in Recruitment

Based on the survey responses, it's clear that many people see AI as a valuable tool in certain aspects of the recruitment process, particularly in handling repetitive and data- driven tasks. A strong 78% believe that AI is capable of performing resume screening, which makes sense given AI's ability to quickly scan large volumes of resumes and identify relevant keywords, qualifications, and experience. Similarly, 54% of respondents feel that AI can assist with candidate shortlisting, helping recruiters identify the most suitable candidates based on predefined criteria, thus speeding up the selection process.

However, there is more skepticism when it comes to tasks that require deeper human insight. Only 29% of respondents believe AI can effectively conduct interviews, and just 39% think it can evaluate personality traits—tasks that rely heavily on intuition, body language, and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, only 19% feel AI should be responsible for providing final hiring decisions, which highlights the lingering belief that final judgments are best made by humans who can consider the complexities of a candidate's fit within the company culture. Finally, 6% of respondents remain uncertain, reflecting that AI's role in recruitment is still a subject of debate for some.

Section 3: Perception and Trust Toward AI vs. Human Recruiters

It's clear that while AI is seen as a valuable tool in certain areas of recruitment, human recruiters still hold an important place in the process. Many respondents believe AI can significantly improve efficiency and fairness, especially when it comes to tasks like resume screening and candidate shortlisting, where it can process large amounts of data quickly and without bias. This highlights the growing trust in AI's ability to handle the repetitive and data-driven aspects of recruitment.

1. Who do you trust more to evaluate your job application fairly?

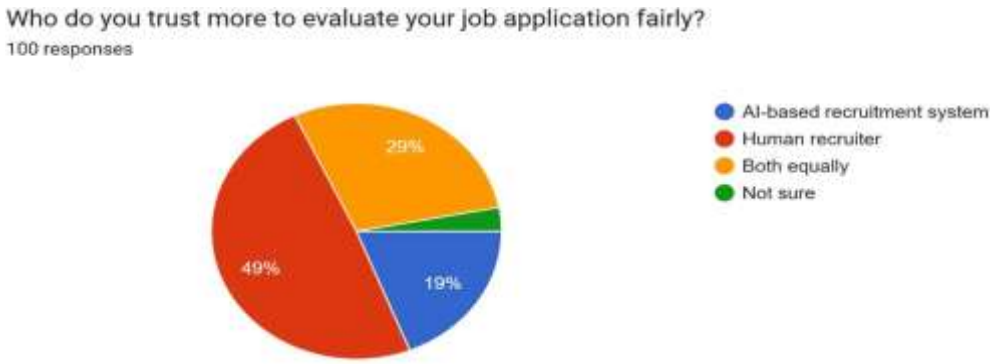

Figure 11: Trust percentage

The responses to this question clearly show that human recruiters are still more trusted when it comes to the fair evaluation of job applications. With 49% of respondents choosing human recruiters over AI, this reflects a strong belief in the human ability to understand context, emotions, and unique qualities that may not be captured by an AI system. Candidates likely feel that humans can look beyond keywords and data points to truly assess potential.

At the same time, 29% of respondents trust both AI and human recruiters equally, suggesting that many are open to a hybrid approach where AI supports the process, but humans still make the final call. Interestingly, only 19% placed full trust in an AI-based recruitment system, which points to a cautious attitude towards fully automated hiring. The 3% who are unsure further emphasize that trust in AI is still developing, and while its role is growing, human insight remains a key factor in recruitment fairness.

2. In your opinion, which one is more transparent in decision-making?

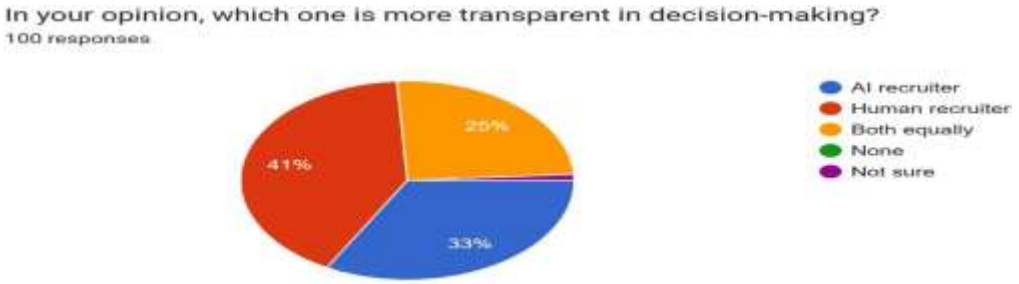

Figure 12: Transparent in decision making

The survey results show that 41% of respondents believe human recruiters are more transparent in their decision-making, compared to 33% who think AI recruiters are. This suggests that many people still feel that humans provide clearer reasoning or at least the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback, which builds a sense of openness. Candidates may trust human recruiters more because they believe they can explain their decisions or consider individual circumstances. A notable 33% feel that AI recruiters are more transparent, likely due to the idea that AI follows fixed rules or algorithms, which, if properly designed, can reduce bias and inconsistency. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents believe both are equally transparent, showing a shift towards accepting AI as a fair player when used responsibly. Interestingly, no one selected "none," and only a small portion were unsure, indicating that most respondents have a clear stance on transparency in recruitment decisions.

3. Do you believe AI systems can be biased or unfair in hiring decisions?

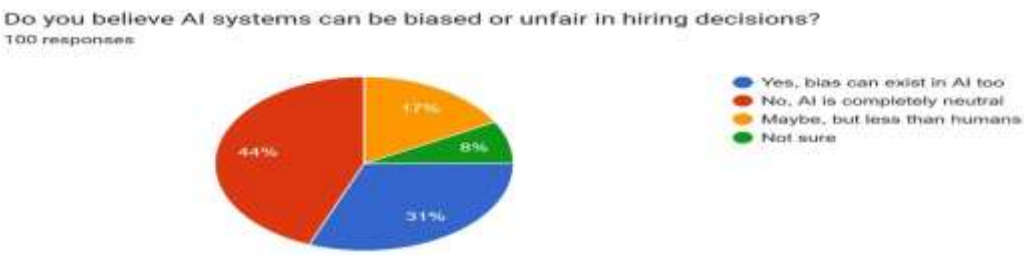

Figure 13: Biased or unfair in Hiring process

The survey results reveal an interesting divide in perceptions about bias in AI hiring systems. While 44% of respondents believe that AI is completely neutral, showing strong trust in its ability to make objective decisions, a significant 31% acknowledge that bias can exist in AI, too. This reflects an understanding that AI systems are only as unbiased as the data.

Meanwhile, 17% feel that AI may be biased, but still less so than human recruiters. This suggests that while AI isn't seen as perfect, it's considered a step toward reducing human error and subjectivity. The 8% who are unsure highlight that awareness about how AI systems work in recruitment is still developing. Overall, while many believe in AI's fairness, there's a growing awareness that it must be designed and monitored carefully to truly ensure unbiased hiring decisions.

4. How comfortable would you feel being interviewed by an AI tool instead of a human recruiter?

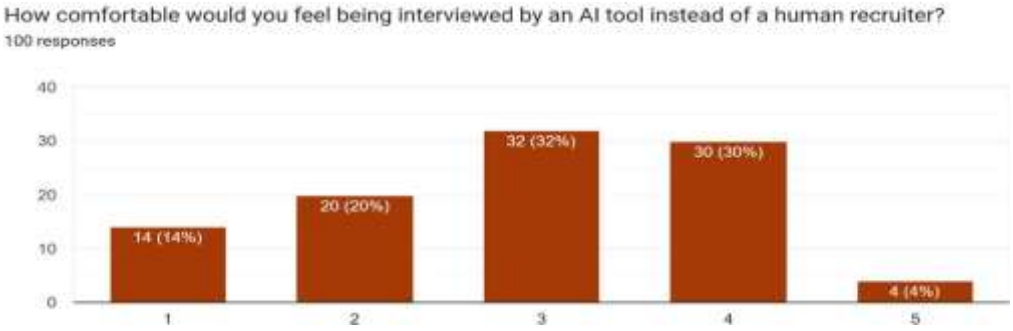

Figure 14: Comfort with AI

The responses to this question reflect a generally cautious attitude towards AI-led interviews. A combined 34% of participants rated their comfort level as 1 or 2 on the scale, indicating dissatisfaction or discomfort with the idea of being interviewed by an AI tool. This suggests that many candidates still prefer the human interaction, empathy, and real-time understanding that a human recruiter can offer during an interview.

On the other hand, 32% of respondents gave a neutral rating of 3, showing that while they may not be completely comfortable, they're not entirely opposed to the idea either. Interestingly, 30% rated their comfort level as 4, which indicates growing acceptance and trust in AI for interviews, especially among those who might appreciate its consistency and time-saving aspects. Only 4% rated it a full 5, showing satisfaction. Overall, the results reveal that while there's some openness to AI in interviews, many candidates still feel more at ease with human interaction.

5. Which of the following concerns do you have about AI in recruitment?

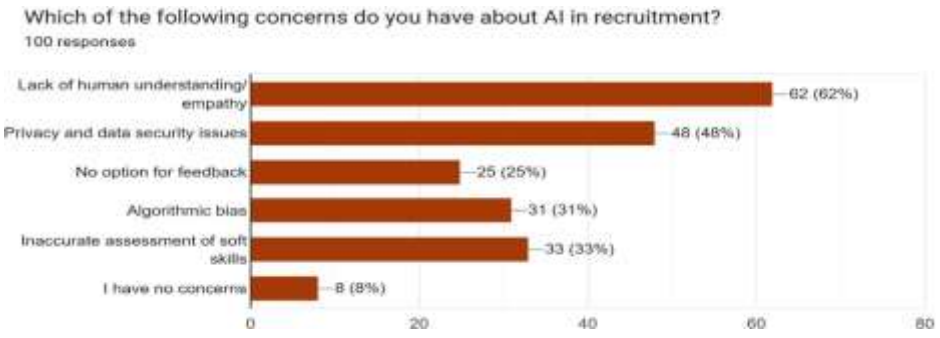

Figure 15: Concerns about AI in Recruitment

The survey highlights several key concerns that candidates have about the use of AI in recruitment. The most prominent worry, shared by 62% of respondents, is the lack of human understanding or empathy. This shows that many people fear losing the personal connection and emotional intelligence that human recruiters bring to the process, qualities that are hard to replicate through technology.

Other major concerns include privacy and data security (48%) and the risk of inaccurate assessment of soft skills (33%), both of which point to a lack of trust in AI's ability to handle sensitive information and subjective evaluations. Algorithmic bias was cited by 31%, reflecting growing awareness that AI can unintentionally carry forward existing biases if not carefully designed. Additionally, 25% noted the absence of a feedback option as a concern, which emphasizes the importance of communication and transparency in the hiring process. Only 8% of respondents stated they had no concerns, indicating that while AI is increasingly accepted, most candidates still have reservations that need to be addressed thoughtfully.

Section 4: Ethical and Emotional Aspects of AI and Human Recruiters

The responses reflect a preference for the human touch in recruitment due to concerns about empathy and fairness. A significant portion of respondents expressed discomfort with AI's lack of emotional understanding, fearing that machines might overlook the nuances of human expression and individuality. Ethical concerns such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the absence of feedback further deepen the hesitation toward fully automated systems. While AI is appreciated for its efficiency, candidates still value the transparency, empathy, and personalized communication that human recruiters bring to the hiring experience.

1. Do you think it is ethical for companies to use AI to screen candidates?

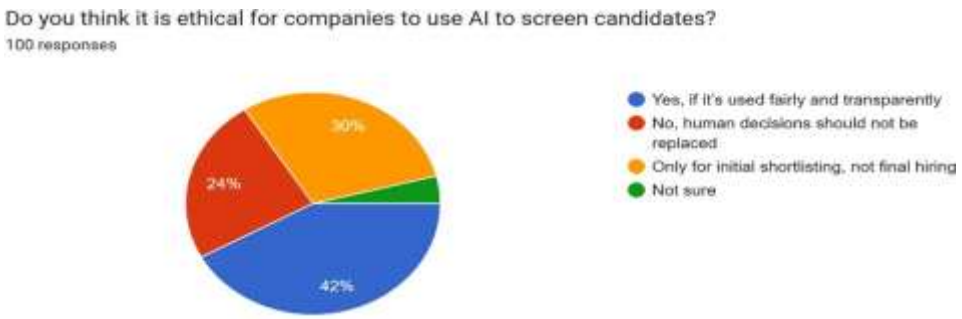

Figure 16: Ethical Consideration for companies to use AI

When asked about the ethics of using AI to screen candidates, most respondents showed a balanced and thoughtful perspective. A large portion—42%—believe it is ethical, but only if AI is used fairly and transparently, highlighting the importance of accountability in automated systems. Meanwhile, 30% feel AI should be limited to initial shortlisting and not be involved in final hiring decisions, reflecting a cautious but open-minded approach. On the other hand, 24% expressed that human decisions should not be replaced at all, emphasizing the value placed on human judgment in ethical decision- making. The overall sentiment suggests that while AI has a place in recruitment, it must be handled with care and transparency to ensure it aligns with ethical standards.

2. Do you feel emotionally understood or valued when interacting with AI during hiring?

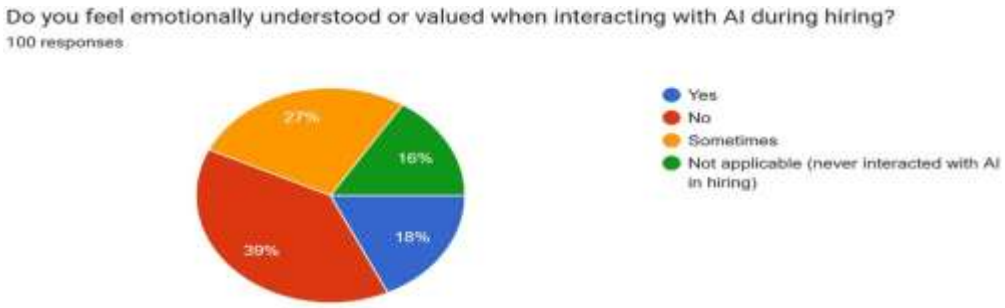

Figure 17: Emotionally Understood or valued interaction with AI

In today's hiring landscape, where AI is becoming more common, it's clear from the responses that many candidates still feel a lack of emotional connection when engaging with these systems. I believe that feeling understood and valued during the hiring process plays a major role in how confident and respected a candidate feels. The fact that 39% of people didn't feel emotionally understood by AI, and only 18% felt that they were, shows how much we still rely on human warmth and empathy—qualities that machines haven't quite mastered yet.

At the same time, it's interesting to see that 27% of respondents felt understood at times, which suggests that while AI may be making progress, it still needs a more human- centered approach. As someone who values personal interaction, I believe AI can be a great tool to support the process, but not replace it entirely. Emotional intelligence is something uniquely human, and in moments like job interviews. —Where people are often anxious or hopeful, genuine understanding can make all the difference.

3. In case of rejection by an AI system, how likely are you to trust the decision?

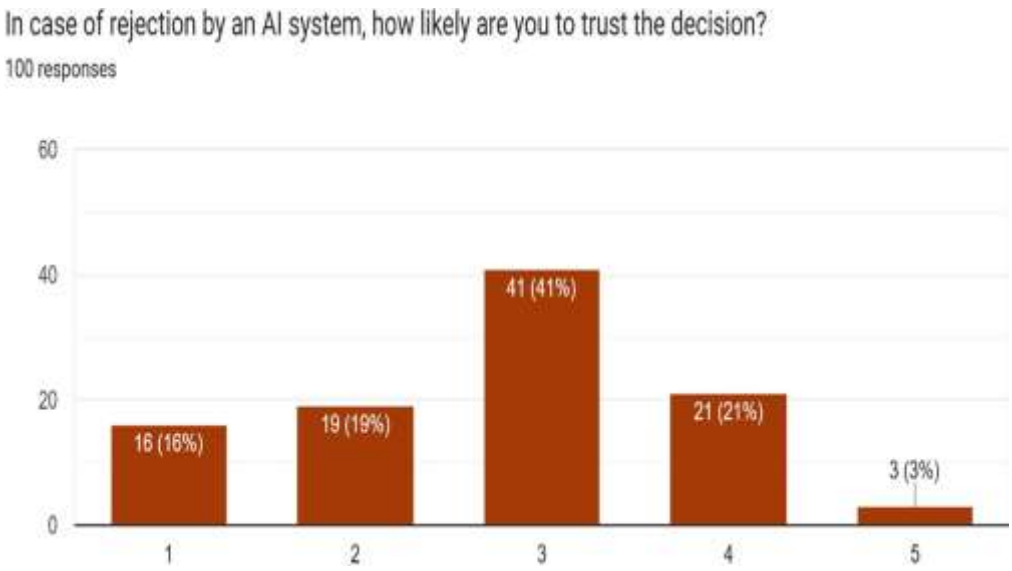

Figure 18: Rejection by an AI system, how likely are you to trust the decision?

The responses to this question reveal mixed feelings about trusting an AI's decision in the case of rejection. A significant portion, 41%, gave a neutral rating of 3, indicating uncertainty or ambivalence about trusting AI in such an important decision. This shows that while candidates may not fully trust AI's judgment, they don't completely dismiss it either.

On the other hand, 16% of respondents rated their trust as 1 (very dissatisfied), reflecting a strong skepticism towards AI rejections. A smaller 19% chose 2, suggesting mild distrust, while 21% rated it as 4, showing a higher level of trust in

AI's decision- making. Only 3% gave it a full 5, indicating very high confidence in AI's judgment. Overall, the results demonstrate that while AI is gaining acceptance in some areas of recruitment, many candidates still feel uncertain or uncomfortable with the idea of AI rejecting them without human oversight.

4. Do you believe AI can assess emotional intelligence or empathy in a candidate?

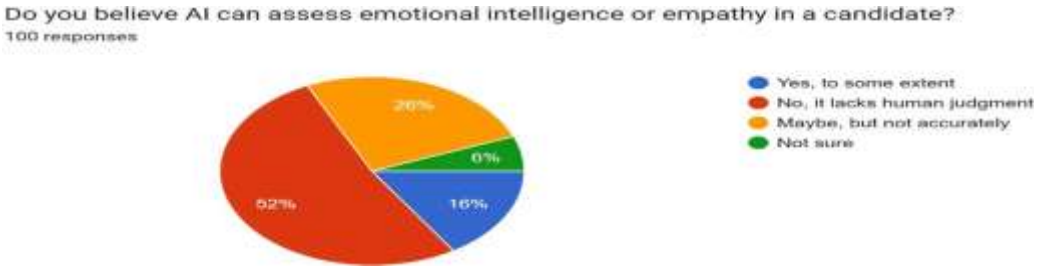

Figure 19: AI can assess emotional intelligence or empathy in a candidate

The responses to the question of whether AI can assess emotional intelligence or empathy in a candidate clearly show that most people remain skeptical about AI's ability to understand these complex human traits. With 52% of respondents believing that AI lacks the human judgment necessary for accurately assessing emotional intelligence or empathy, it's clear that many view these qualities as requiring a depth of understanding that machines simply cannot replicate. Emotional intelligence is rooted in subtle social cues, body language, and emotional context, which AI still struggles to interpret effectively.

However, 26% of respondents felt that AI might be able to assess these traits to some extent, though not accurately. This indicates that while AI can provide some insights based on patterns and data, its capacity to evaluate the nuances of human emotions remains limited. A smaller 16% believed that AI could assess emotional intelligence or empathy, suggesting that some see potential for AI to learn and improve in this area. Still, the consensus is that human recruiters, with their emotional awareness and empathy, are irreplaceable in evaluating these deeply human characteristics.

5. Do you feel the absence of human interaction negatively impacts your interview experience?

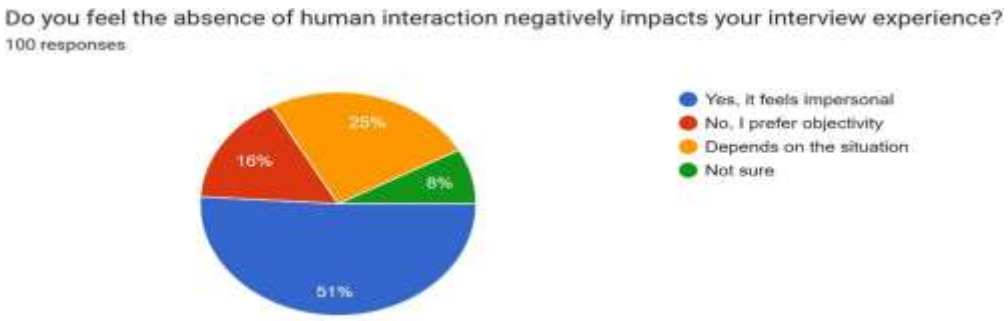

Figure 20: Absence of human interaction negatively impacts your interview experience

The responses to this question show a strong preference for human interaction during interviews, with 51% of participants feeling that the absence of human connection makes the experience feel impersonal. This suggests that many candidates value the opportunity to engage with someone who can interpret their responses in a more nuanced and empathetic way,

rather than just analyzing data points or keywords. Human recruiters are often seen as more capable of understanding the full context of a candidate's background, motivations, and personality.

On the other hand, 16% of respondents preferred the objectivity that AI brings, indicating that some candidates appreciate the consistency and fairness AI can offer. Additionally, 25% felt that the impact of lacking human interaction depended on the situation, implying that in some contexts, such as preliminary screenings or specific roles, AI might be more acceptable. The 8% who were unsure reflect that while AI in interviews is still a developing concept, there is uncertainty around how it affects the candidate experience. Ultimately, the results suggest that while AI has a role to play, human interaction remains crucial to a positive and well-rounded interview experience.

Section 5: Expectations and Suggestions

In this, the respondent expressed a desire for a balanced integration of AI and human recruiters in the hiring process. While many see AI as a valuable tool for tasks like screening and shortlisting, there is a strong preference for human recruiters to handle final decisions and offer personalized interaction. Candidates expect AI to be transparent in its decision-making, providing clear feedback and ensuring privacy and security. There's also a demand for AI systems to consider emotional intelligence and cultural fit alongside qualifications, something that many feel AI is not yet fully equipped to evaluate.

1. What do you expect from a good recruitment process?

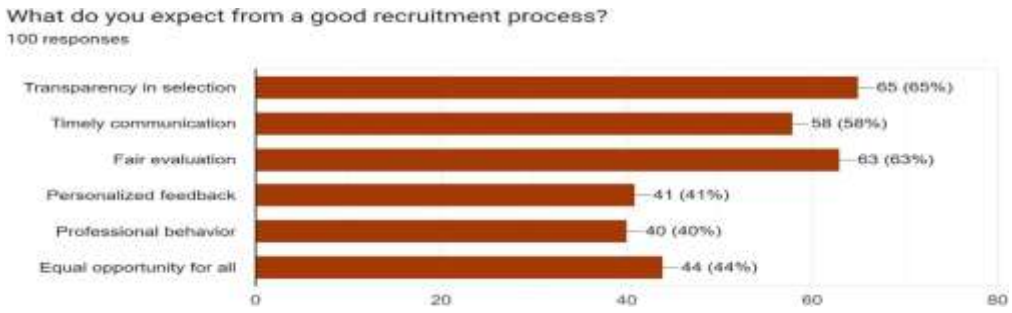

Figure 21: Expectation from a good recruitment

When it comes to expectations from a good recruitment process, transparency in selection emerged as the top priority for respondents, with 65% highlighting its importance. Candidates want to understand the criteria and reasoning behind hiring decisions, as this creates a sense of fairness and reduces uncertainty. Alongside transparency, 63% of participants emphasized the need for fair evaluation, ensuring that all candidates are udged on the same level and given equal opportunity. Timely communication also came in strong at 58%, indicating that candidates value being kept informed throughout the process, whether they are progressing or not.

Moreover, personalized feedback is crucial for 41% of respondents, reflecting the desire for constructive criticism that can help them improve in future opportunities. Professional behavior, which was noted by 40% of participants, also plays a key role in creating a positive and respectful recruitment experience. Finally, 44% of respondents highlighted the importance of equal opportunity, signaling that candidates expect to be evaluated based on merit without any bias or discrimination. Overall, these findings suggest that candidates seek a recruitment process that is not only efficient but also fair, transparent, and respectful.

2. Which recruiter type do you believe should make the final hiring decision?

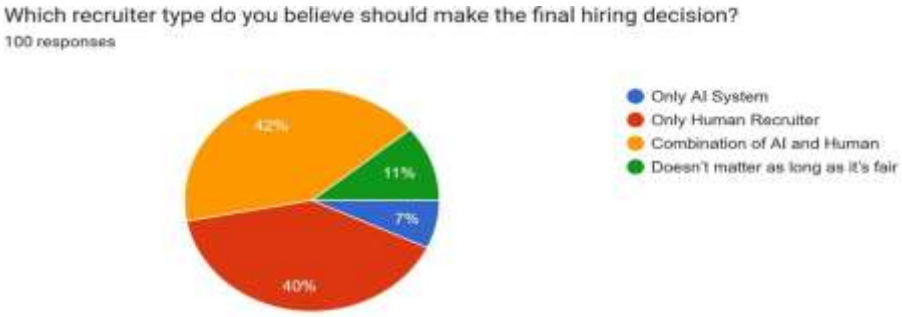

Figure 22: Believe in which method for the final hiring decision

The responses regarding who should make the final hiring decision reveal that most candidates favor a combination of AI and human recruiters, with 42% supporting this approach. This suggests that while AI can be useful in the early stages of recruitment, such as screening resumes and shortlisting candidates, human judgment remains essential for final decisions, where factors like cultural fit and emotional intelligence are better assessed.

On the other hand, 40% of respondents believe that only a human recruiter should make the final decision, emphasizing the importance of human intuition, empathy, and the ability to consider complex, intangible qualities that AI might miss. A small group, 7%, feels that only an AI system should make the final decision, indicating a strong belief in the potential of AI to handle hiring with complete objectivity. Finally, 11% stated that if the process is fair, it doesn't matter who makes the decision, showing a pragmatic outlook toward the fairness and transparency of the hiring process.

3. Would you recommend using AI in the hiring process in the future?

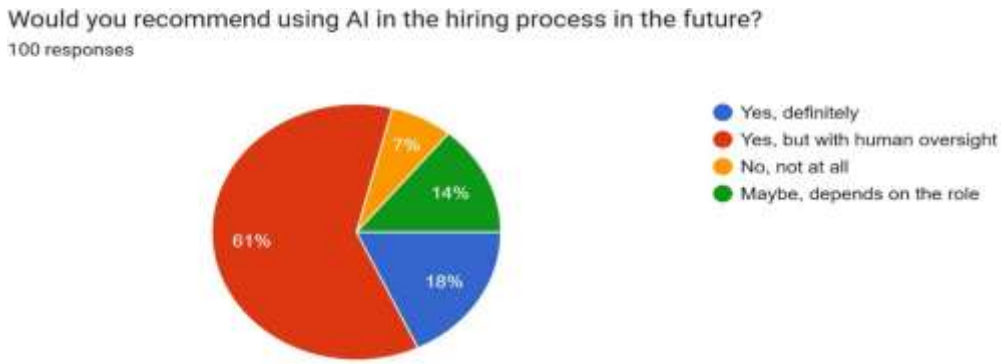

Figure 23: Recommend using AI in the hiring process in the future

The responses about whether to recommend using AI in the hiring process in the future reveal a clear inclination toward a balanced approach. A majority, 61%, believe that AI can be beneficial in recruitment but should always be used with human oversight. This reflects the understanding that while AI can enhance efficiency and reduce bias, it lacks the nuance and empathy that human recruiters bring to the table, especially when it comes to final decisions.

On the other hand, 18% of respondents are fully confident in the use of AI in the hiring process, suggesting a belief in its potential to streamline hiring without needing human intervention.

A smaller 7% are completely against the idea of using AI at all, showing a preference for traditional, human-driven recruitment. Finally, 14% said that whether AI should be used depends on the role, indicating that AI may be more suitable for certain positions where tasks are more structured and less reliant on human emotional intelligence.

4. What improvements would you like to see in AI-based recruitment systems?

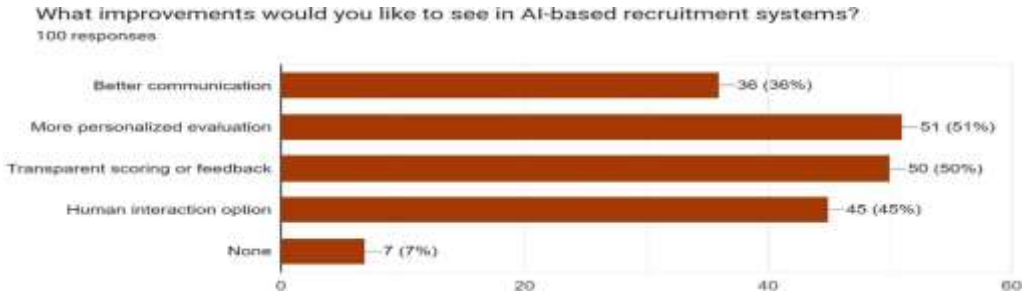

Figure 24: Improvements you would like to see in AI-based Hiring systems

The responses regarding improvements in AI-based recruitment systems highlighted several key areas where candidates believe these systems could be more effective. The most common request, with 51% of respondents, is for more personalized evaluations, suggesting that candidates want AI systems to consider not just qualifications but also individual strengths, experiences, and cultural fit. This would make the process feel more human and less transactional. Along with this, 50% of respondents emphasized the need for transparent scoring and feedback, showing that clarity in how decisions are made would help candidates feel more confident and informed throughout the process.

45% of participants called for an option for human interaction, indicating that while AI can handle initial stages, candidates still value the human touch for deeper engagement and final decisions. Better communication was also a priority for 36% of respondents, as timely updates and clear responses are crucial for a positive candidate experience. Finally, 7% of respondents felt that no improvements were necessary, which suggests that some are satisfied with the current capabilities of AI in recruitment. Overall, these suggestions reflect the desire for AI to be more transparent, personalized, and integrated with human interaction to ensure fairness and a better overall experience for candidates.

5. How satisfied are you overall with the current trends in recruitment using AI?

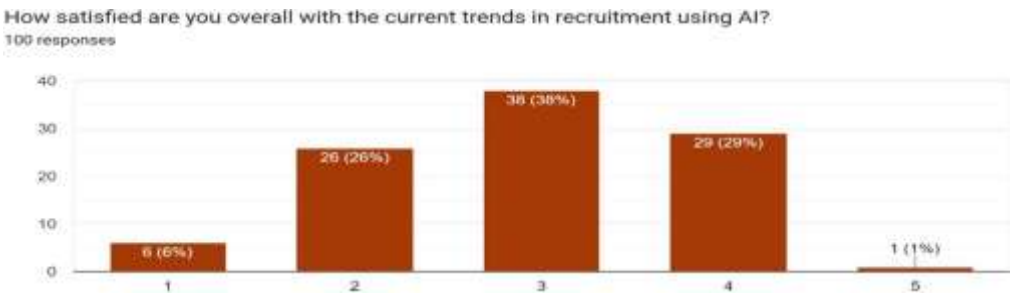

Figure 25: Overall satisfaction with the current trends in recruitment using AI

The responses regarding overall satisfaction with the current trends in recruitment using AI indicate a mixed sentiment among candidates. A significant portion, 38%, rated their satisfaction as neutral (3), reflecting uncertainty or ambivalence about the role AI currently plays in recruitment. This suggests that while AI is seen as a useful tool, candidates may still feel that there are areas for improvement or that it isn't yet fully optimized for the hiring process.

On the other hand, 29% of respondents rated their satisfaction as 4, showing that many are satisfied with how AI is being used in recruitment, appreciating its efficiency and fairness in some areas. A smaller group, 26%, rated their satisfaction as 2, indicating some dissatisfaction, possibly due to concerns about the impersonal nature of AI or its limitations in

assessing soft skills. Only 1% gave it a full rating of 5, reflecting that very few candidates are completely satisfied with the current trends. Lastly, 6% rated their satisfaction as 1, showing strong dissatisfaction, likely due to a lack of trust or perceived fairness in AI-driven recruitment systems.

CHAPTER 3: LIMITATIONS

While conducting this research, I aimed to collect meaningful insights and present a realistic picture of how candidates perceive AI and human recruiters. However, like any research project, this study also had a few limitations that should be acknowledged to better understand the scope and boundaries of the findings.

3.1. RESULTS DISCUSSED IN LIGHT OF LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Every research project is carried out within a specific context, and mine is no exception. While the findings of this study offer valuable insights into how candidates perceive artificial intelligence (AI) versus human recruiters, it's important to acknowledge that these results are based on certain assumptions and are subject to a few limitations that may have influenced the outcomes.

One key assumption in this study is that all participants had a basic understanding of what AI in recruitment means, even if they hadn't directly interacted with it. I designed the questionnaire in a way that kept the language simple and relatable, but it's still possible that some respondents interpreted questions differently.

Additionally, the study assumes that all participants responded honestly and thoughtfully, without rushing through the questions. In real-world settings, though, there's always the possibility that some answers were selected quickly or without full understanding, especially in self-administered online surveys.

Another consideration is the nature of perception-based research itself. Since trust, ethics, and transparency are highly subjective experiences, people's responses might be shaped by recent personal experiences or even mood at the time of filling out the form. For example, someone recently rejected by an AI system might rate AI less favorably, while someone selected through an AI-based process might show more trust toward it.

This study was conducted in a specific time frame and with a limited audience. The views expressed reflect the sentiments of that particular group during that specific period. If the same survey were conducted with a different group or after a few years, when AI might be more advanced or regulated, the results might be different.

3.2. VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND CAVEATS FOR MANAGEMENT

When it comes to evaluating the strength of any research, the two key pillars are validity and reliability. In my study, I made efforts to ensure that both these aspects were taken seriously, but there are a few points worth discussing openly.

Validity refers to whether the study measures what it intends to measure. In this case, I wanted to understand how candidates perceive AI vs. human recruiters in terms of trust, ethics, and transparency. To make sure the questionnaire reflected this clearly, I aligned every question with the research objectives and kept the language direct and easy to understand. However, since perceptions are subjective, it's possible that some respondents interpreted the same question differently based on their unique experiences or background. Also, without in-person clarification, I couldn't ensure every participant fully understood the role of AI in recruitment, especially those who marked "Maybe" or had limited

awareness.

Reliability deals with how consistently the study would produce similar results if repeated. The questionnaire used a standardized Likert scale and multiple-choice questions, which supports reliability to a good extent. Still, the study depended on voluntary online participation, and the absence of a pre-tested pilot version meant I couldn't identify issues like confusing wording or response fatigue beforehand. In future studies, pilot testing would help refine the questions and make the tool even more reliable.

For managers and organizations reading this study, it's important to consider a few caveats. First, the sample mainly consisted of students, early-career professionals, and job seekers, which means their views might not represent senior professionals or high- level executives who may have very different experiences with AI hiring. Second, since most responses came through digital platforms, the sample could be slightly skewed toward tech-savvy individuals—those who are already familiar with digital tools and possibly more open to AI. Response bias is always a risk in self-reported surveys. Some participants may have answered in a way they thought was expected or socially acceptable, rather than their true feelings. While these factors don't invalidate the results, they do remind us to interpret the findings with context and caution.

3.3. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND EFFORTS TO OVERCOME THEM

Like any research journey, mine also came with its fair share of challenges. While designing and conducting the study was exciting, I faced some practical difficulties along the way that taught me a lot about real-world research.

One of the first challenges was reaching the right respondents. Since I needed people who had either experienced AI-based recruitment or had enough understanding of it, I had to be careful about where and how I shared my survey. I used platforms like WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Telegram to circulate the form, but even then, getting people to respond meaningfully took time and follow-up. Many people saw the form but didn't fill it out immediately, so I had to remind or reshare it politely, without being pushy.

Another issue was ensuring response quality. While most participants took the survey seriously, a few responses had to be removed during data cleaning because they were incomplete or inconsistent. For example, some people marked "not aware of AI" but answered detailed AI-based questions anyway, which could have affected accuracy. I had to make a judgment call on what to include and what to exclude based on response patterns and logic.

I also faced minor technical limitations while analyzing checkbox questions, where people could select multiple options. Breaking down those multiple selections and calculating percentages accurately required extra attention and time during data analysis.

Despite these hurdles, I made sure to stay consistent and keep improving the process. I reviewed the questionnaire multiple times before launching it, kept all questions clear and neutral, and double-checked the Excel data for errors. These small efforts helped me overcome the bigger challenges and maintain the overall quality of the study.

3.4. LESSONS LEARNED FOR HIGHER-QUALITY RESEARCH IN THE FUTURE

Working on this research has been one of the most valuable learning experiences for me. It wasn't just about collecting responses and analyzing data—it really gave me a first-hand understanding of how challenging and rewarding research can be. There were so many things I discovered along the way that I had only read about in theory before.
One of the biggest lessons I learned is the importance of pilot testing a questionnaire before launching it. While I did take care to design clear and relevant questions, I now realize that testing it with a small group of people first would have helped me catch things like repetitive options, confusion in wording, or even the length of the form. A quick pilot run could've saved me time during data cleaning later and made the overall process smoother for respondents.

I also understood the value of a well-planned sampling strategy. While I'm grateful for all the responses I received, most of them came from students or young professionals— people who are either preparing for or just starting their careers. Their perspectives were incredibly insightful, but I now see that having responses from more experienced professionals, recruiters, or people from different industries would have added even more depth to the study. In the future, I would try to create a more balanced sample using targeted outreach to different demographics and professional groups.

Another key takeaway was about managing outreach and engagement. Getting people to fill out the form wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. I had to send reminders, re- share the link, and sometimes even explain the purpose of the survey personally. It taught me that getting responses is not just about having a good form, but also about communication and timing. Now I better understand how important it is to present research clearly and with purpose so people are willing to participate and respond sincerely.

Finally, this project made me realize that research is not just about data, it's about people. Since my topic focused on trust, ethics, and perception, I had to put myself in the shoes of the respondents. This helped me not only create better questions but also interpret the data in a more empathetic and human way. I've learned that the most powerful insights often come from simply listening to people and understanding their experience, not just from numbers and charts.

Overall, this project helped me grow, not just as a student but as a researcher. I now feel much more confident about how to design, conduct, and reflect on research in the future. And most importantly, I've learned to stay open to feedback, adapt when needed, and approach every step with patience and care.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This research has been a deeply engaging and insightful journey for me, not just as an academic project, but as a personal exploration into how technology is transforming one f the most human aspects of business hiring. Through this study, I aimed to understand how candidates today perceive artificial intelligence (AI) compared to human recruiters, especially when it comes to trust, ethical behavior, and transparency in the decision-making process. The findings made one thing very clear—AI is no longer new to job seekers. A large majority of respondents were already aware of AI's role in hiring, and most believe it is being used quite commonly today. Social media, college exposure, and peer conversations played a major role in shaping this awareness. However, even with this growing familiarity, many respondents still feel more comfortable and confident when a human is involved in their recruitment journey.

Trust emerged as a crucial factor. Candidates seem to appreciate the efficiency of AI in tasks like resume screening or assessments, but they are not fully convinced about AI's ability to understand soft skills, emotions, or cultural fit. Many responses pointed toward a lack of transparency in how AI systems make decisions, leading to concerns about fairness and bias. On the other hand, human recruiters—despite their limitations—are seen as more relatable, communicative, and empathetic. This research shows that while AI can improve speed, consistency, and scalability, it cannot entirely replace the human connection that builds trust and engagement. The most preferred model among respondents was a hybrid approach, where AI handles the early stages (like filtering or screening), but human recruiters make the final decisions and interact with the candidates.

The insights gathered through this study serve as a reminder that in the rush to digitize recruitment, organizations should not overlook the candidate experience. People who want to feel seen, heard, and respected during hiring. Whether it's a chatbot or a recruiter speaking to them, they care about fairness, feedback, and clarity. If those elements are missing, trust in the system breaks, regardless of who or what is running it. AI in recruitment is here to stay—but how it is implemented, communicated, and balanced with the human touch will determine whether it earns the trust and confidence of candidates. The key takeaway is that the goal shouldn't be to replace human recruiters but to enhance the hiring process.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

After carefully analyzing the data and reflecting on the patterns in responses, I believe several important recommendations can help managers, HR professionals, and even tech developers improve recruitment practices. The goal is not to discourage the use of AI but to guide how it can be better integrated while still respecting the candidate's trust, emotions, and dignity.

5.1. SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGERIAL ACTION

✓ **Use AI to Support, Not Replace, Human Judgment:** Based on the feedback I received, it's clear that candidates are not fully against AI. They understand its role in saving time and managing large volumes of applications. However, many people still feel that final hiring decisions should involve a human touch. I recommend that companies consider a hybrid model, where AI handles the basic stages—like filtering resumes or scheduling interviews—but human recruiters take over when it comes to assessing personality, cultural fit, and communication.

✓ **Be Transparent About AI Usage**: One major reason candidates lose trust in AI is because they often don't even know it's being used. Many participants in my study said they were unsure whether a machine or a person had evaluated them. This creates confusion and suspicion. Companies should be upfront in their job postings and interview emails, clearly stating when AI will be involved—and in what way. This small step can go a long way in building trust.

✓ **Train Recruiters to Understand and Work Alongside AI**: AI is not something that works on its own. It needs to be used wisely by people who understand both technology and human behavior. I believe HR professionals should be trained not only in using AI tools but also in analyzing their output critically. Recruiters should question AI suggestions, validate decisions, and ensure that algorithms are not making biased or unfair judgments.

✓ **Regularly Audit AI Tools for Fairness and Bias**: Another key concern raised by candidates was the risk of bias in automated systems. Since AI learns from past data, it may unintentionally reflect historical biases. I recommend that companies conduct regular audits of their recruitment algorithms to ensure they are fair to all genders, backgrounds,

and communities. Ethical hiring should not be left to chance—it must be monitored closely.

✓ **Don't Ignore the Human Side of Hiring:** At the end of the day, recruitment is not just a process—it's a life-changing moment for candidates. People want to feel heard, respected, and valued. Whether AI is used or not, companies must make sure that candidates receive some form of communication, feedback, or closure. Even an automated message explaining the result of their application shows basic respect. Organizations that focus on the candidate experience will always stand out in the long run.

5.2. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study gave me a solid foundation, but it also opened ideas for what more could be explored in the future.

✓ **Research in Different Industries and Roles:** My study included participants from mixed backgrounds, but I believe future research could focus on specific sectors like IT, education, or healthcare. Different industries use AI in different ways, so understanding sector-specific perceptions can give deeper insights.

✓ **Include the Employer's or Recruiter's Perspective:** I focused mainly on candidates, but a follow-up study could include HR professionals, recruiters, or hiring managers to understand their trust in AI. Do they feel confident using AI tools? Are they trained to question or override algorithmic decisions? Their input could add another layer to the conversation.

✓ **Use Interviews or Focus Groups for Deeper Understanding**: While surveys are useful for reaching more people, future research could also include qualitative methods like interviews or focus groups. These formats allow people to express emotions and give detailed examples, which help understand why they feel a certain way, not just what they feel.

✓ **Explore Changing Trends Over Time:** AI in recruitment is still evolving. Over time, laws around ethical AI, better tools, and more candidate awareness could change perceptions. I recommend doing similar studies every few years to track how trust in AI grows—or declines—and how companies are adapting.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Job Application Trust in Artificial Intelligence vs Human Recruiters: Understanding Candidate Perceptions in the Hiring Process

Dear Respondent,

I am Shuaib Khan, an MBA student at Galgotias University, currently conducting academic research as part of my thesis titled **"Trust in Artificial Intelligence vs Human Recruiters: Analyzing Candidate Perceptions of Credibility, Ethical Consideration, and Decision-Making Transparency in the Hiring Process."**

This questionnaire aims to explore how candidates perceive and experience recruitment processes handled by **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Human Recruiters**, with a specific focus on **trust, ethics, fairness, and transparency**.

Your participation is **completely voluntary**, and all responses will remain **confidential and used strictly for academic purposes only**. The form will take approximately 5–7 **minutes** to complete. Your insights will greatly contribute to a deeper understanding of evolving hiring practices and their impact on job seekers.

Thank you for your time and valuable input.

Warm regards,

Shuaib Khan

MBA – HR & Business Analytics

Galgotias University

* Indicates required question

1. Email *

SECTION:1 *DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION*

2. Age *

3. Gender *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Other
- ◯ Prefer not to say

4. Educational Qualification *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Under Graduate
- ◯ Post Graduate
- ◯ Doctorate
- ◯ Other: _____

5. Current Occupation *

Mark only one oval.

- Student
- Working Professional
- Job Seeker
- Entrepreneur
- Other: _____

6. Have you ever participated in a hiring process (as a candidate)? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

Section 2: *Understanding of AI in Recruitment*

This section focuses on understanding the respondent's awareness and knowledge of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the hiring and recruitment process. It helps us identify how familiar individuals are with AI tools, their experiences (if any), and how they perceive the role of AI in modern recruitment practices.

7. Are you aware of the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in recruitment? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

8. Where did you hear or learn about AI in recruitment? *

Check all that apply.

- New Articles
- Social Media
- College/University
- Company HR policies
- Friends or colleagues

9. In your opinion, how commonly is AI used in recruitment today? *

Mark only one oval.

- Very Commonly
- Somewhat commonly
- Rarely
- Not used at all
- Don't know

10. Do you think AI can help improve the hiring process? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes, it can make the process faster and fairer
- ◯ Maybe, but it depends on how it's used
- ◯ No, human recruiters are more effective
- ◯ I'm not sure

11. Which of the following tasks do you think AI is capable of performing in recruitment? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Resume screening
- ☐ Candidate shortlisting
- ☐ Conducting interviews
- ☐ Evaluating personality traits
- ☐ Providing final hiring decisions
- ☐ I don't know

Section 3: *Perception and Trust Toward AI vs Human Recruiters*

This section is designed to explore how candidates perceive and trust AI compared to human recruiters. It aims to understand their comfort level, ethical concerns, and beliefs about fairness and transparency in hiring decisions made by AI versus humans.

12. Who do you trust more to evaluate your job application fairly? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ AI-based recruitment system
- ◯ Human recruiter
- ◯ Both equally
- ◯ Not sure

13. In your opinion, which one is more transparent in decision-making? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ AI recruiter
- ◯ Human recruiter
- ◯ Both equally
- ◯ None
- ◯ Not sure

14. Do you believe AI systems can be biased or unfair in hiring decisions? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes, bias can exist in AI too
- ◯ No, AI is completely neutral
- ◯ Maybe, but less than humans
- ◯ Not sure

15. How comfortable would you feel being interviewed by an AI tool instead of a human recruiter? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Very comfortable

16. Which of the following concerns do you have about AI in recruitment? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Lack of human understanding/empathy
- ☐ Privacy and data security issues
- ☐ No option for feedback
- ☐ Algorithmic bias
- ☐ Inaccurate assessment of soft skills
- ☐ I have no concerns

Section 4: *Ethical and Emotional Aspects of AI and Human Recruiters*

This section focuses on understanding your emotional comfort and ethical views regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence in hiring. Your inputs will help evaluate the psychological and moral aspects of AI-based recruitment.

17. Do you think it is ethical for companies to use AI to screen candidates? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes, if it's used fairly and transparently
- ◯ No, human decisions should not be replaced
- ◯ Only for initial shortlisting, not final hiring
- ◯ Not sure

18. Do you feel emotionally understood or valued when interacting with AI during hiring? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Not applicable (never interacted with AI in hiring)

19. In case of rejection by an AI system, how likely are you to trust the decision? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Not ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Very likely

20. Do you believe AI can assess emotional intelligence or empathy in a candidate? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes, to some extent
- ◯ No, it lacks human judgment
- ◯ Maybe, but not accurately
- ◯ Not sure

21. Do you feel the absence of human interaction negatively impacts your interview experience? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes, it feels impersonal
- ◯ No, I prefer objectivity
- ◯ Depends on the situation
- ◯ Not sure

Section 5: *Expectations and Suggestions*

In this final section, we aim to gather your honest views on how AI and human recruiters can improve your hiring experience. Your suggestions will contribute to enhancing recruitment practices in the future.

22. What do you expect from a good recruitment process? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Transparency in selection
- ☐ Timely communication
- ☐ Fair evaluation
- ☐ Personalized feedback
- ☐ Professional behavior
- ☐ Equal opportunity for all

23. Which recruiter type do you believe should make the final hiring decision? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Only AI System
- ◯ Only Human Recruiter
- ◯ Combination of AI and Human
- ◯ Doesn't matter as long as it's fair

24. Would you recommend using AI in the hiring process in the future? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes, definitely
- ◯ Yes, but with human oversight
- ◯ No, not at all
- ◯ Maybe, depends on the role

25. What improvements would you like to see in AI-based recruitment systems? *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Better communication
- ☐ More personalized evaluation
- ☐ Transparent scoring or feedback
- ☐ Human interaction option
- ☐ None

26. How satisfied are you overall with the current trends in recruitment using AI? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Ver	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very Satisfied

Thank You...

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Your honest responses are incredibly valuable for this research study, which aims to understand how candidates perceive trust, ethics, and transparency when comparing AI and human recruiters in hiring processes.

Your input will contribute to meaningful insights that can help improve recruitment systems for future candidates like yourself.

We truly appreciate your support and participation!

APPENDIX: B - FORMAL MESSAGES FOR RESPONSE

APPENDIX: C FLYER