WCRG Global Research
WORLD COMET RESEARCH GROUP

International Journal of Artificial Intelligence & Digital Transformation
Vol. 9, No. 3, 2026
Doi: 10.67228/30713315/IJAIDT-V9I3P102
PP. 38-55

Original Article

Human in the Loop Agentic Recruitment: Balancing Automation, Recruiter Productivity, and Decision Quality

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Received: 06-05-2026 Revised: 06-28-2026 Accepted: 07-04-2026 Published: 07-07-2026

ABSTRACT
The rapid advancement of agentic artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping recruitment by enabling autonomous systems to perform complex tasks such as candidate sourcing, screening, matching, communication, and decision support. However, increasing automation also raises concerns regarding algorithmic bias, transparency, accountability, trust, and the potential reduction of meaningful human judgment in hiring decisions. This study examines human-in-the-loop agentic recruitment as an approach for balancing automation benefits with recruiter oversight, productivity, and decision quality. It develops a conceptual framework that defines how AI agents and human recruiters can interact across different stages of the recruitment process through task delegation, continuous supervision, feedback, and decision validation. The study further explores how agentic AI can reduce repetitive administrative workloads, improve recruiter efficiency, accelerate candidate evaluation, and support more consistent decision-making while preserving human control over high-impact employment decisions. Particular attention is given to explainability, fairness, accountability, human override mechanisms, and appropriate allocation of decision rights between recruiters and AI agents. The paper contributes to emerging research on human-AI collaboration by positioning human oversight as a critical governance mechanism for responsible recruitment automation. It concludes that effective agentic recruitment requires not maximum automation, but carefully designed human-AI collaboration that enhances productivity while maintaining fairness, transparency, accountability, and recruitment decision quality.

KEYWORDS
Agentic AI, Human-in-the-Loop, Recruitment Automation, Human-AI Collaboration, Recruiter Productivity, Decision Quality, Responsible AI.

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become increasingly embedded in recruitment and human resource management, transforming how organizations identify, assess, and select potential employees. AI-enabled recruitment systems are now capable of supporting candidate sourcing, résumé screening, applicant ranking, interview scheduling, competency assessment, and decision support. These technologies offer organizations opportunities to reduce administrative workload, accelerate recruitment processes, and improve consistency in candidate evaluation (Tambe et al., 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020). More recently, advances in large language models and autonomous AI agents have introduced a new generation of systems capable of planning, reasoning, coordinating tasks, interacting with users, and independently executing multi-step activities (Wang et al., 2024). Within recruitment, such agentic AI systems could potentially manage substantial portions of the hiring workflow while collaborating continuously with human recruiters.

Despite these potential benefits, greater AI autonomy creates important organizational and ethical concerns. Recruitment decisions directly affect employment opportunities and therefore require fairness, transparency, accountability, and appropriate human judgment. Existing research has identified risks associated with algorithmic recruitment, including discrimination, biased training data, limited explainability, privacy concerns, and difficulties in determining responsibility when automated systems produce inappropriate outcomes (Köchling & Wehner, 2020; Raghavan et al., 2020; Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). Although automation may increase efficiency, excessive reliance on AI could also reduce meaningful human oversight and create situations in which recruiters defer to algorithmic recommendations without sufficiently evaluating their validity. The central problem is therefore not simply whether recruitment tasks should be automated, but how automation and human judgment should be combined to improve recruiter productivity without compromising recruitment decision quality.

Existing scholarship provides useful foundations for addressing this challenge. Studies have examined AI-enabled recruiting, algorithmic fairness, recruiter perceptions, human trust in AI, and human–AI collaboration (Li et al., 2021; Glikson & Woolley, 2020; Chen, 2023). Broader organizational research has also highlighted the automation–augmentation paradox, suggesting that AI can simultaneously replace certain human tasks while strengthening human decision-making capabilities (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). Similarly, hybrid intelligence emphasizes combining complementary capabilities of humans and intelligent systems rather than treating them as competing decision-makers (Dellermann et al., 2019). However, an important research gap remains. Much of the existing recruitment literature focuses on conventional algorithmic tools or AI-assisted hiring rather than autonomous, goal-directed AI agents operating within structured human-in-the-loop recruitment processes. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how decision rights, task delegation, human intervention, oversight, and accountability should be organized when AI agents possess greater operational autonomy.

This study therefore aims to develop a human-in-the-loop agentic recruitment framework that explains how organizations can balance automation, recruiter productivity, and recruitment decision quality. Specifically, it seeks to identify recruitment activities that can appropriately be delegated to AI agents, determine where human oversight and intervention remain necessary, examine how human–AI interaction influences recruiter productivity, and assess how governance mechanisms can protect fairness and decision quality.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions: How should recruitment tasks and decision rights be allocated between autonomous AI agents and human recruiters? How can agentic AI improve recruiter productivity without weakening human oversight? What factors influence the quality of recruitment decisions in human–AI collaborative environments? Finally, what governance mechanisms are required to ensure fairness, transparency, explainability, trust, and accountability?

The study is significant because it extends existing research from AI-assisted recruitment toward human-centered agentic recruitment. It contributes theoretically by connecting human–AI collaboration, hybrid intelligence, organizational decision-making, and automation–augmentation perspectives. Practically, it offers organizations a structured basis for designing recruitment systems in which AI autonomy enhances efficiency while human recruiters retain meaningful control over consequential employment decisions (Shrestha et al., 2019; Seeber et al., 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1. AI-Driven Recruitment and Selection

Artificial intelligence has progressively transformed recruitment from a largely human-administered process into a technology-supported decision environment. AI-enabled recruitment applications now support activities such as candidate sourcing, résumé screening, applicant-job matching, assessment, communication, interview scheduling, and candidate ranking. Tambe et al. (2019) argue that AI has substantial potential in human resource management because of its ability to process large volumes of data and identify patterns that may be difficult for human decision-makers to detect. Similarly, Black and van Esch (2020) explain that AI-enabled recruitment can reduce repetitive activities and enable recruiters to redirect attention toward more strategic and interpersonal aspects of talent acquisition.

AI can also influence the candidate experience. Automated recruitment tools can provide faster responses, personalized job recommendations, and more efficient application processing (van Esch et al., 2019). However, these benefits do not automatically translate into superior recruitment outcomes. The effectiveness of AI depends on the quality of the underlying data, the validity of the models used, and how recruiters interpret and act upon algorithmic outputs. Li et al. (2021) found that recruitment professionals do not necessarily treat AI as an independent replacement for human decision-making; rather, they often use AI selectively within existing recruitment practices.

A major limitation of AI-driven recruitment concerns algorithmic discrimination. Historical recruitment data may contain patterns reflecting past inequalities, and models trained on such data may reproduce or amplify discriminatory outcomes (Köchling & Wehner, 2020). Raghavan et al. (2020) further demonstrate that claims concerning the fairness and bias-mitigation capabilities of algorithmic hiring systems should be evaluated carefully because technical interventions alone cannot eliminate every source of discrimination. Therefore, recruitment automation involves both technical performance and broader organizational, ethical, and governance considerations.

2.2. From Recruitment Automation to Agentic AI

Conventional recruitment AI generally performs predefined tasks in response to specific inputs. Agentic AI represents a significant development because autonomous agents can pursue objectives through multi-step reasoning, planning, tool use, interaction, and adaptive execution. Large language model-based agents can decompose complex goals into subtasks, select actions, evaluate intermediate outcomes, and modify subsequent actions according to environmental feedback (Wang et al., 2024).

This capability could substantially change recruitment. Rather than using separate systems for résumé screening, scheduling, candidate communication, and ranking, an agentic recruitment system could potentially coordinate several interconnected recruitment activities. For instance, an AI agent could identify candidates, compare qualifications against job requirements, request missing information, schedule assessments, summarize results, and recommend candidates for recruiter review.

Nevertheless, greater autonomy introduces greater organizational risk. When an AI system moves from merely generating recommendations to independently initiating actions, determining responsibility for outcomes becomes increasingly important. Existing AI recruitment research has largely examined algorithmic decision support rather than autonomous agents capable of coordinating recruitment workflows. Consequently, agentic recruitment requires a governance architecture in which autonomy is deliberately bounded by human authority.

Research on human-agent collaboration suggests that complex tasks may benefit when humans and AI agents contribute complementary capabilities rather than operating independently (Feng et al., 2024). For recruitment, this implies that automation should be differentiated by task criticality. Routine and reversible activities may permit considerable agent autonomy, whereas consequential decisions such as rejection, final candidate selection, or assessment of ambiguous personal circumstances require stronger human involvement.

2.3. Human-AI Collaboration and Human-in-the-Loop Recruitment

Human-in-the-loop approaches provide an important mechanism for combining AI efficiency with human judgment. Rather than designing recruitment systems around complete automation, human-in-the-loop systems allocate specific responsibilities to AI while preserving opportunities for human review, intervention, correction, and override.

Jarrahi (2018) conceptualizes human-AI relationships as a form of symbiosis in organizational decision-making. AI systems provide analytical capabilities, computational speed, and pattern recognition, while humans contribute contextual understanding, intuition, ethical reasoning, social intelligence, and the ability to address ambiguity. Dellermann et al. (2019) similarly describe hybrid intelligence as the deliberate combination of human and machine intelligence to achieve outcomes that neither could obtain as effectively independently.

This complementarity is particularly relevant to recruitment. AI may rapidly analyze hundreds or thousands of applications, whereas recruiters can interpret unusual career histories, contextualize employment gaps, evaluate interpersonal qualities, and consider organizational circumstances that may not be adequately captured by quantitative models.

Chen (2023) suggests that collaboration between recruiters and AI may also contribute to reducing certain forms of human prejudice when algorithmic support is appropriately designed. However, AI involvement does not inherently guarantee unbiased decisions. Human oversight remains necessary because automated recommendations can themselves contain systematic biases.

Seeber et al. (2020) extend this perspective by conceptualizing AI systems as potential teammates rather than merely passive tools. In agentic recruitment, this perspective is valuable because AI agents may actively communicate, recommend actions, execute delegated activities, and request human intervention. The recruiter therefore shifts from being only a direct task performer toward also becoming an overseer, collaborator, and validator of AI-supported processes.

2.4. Recruiter Productivity and Recruitment Decision Quality

One of the strongest organizational arguments for recruitment automation is improved recruiter productivity. Time-consuming activities such as searching candidate databases, preliminary résumé analysis, scheduling, status communication, and information consolidation can consume significant recruiter capacity. AI agents could automate many of these activities, enabling recruiters to allocate more time to interviews, stakeholder consultation, candidate engagement, workforce planning, and final decision-making (Tambe et al., 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020).

However, productivity should not be measured solely in terms of processing speed or number of applicants evaluated. Faster recruitment is of limited value if automation reduces decision accuracy, fairness, candidate satisfaction, or accountability. The critical question is therefore whether automation generates productive augmentation rather than merely higher task throughput.

ISSN: 3071-3315
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Raisch and Krakowski (2021) describe this tension through the automation–augmentation paradox. AI can substitute for human work while simultaneously enhancing human capabilities. Applied to recruitment, the challenge is identifying which activities should be automated and which should remain human-centered.

Recruitment decision quality is similarly multidimensional. High-quality decisions should be relevant, consistent, evidence-based, explainable, fair, and aligned with job requirements. Algorithmic systems may improve consistency but can also produce confidently incorrect or biased recommendations. Human decision-makers can correct contextual errors but may introduce subjective biases of their own.

Bansal et al. (2021) show that providing AI explanations does not automatically guarantee superior human-AI team performance. Explanations must actually help users determine when AI advice should be accepted or rejected. This is especially important in recruitment, where recruiters need sufficient information to understand and challenge recommendations rather than simply approve algorithmic outputs.

2.5. Trust, Explainability, Fairness, and Accountability

Trust is fundamental to effective human-AI collaboration. Glikson and Woolley (2020) demonstrate that human trust in AI is shaped by characteristics such as reliability, transparency, performance, and the nature of the task. Insufficient trust may result in recruiters ignoring useful AI recommendations, whereas excessive trust may produce automation bias.

Algorithm appreciation provides another important perspective. Logg et al. (2019) show that individuals may sometimes give considerable weight to algorithmic judgment. Within recruitment, such reliance becomes problematic when recruiters accept AI-generated rankings without independent assessment.

Perceptions of unfair bias can also weaken trust in automated systems (Langer et al., 2023). Applicants themselves may react differently to AI involvement depending on perceived transparency, fairness, and human presence in the recruitment process (Horodyski, 2023). Ethical concerns therefore extend beyond recruiter productivity to the legitimacy of employment decisions.

Hunkenschroer and Luetge (2022) emphasize major ethical challenges surrounding AI recruitment, including discrimination, transparency, privacy, and responsibility. From a human rights perspective, AI-based hiring must also respect fundamental protections against unjustified discriminatory treatment (Hunkenschroer & Kriebitz, 2023). Rigotti and Fosch-Villaronga (2024) similarly demonstrate that fairness in AI recruitment cannot be treated exclusively as a mathematical problem because fairness is also shaped by legal, social, and contextual considerations.

ISSN: 3071-3315
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2.6. Theoretical Foundations of Human-in-the-Loop Agentic Recruitment

Several complementary theoretical perspectives provide the foundation for understanding human-in-the-loop agentic recruitment. The automation–augmentation paradox explains the tension between replacing human tasks and enhancing human capabilities (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). Hybrid intelligence explains how complementary human and AI capabilities can be combined (Dellermann et al., 2019), while human-AI symbiosis emphasizes collaboration in organizational decision-making (Jarrahi, 2018). Organizational decision structure theory further highlights the importance of determining how decision authority should be distributed when AI participates in organizational decisions (Shrestha et al., 2019).

Together, these perspectives suggest that effective agentic recruitment should not be designed around maximum AI autonomy. Instead, autonomy should be calibrated according to task complexity, consequence, uncertainty, and risk. Human recruiters should maintain authority over high-impact decisions while AI agents handle tasks in which computational scale, speed, and consistency provide meaningful advantages.

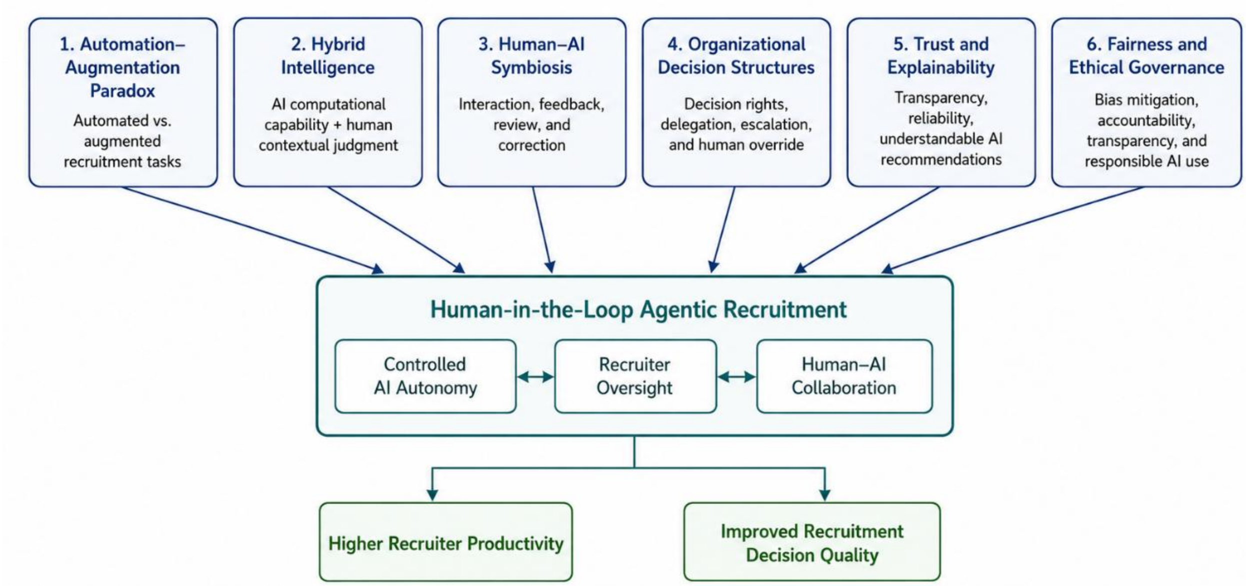

Fig 1 - Integrated Theoretical Foundation for Human-in-the-Loop Agentic Recruitment

Figure 1. Integrated theoretical foundation for human-in-the-loop agentic recruitment, illustrating how automation augmentation, hybrid intelligence, human AI symbiosis, organizational decision structures, trust and explainability, and ethical governance jointly shape controlled AI autonomy, recruiter oversight, human AI collaboration, recruiter productivity, and recruitment decision quality.

ISSN: 3071-3315
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Table 1: Key Literature Streams Underpinning Human-in-the-Loop Agentic Recruitment

Literature stream	Central argument	Relevance to agentic recruitment	Representative studies
AI-driven recruitment	AI improves sourcing, screening, matching, and processing efficiency	Establishes the technological foundation for recruitment automation	Tambe et al. (2019); Black & van Esch (2020)
Agentic AI	Autonomous agents can plan, reason, execute tasks, and adapt across multi-step processes	Explains how recruitment systems can progress beyond isolated automation	Wang et al. (2024); Feng et al. (2024)
Hybrid intelligence	Human and machine capabilities can complement one another	Supports deliberate division of recruitment responsibilities	Dellermann et al. (2019); Jarrahi (2018)
Automation–augmentation	AI simultaneously substitutes for and enhances human work	Explains the need to balance autonomy with recruiter involvement	Raisch & Krakowski (2021)
Human-AI decision structures	Decision authority can be distributed between humans and AI	Supports task delegation, escalation, review, and override mechanisms	Shrestha et al. (2019); Seeber et al. (2020)
Trust and explainability	Appropriate reliance depends on transparency, reliability, and understanding	Prevents both rejection of useful AI and excessive automation bias	Glikson & Woolley (2020); Bansal et al. (2021)
Fairness and ethics	Algorithmic systems may reproduce discrimination and create accountability problems	Requires continuous human oversight and governance	Köchling & Wehner (2020); Hunkenschroer & Luetge (2022)

3. HUMAN-IN-THE-LOOP AGENTIC RECRUITMENT FRAMEWORK

The proposed Human-in-the-Loop Agentic Recruitment Framework conceptualizes recruitment as a collaborative system in which autonomous AI agents perform data-intensive, repetitive, and coordination-oriented activities while human recruiters retain authority over contextual, ethical, and high-impact employment decisions. The framework is grounded in the principle that AI should augment rather than completely replace human decision-making. This approach reflects the automation–augmentation perspective of Raisch and Krakowski (2021) and the concept of hybrid intelligence, in which human and machine capabilities are deliberately combined to achieve superior organizational outcomes (Dellermann et al., 2019).

3.1. Role of AI Agents in the Recruitment Process

Within the proposed framework, AI agents operate as semi-autonomous recruitment collaborators capable of completing interconnected tasks rather than merely producing isolated recommendations. Advances in large language model-based autonomous agents demonstrate that AI systems can plan, reason, execute multiple steps, evaluate intermediate outputs, and interact with users during complex tasks (Wang et al., 2024; Feng et al., 2024).

In recruitment, AI agents can therefore support candidate sourcing, résumé extraction, applicant-job matching, preliminary screening, candidate communication, interview scheduling, assessment consolidation, and generation of candidate summaries. Such tasks are particularly appropriate for automation because they frequently involve high information volume and repetitive processing. AI-supported recruitment can reduce administrative burden and enable recruiters to devote greater attention to strategic and interpersonal activities (Tambe et al., 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020).

However, the framework deliberately limits AI autonomy at stages involving significant consequences for candidates. AI may recommend candidate rankings or identify applicants requiring further evaluation, but it should not independently make final employment decisions without appropriate human review.

3.2. Role of Human Recruiters

Human recruiters occupy three major roles within the framework: supervisor, collaborator, and final decision authority. As supervisors, recruiters establish recruitment objectives, define job-related evaluation criteria, monitor AI behavior, and identify inappropriate outputs. As collaborators, they interpret AI-generated information, provide feedback, resolve ambiguous cases, and contribute contextual knowledge that may not be represented in recruitment data.

This division reflects human–AI symbiosis, where AI contributes computational efficiency while humans contribute contextual judgment, social understanding, intuition, and ethical reasoning (Jarrahi, 2018). Recruiters are particularly important when candidates possess nontraditional career paths, employment gaps, unusual qualifications, or circumstances requiring interpretation beyond standardized data. As final decision authorities, human recruiters retain responsibility for high-impact decisions such as final shortlisting, interview evaluation, candidate rejection in ambiguous circumstances, and hiring recommendations. Shrestha et al. (2019) emphasize that AI-based organizational systems require explicit allocation of decision authority between humans and machines.

3.3. Task Delegation and Levels of AI Autonomy

Task delegation within the framework is determined by three factors: task complexity, decision consequence, and uncertainty. Low-risk and highly standardized tasks receive greater AI autonomy, whereas high-risk and ambiguous tasks require stronger human participation. For example, interview scheduling can generally be delegated almost completely to an AI agent because errors are easily corrected and carry relatively low consequences. Résumé screening can involve moderate automation but should include recruiter validation. Final hiring decisions, however, should remain predominantly human-controlled.

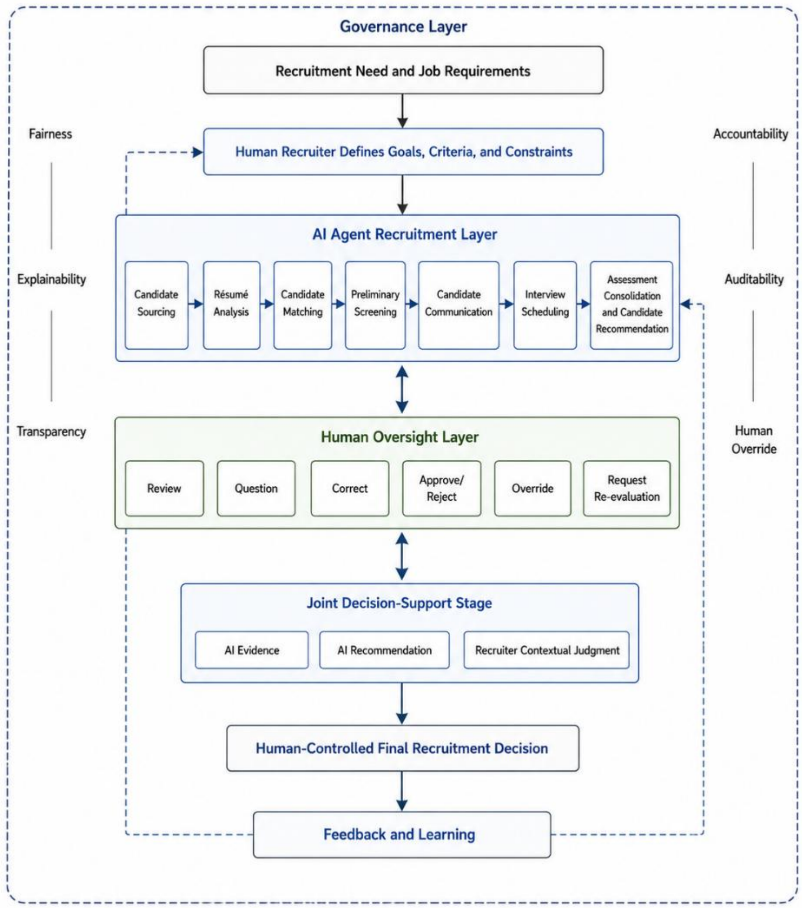

Fig 2 - Proposed Human-in-the-Loop Agentic Recruitment Framework

Figure 2. Proposed conceptual framework showing the distribution of recruitment activities between AI agents and human recruiters and the continuous oversight mechanisms governing agentic recruitment. Source: Developed by the authors based on Jarrahi (2018), Shrestha et al. (2019), Dellermann et al. (2019), Raisch and Krakowski (2021), and Wang et al. (2024).

3.4. Human Oversight and Interaction

Human oversight is not treated as a final approval step only. Instead, it operates continuously throughout the recruitment process. Recruiters should be able to inspect AI recommendations, request explanations, correct inaccurate assumptions, override inappropriate outputs, and escalate unusual cases for deeper review.

ISSN: 3071-3315
PP: 38-55.

This is particularly important because recruitment algorithms may reproduce historical biases or generate recommendations that appear technically consistent while being ethically problematic (Köchling & Wehner, 2020; Raghavan et al., 2020). Explainability therefore supports meaningful oversight by helping recruiters evaluate whether recommendations are based on legitimate job-related criteria. Nevertheless, explanations alone do not guarantee improved human-AI performance, making recruiter judgment and appropriate training essential (Bansal et al., 2021).

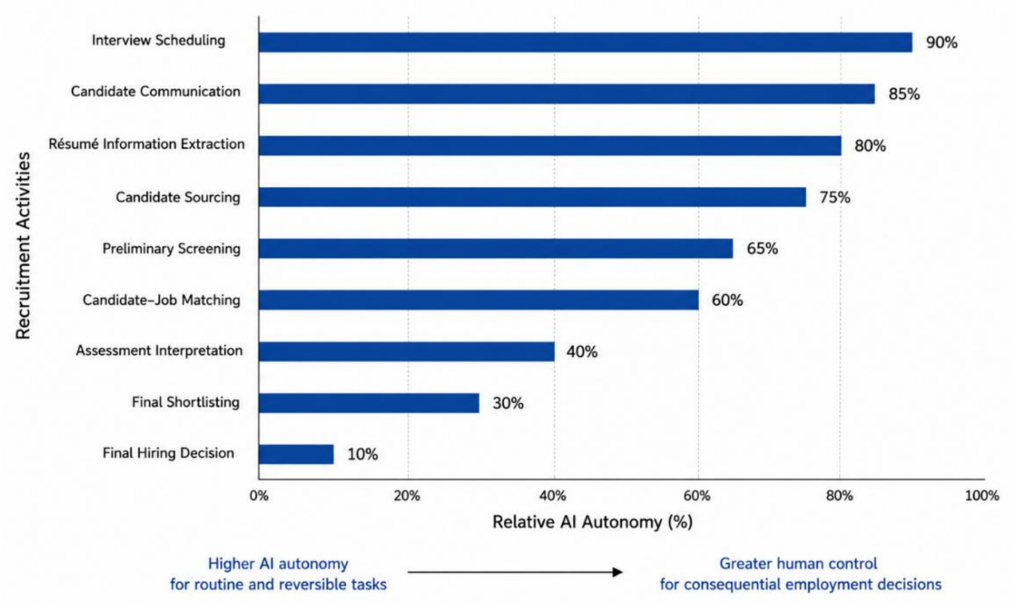

Fig 3 – Illustrative Distribution of AI Autonomy across Recruitment Tasks

Figure 3. Illustrative bar chart showing how AI autonomy should decrease as recruitment tasks become more consequential and judgment-intensive. Percentages are conceptual rather than empirical measurements and are intended to demonstrate the framework's proposed allocation principle.

3.5. Decision-Making Process

The framework ultimately adopts a human-led, AI-supported decision model. AI agents gather and process evidence, identify patterns, generate recommendations, and highlight potential inconsistencies, while recruiters interpret those outputs within organizational and candidate-specific contexts. This arrangement reduces the risks associated with both complete human discretion and unquestioned algorithmic decision-making.

Accordingly, the framework does not define successful agentic recruitment as maximum automation. Instead, success depends on calibrated autonomy, where AI is given greater authority over low-risk operational tasks and progressively less authority as decisions become more uncertain, ethical, subjective, or consequential. This enables organizations to capture the productivity advantages of agentic AI while preserving meaningful human judgment, accountability, fairness, and control over employment decisions (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Chen, 2023).

4. BALANCING AUTOMATION, RECRUITER PRODUCTIVITY, AND DECISION QUALITY

The value of agentic artificial intelligence in recruitment depends not simply on how much of the recruitment process can be automated, but on whether automation improves recruiter productivity without compromising the quality, fairness, and accountability of hiring decisions. AI-enabled recruitment systems can process large applicant pools, extract résumé information, identify potential matches, communicate with candidates, and coordinate interviews more rapidly than manual recruitment processes (Tambe et al., 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020). Agentic AI extends these capabilities by allowing systems to coordinate several activities autonomously and respond dynamically to changing recruitment requirements (Wang et al., 2024). Nevertheless, productivity gains must be balanced against the risks created when autonomous systems influence consequential employment decisions.

4.1. Automation and Recruiter Productivity

Recruiter productivity can be improved when AI agents assume responsibility for repetitive, time-intensive, and standardized tasks. Candidate sourcing, résumé parsing, preliminary matching, routine communication, and interview scheduling can consume substantial recruiter time. Delegating these activities allows recruiters to focus on higher-value responsibilities such as candidate engagement, stakeholder consultation, complex assessment, and final selection decisions (Black & van Esch, 2020). Thus, automation should be understood as a mechanism for reallocating human effort rather than merely reducing human participation.

This principle reflects the automation–augmentation paradox proposed by Raisch and Krakowski (2021). AI may substitute for human involvement in some activities while augmenting human capabilities in others. In agentic recruitment, productivity is therefore maximized when AI performs activities suited to computational scale and consistency, while recruiters concentrate on judgment-intensive activities.

4.2. Human Oversight and Algorithmic Bias

Productivity benefits cannot justify uncontrolled AI autonomy. Recruitment algorithms may reproduce inequalities contained in historical employment data or disadvantage particular groups through proxy variables and inappropriate evaluation criteria (Köchling & Wehner, 2020). Raghavan et al. (2020) further caution that technical claims of bias mitigation do not necessarily guarantee fair hiring outcomes.

Human oversight should therefore operate throughout the recruitment process. Recruiters must be able to inspect candidate rankings, question unusual recommendations, correct errors, request re-

ISSN: 3071-3315
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evaluation, and override AI outputs. Such oversight transforms recruiters from passive recipients of algorithmic recommendations into active supervisors of agentic decision processes.

4.3. Explainability, Trust, and Appropriate Reliance

Explainability is essential because recruiters cannot exercise meaningful oversight when they cannot understand why an AI system generated a recommendation. Explanations should clarify the evidence, criteria, and reasoning supporting candidate assessments. However, explanations should not simply increase acceptance of AI outputs. Bansal et al. (2021) demonstrate that AI explanations do not automatically improve human-AI team performance.

Trust should instead be appropriately calibrated. Glikson and Woolley (2020) identify reliability and transparency as important determinants of trust in AI, while Langer et al. (2023) show that perceptions of unfair bias can negatively affect trust. Excessive trust may create automation bias, where recruiters accept algorithmic recommendations without sufficient scrutiny. Conversely, insufficient trust may lead recruiters to ignore valuable AI-supported evidence.

4.4. Accountability and Recruitment Decision Quality

Accountability becomes particularly important as AI agents gain greater operational autonomy. Responsibility for recruitment outcomes should remain clearly assigned to identifiable human decision-makers and organizational structures. Shrestha et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of designing explicit decision-making structures when AI participates in organizational decisions.

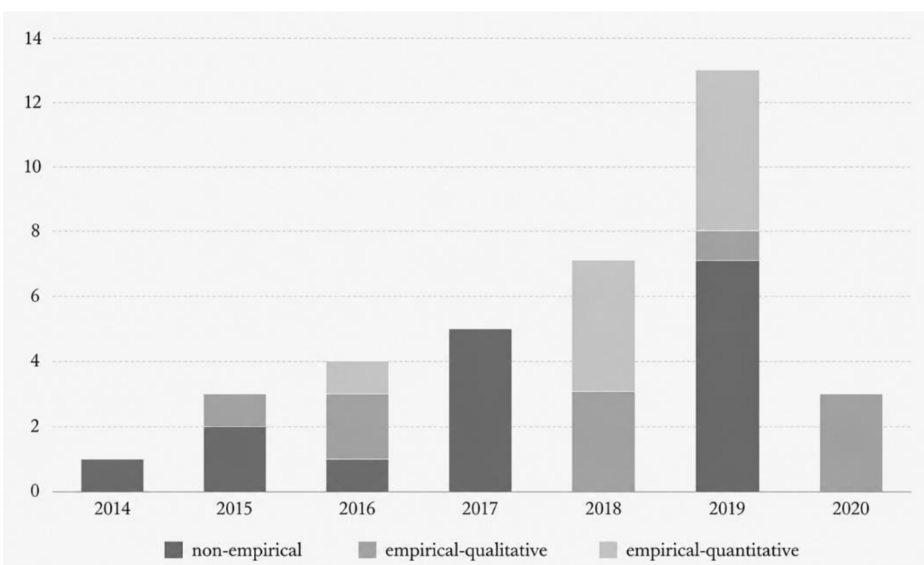

Fig 4 - Balancing Automation, Productivity, and Recruitment Decision Quality

Figure 4. Publication Trends by Study Type. Distribution of non-empirical, empirical-qualitative, and empirical-quantitative studies across the selected publication years.

Recruitment decision quality should consequently be evaluated beyond speed and efficiency. High-quality recruitment decisions should demonstrate accuracy, job relevance, consistency, fairness, transparency, and contextual appropriateness. Ethical considerations are especially important because poorly governed AI recruitment systems may generate discriminatory or insufficiently transparent employment outcomes (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Rigotti & Fosch-Villaronga, 2024).

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion and Theoretical Implications

This study advances the emerging discussion on agentic artificial intelligence in recruitment by proposing a human-in-the-loop perspective in which automation and human judgment are treated as complementary rather than competing capabilities. Existing research has established the potential of AI to improve recruitment efficiency, candidate screening, and decision support (Tambe et al., 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020). However, the increasing autonomy of AI agents creates a new organizational challenge: determining how much decision authority should be delegated to AI and where human intervention should remain mandatory.

The proposed framework contributes theoretically by integrating the automation–augmentation paradox, hybrid intelligence, human–AI symbiosis, and organizational decision-making structures. The automation–augmentation perspective explains why AI may simultaneously substitute for routine recruiter activities while strengthening human performance in complex tasks (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). Hybrid intelligence further suggests that superior outcomes can emerge when computational capabilities are combined with human contextual and ethical judgment (Dellermann et al., 2019). In this context, human-in-the-loop recruitment represents a structured form of human–AI collaboration rather than simple technology adoption.

A central theoretical implication is that AI autonomy should be treated as a variable rather than a binary choice between automation and human control. The appropriate degree of autonomy depends on task complexity, uncertainty, reversibility, and potential consequences. This extends existing work on organizational AI decision structures by emphasizing dynamic allocation of decision rights between recruiters and AI agents (Shrestha et al., 2019).

5.2 Practical Implications

For organizations, the framework provides a practical basis for designing recruitment processes that capture productivity gains without eliminating meaningful human oversight. Routine activities such as candidate sourcing, résumé extraction, scheduling, and administrative communication can be heavily automated, allowing recruiters to devote more attention to candidate relationships, complex evaluations, stakeholder consultation, and strategic workforce decisions.

Organizations should nevertheless establish clearly defined human intervention points. Recruiters must be able to review AI-generated recommendations, request explanations, investigate potential bias, correct errors, override inappropriate outputs, and approve consequential decisions. This is especially important because algorithmic recruitment systems may reproduce discriminatory patterns or create apparently objective outcomes that remain unfair in practice (Köchling & Wehner, 2020; Raghavan et al., 2020).

Effective implementation also requires governance mechanisms such as transparent decision criteria, audit trails, documentation of human overrides, bias monitoring, and clear accountability structures. Trust should be calibrated rather than maximized, because excessive reliance on AI may encourage automation bias while insufficient trust can prevent organizations from realizing legitimate technological benefits (Glikson & Woolley, 2020).

5.3. Key Contributions

The study makes three principal contributions. First, it extends AI recruitment research from conventional algorithmic decision support toward agentic recruitment, where AI systems may autonomously coordinate multiple stages of recruitment. Second, it introduces calibrated autonomy as a central design principle, suggesting that the level of AI control should decrease as recruitment tasks become more ambiguous, subjective, or consequential. Third, the framework connects recruiter productivity with decision quality, demonstrating that efficiency gains should be evaluated alongside fairness, explainability, accountability, and human responsibility.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

The primary limitation of this study is its conceptual nature. The proposed framework has not yet been empirically tested across organizations, industries, or recruitment technologies. Furthermore, agentic AI remains a rapidly developing area, and organizational practices may evolve as autonomous systems become more capable.

Future research should therefore empirically examine the relationship between levels of AI autonomy and recruitment outcomes. Experimental studies could compare fully human, AI-assisted, and agentic human-in-the-loop recruitment processes in terms of recruiter productivity, time-to-hire, decision accuracy, fairness, candidate experience, and trust. Longitudinal research could investigate how recruiters' reliance on autonomous agents changes with repeated interaction. Researchers should also explore how organizational size, industry, regulatory environments, and recruitment complexity influence appropriate autonomy levels. Further attention should be given to candidate perceptions of agentic recruitment, particularly regarding fairness, transparency, privacy, and opportunities for human review (Horodyski, 2023; Hunkenschroer & Kriebitz, 2023).

6. CONCLUSION

Agentic AI has the potential to transform recruitment by moving beyond isolated automation toward autonomous coordination of sourcing, screening, matching, communication, and decision-support activities. However, greater technological autonomy also increases the importance of human oversight, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

The central argument of this study is that effective recruitment should not pursue maximum automation. Instead, organizations should adopt human-centered agentic recruitment, in which AI autonomy is calibrated according to the nature and consequences of individual tasks. AI agents should handle activities where speed, scale, and consistency provide clear advantages, while human recruiters retain control over ambiguous, ethically sensitive, and high-impact decisions.

The overall significance of the proposed framework therefore lies in repositioning the recruiter rather than removing the recruiter. In an agentic recruitment environment, human professionals become supervisors, collaborators, contextual interpreters, and accountable decision-makers. By combining AI efficiency with meaningful human judgment, organizations can potentially achieve greater recruiter productivity while preserving fairness, trust, accountability, and high-quality recruitment decisions.

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