Human Resource Professionals' Perceptions of Adopting Artificial Intelligence in the Recruitment Process in New Zealand Organisations

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Abstract

In today's fast-paced and highly competitive business landscape, organisations increasingly embrace artificial intelligence (AI) to drive innovation and efficiency. One notable transformation area is recruitment, where AI rapidly changes traditional practices of searching for, attracting, evaluating, and selecting talent. While the global adoption of AI in recruitment continues to accelerate, the experiences of human resource (HR) professionals within New Zealand's unique employment context remain underexplored. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring: (1) the experiences of HR professionals towards the adoption of AI in recruitment, and (2) the advantages and challenges of the adoption of AI in recruitment as perceived by HR professionals. A qualitative approach was adopted, using semi-structured interviews with ten HR professionals to gather rich insights into their interactions with AI-powered recruitment solutions.

There are four findings from the study. First, the study shows that the role of HR professionals is evolving in AI-based recruitment. Second, AI recruitment tools are productivity enablers rather than replacements for human roles. Third, there are ethical concerns rather than technical limitations. Finally, HR professionals are actively evolving their skills and vision to align with a future increasingly defined by AI. This study contributes empirical insights to AI integration in human resource management (HRM) and offers practical contributions for HR practitioners and stakeholders.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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List of Acronyms

AI	Artificial intelligence
ATS	Applicant tracking system
ChatGPT	Chat generative pre-trained transformer
CRM	Candidate relationship management
CV	Curriculum vitae
ERP	Enterprise resource planning
EVP	Employer value proposition
HR	Human resource
HRIS	Human resource information systems
HRM	Human resource management
IT	Information technology
MS Teams	Microsoft Teams
RPA	Robotic process automation
NZ	New Zealand
RBV	Resource-based view
SHRM	Strategic human resource management
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter sets the groundwork for the study of human resource (HR) professionals' perceptions of adopting artificial intelligence (AI) in the recruitment process in New Zealand (NZ) organisations. Integrating AI technology into recruitment has changed how organisations attract, assess and hire talent. In NZ's unique labour market context, understanding HR professionals' perceptions and experience of using AI recruitment tools and the benefits and challenges they face are critical to ensuring successful implementation. It starts with outlining the growing application of AI in HR and its relevance to the contemporary NZ workplace environment. Next is a problem statement highlighting key research gaps this study seeks to address. This is followed by research objectives and questions to help define the scope and direction. The delimitations are also discussed to clarify the study's focus and boundaries. The chapter concludes with a summary of the thesis structure, providing readers with a roadmap for the following chapters.

1.1 Research background

The contemporary business environment is undergoing an unprecedented transformation due to digitalisation and automation, fundamentally reshaping the future of work and compelling organisations to rethink their workforce strategies (Frey & Osborne, 2016; Willcocks, 2024). At the forefront of this development is AI, a computer science technology that focuses on creating systems or machines that redefine industries and reshape how people work, live, and interact across various domains (Jarrahi, 2018). As Stephen Hawking cautioned, "AI will be either the best or worst thing for humanity" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). This highlights both the promise and danger of this powerful innovation.

AI is significantly reshaping Human Resource Management (HRM), particularly in recruitment, which has evolved from a basic HR administrative function to a strategic concern for business leaders (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Brockbank et al., 2018). According to Meshram (2023), 24% of companies worldwide have adopted AI in their recruitment processes. Recent studies show both the possibilities and problems of using AI-enabled recruitment. As AI systems continue to evolve, they are reshaping traditional recruitment practices by streamlining decision-making and automating time-consuming tasks such as candidate sourcing, resume screening, and conducting pre-assessments (Albert, 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020; Van Esch et al., 2021). These technologies enhance efficiency and minimise human bias by evaluating applicants based on job requirements (Daugherty et al., 2020; Singh & Kularatne, 2025; Van Esch et al., 2021). However, adopting AI in recruitment presents ethical and operational challenges such as algorithmic bias, ethical considerations, and the necessity for ongoing human intervention (Budhwar et al., 2023; Kelan, 2023; Köchling et al., 2021). In addition, the implementation must be guided by strong governance approaches to ensure accountability and promote responsible recruitment practices (Blackmore et al., 2023; Dattner et al., 2019; Jha et al., 2020).

NZ's commitment to innovation makes it an ideal context for examining AI's adoption and readiness in HRM (Dhurandhar & Dai, 2019; Gavaghan, 2021). Like many other countries, NZ's recruitment sector is actively adapting to emerging AI technologies, navigating opportunities and challenges (Gavaghan et al., 2021). The HR function is pivotal in leading this transformation, adding strategic value to organisations in the digital age (Ore & Sposato, 2022). This research investigates how HR professionals in NZ perceive and experience AI in recruitment, exploring its practical advantages and ethical and operational challenges. In doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how this transformative technology reshapes the future of talent acquisition in NZ organisations.

1.2 Problem statement

There are several key reasons why this research is both necessary and timely. First, although AI recruitment systems are increasingly adopted by organisations worldwide to enhance efficiency (Albert, 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020; Van Esch et al., 2021), research remains limited in exploring the experiences and perceptions of HR professionals during their AI recruitment implementation (Ore & Sposato, 2022; Prikshat et al., 2023). As main users, HR professionals' insights directly influence the success of AI integration. Second, this issue is critical in NZ because the employment landscape in NZ is uniquely shaped by cultural diversity, local labour laws, and varied organisational structures, so international research alone is not enough to fully understand the context (Dhurandhar, 2021; Singh & Kularatne, 2025). Thirdly, the adoption of AI in recruitment has advanced more rapidly than the research examining its impact, resulting in a significant gap in understanding its advantages and disadvantages in practice. If this research gap is not addressed, organisations in NZ may implement AI recruitment systems ineffectively, experience increased resistance to implementation, and unintentionally engage in unethical recruitment practices (Budhwar et al., 2023; Kelan, 2023; Köchling et al., 2021). Furthermore, the lack of clear frameworks for the responsible implementation may result in legal noncompliance or reputational harm (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Yam & Skorburg, 2021).

1.3 Research objectives and research questions

This study aims to explore and understand HR professionals' perceptions and experiences regarding adopting AI in recruitment processes within NZ organisations. It investigates how HR professionals use AI tools, their perceived advantages, challenges, and general perceptions of these new technologies. Since there is limited academic research on AI in recruitment in NZ, this study aims to address this gap by offering context-specific insights. In addition to its academic value, the research aspires to deliver practical recommendations to assist relevant stakeholders in effectively implementing AI in recruitment.

Based on the research objectives, we seek to answer the following research questions:

> *Question 1: What are the experiences of HR professionals towards adoption of AI in recruitment?*

Question 2: What are the advantages and challenges of adoption of AI in recruitment as perceived by HR professionals?

In order to frame the participants' perspectives within their professional context, the first research question explores their narratives, including current roles, levels of responsibility in recruitment, and the typical recruitment task challenges. Moreover, it delves into their practical engagement with AI tools, including the reasons for adoption, the specific AI recruitment tools they use, and the areas of their roles that have been impacted. This question is designed to capture how HR professionals interact and experience AI within their recruitment practices.

The second research question focuses on the perceived benefits and challenges of using AI in recruitment, including its impact on daily responsibilities and the evolving skill requirements. Finally, the research questions invite participants to share practical advice and recommendations, offering valuable insights to inform organisational strategies and guide responsible AI adoption in recruitment practices.

1.4 Delimitations

This study excludes international contexts and is restricted to HR professionals working for NZ-based companies. Moreover, the target group involves HR professionals who are the main stakeholders, such as HR managers, recruiters, AI recruitment ambassadors, and individuals who have utilised AI tools in recruitment. This narrow focus on a smaller group with similar professional and cultural backgrounds enhances the consistency and relevance of the findings. Furthermore, the study explores the adoption of AI, especially within the recruitment function. It does not address its use in other HR domains such as onboarding, performance management, learning and development, or employee engagement. The technology scope is limited to AI recruitment tools only, such as application tracking systems (ATS), chatbots, robotic process automation (RPA), candidate relationship management (CRM), video interview systems, and psychometric tests. It excludes HR information systems (HRIS) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) platforms.

Additionally, the study explores the perceptions of HR professionals regarding the use of AI in recruitment at the current phase of adoption. It emphasises immediate experiences and perspectives, without incorporating historical context, longitudinal tracking, or post-deployment evaluations. The study relies solely on semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis as a qualitative methodology. The emphasis is on exploring perceptions and experiences rather than measuring performance metrics or outcomes of AI implementation. Lastly, the study does not adopt a predetermined theoretical framework. Instead, relevant theories are expected to emerge organically during the analysis phase, potentially drawing from technology adoption models or frameworks examining innovation's impact.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study's background, identifies the problem, defines objectives, outlines research questions, and clarifies its scope. Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical basis through a literature review that explores the evolution of recruitment, current challenges, and the integration of AI technologies, strategic HRM, the future of work, etc. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, detailing the philosophical framework, approach, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations, establishing a systematic framework to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 delivers the interview findings, organised thematically and enriched by participants' narratives. Chapter 5 then interprets these findings about the two research questions, exploring HR professionals' experiences with AI and their perceived advantages and challenges. Chapter 6 concludes the study with a summary of key insights, theoretical and practical contributions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical basis for the thesis. The review begins by examining the basic recruitment concepts and their evolution from traditional methods. It then explores the challenges faced with current recruitment practices, including the future of work, followed by an analysis of the evolution of AI and its integration into today's recruitment processes. The chapter also investigates the benefits and challenges of AI-enabled recruitment tools, examining attitudes and perceptions towards adopting AI in recruitment, particularly among HR professionals, and the connection to strategic human resource management.

2.2 Definition of recruitment

Recruitment is an important function of HRM, playing a pivotal role in the success of any business organisation (Black & Van Esch, 2020; Ekwoaba, 2015). According to Barber (1998), recruitment is the activities and practices undertaken by an organisation to identify and attract potential employees. Recruitment typically involves three main stages: sourcing, screening, and selection (Rajesh et al., 2018). This comprehensive process involves analysing job requirements, advertising the position, assessing candidates, and ultimately recruiting the right person while saving time and resources and maintaining a competitive advantage (Chapman & Webster, 2003; Solek-Borowska & Wilczewska, 2018). Organisations use various methods to assess candidate suitability, including screening resumes and assessing skills, abilities, motivation, personality, and job fit (Brown & Campion, 1994; Chapman & Webster, 2003). For instance, companies often use predictors like person-organisation fit and person-job fit to recruit the right employees. According to Cable and Judge (1996), person-organisation fit assesses how well a candidate's perception of the company's values matches theirs. Person-job fit, on the other hand, evaluates how well the candidate's abilities and personality match a job's specific needs and demands (Edwards, 1991).

Research demonstrates that effective recruitment positively impacts organisational productivity (Huselid, 1995). Furthermore, as companies increasingly view employees as their most valuable assets, employee selection has become critical to economic sustainability (Rozario et al., 2019). This view has elevated recruitment to one of the most important HR functions for organisations to survive and succeed.

2.3 Traditional recruitment

Traditional recruitment methods have changed significantly due to the development of internet technology (Kapse et al., 2012). Standard traditional techniques include word-of-mouth referrals, paper applications, newspaper advertisements, public employment agencies, recruiting new university graduates, and at community events (Butson et al., 2021; Nairn & Roebuck, 2022). However, these methods have been criticised for being slow, expensive, limited in geographical scope, and poor in managing the relationship with applicants (Lee, 2005). According to Holm (2012), traditional recruitment typically follows a linear process that takes 9 to 14 weeks to fill a position. Acikgoz (2019) asserts that there is no clear model or definition for the traditional recruitment process; instead, many researchers explain it in various ways. However, Breaugh (2008) suggests a comprehensive approach, incorporating both organisational and applicant perspectives. It begins with setting clear recruitment objectives, which involve specifying position requirements, desired candidate qualifications, recruitment timeframes, and anticipated outcomes like performance levels and retention rates. The second step focuses on strategy development, where organisations create detailed plans for attracting suitable candidates, including decisions about recruitment channels, timing, communication methods, and budget allocation (Breaugh, 2008). During the third step, organisations implement recruitment by executing chosen methods, sharing accurate information with candidates, coordinating with recruiters, arranging site visits, and extending job offers (Breaugh, 2008). The fourth step examines intervening job applicant variables, assessing candidates' responses to recruitment efforts, including their attention, interest, position expectations, and perceived organisational fit (Breaugh, 2008). Finally, the process concludes with evaluating recruitment results against initial objectives, measuring success in terms of position fulfilment, job performance, retention, and satisfaction, which can help with future recruitment improvements (Breaugh, 2008). However, the recruitment process can be simple or complex and varies depending on the organisation's goals and the recruitment sources used (Ployhart et al., 2005).

2.4 Future of work

Rapid technological change is a significant part of what will shape the future of work (Davis, 2013; Latham & Ernst, 2006). Specifically, AI, machine learning, robots, and automation are rapidly changing in many industries and societies (Gordon & Gunkel, 2025). Therefore, people are very concerned about how this technological revolution might affect jobs and how people work together (Frey & Osborne, 2016).

According to pessimistic projections, many jobs could be lost in the next 20 years, indicating a significant disruption (Wang & Siau, 2019). For instance, routine, repetitive, and predictable jobs are the most likely to be lost. These include jobs in sales, administration, farming, and transportation (Frey & Osborne, 2016). In addition, new technologies are being used more in fields like legal research, accounting, market analysis, and medical (Frey & Osborne, 2016), so even highly skilled jobs are not safe.

However, the story is not entirely bleak. The optimistic view is that AI and automation might not necessarily cause many people to lose their jobs. Instead, they might create new jobs and help workers instead of replacing them totally (Autor, 2015; Bessen, 2019; Guliyev, 2023). In addition, Graetz and Michaels (2018) and Stewart et al. (2015) state that technological innovation is "the great job creation machine" and that robotisation can help the economy grow without reducing job numbers significantly. According to Frey and Osborne (2016) and Goos et al. (2014), jobs that require empathy, strategic thinking, social intelligence, and creative intelligence are least prone to computerisation, indicating that human-specific skills will continue to be crucial.

The transition period, which is supposed to last until about 2050, will be challenging (Gordon & Gunkel, 2025). The reason is that technological unemployment will fall between when people lose their jobs and when new chances open. This could make social and economic problems worse. In addition, there may be significant differences between skilled and unskilled people in the population because of how technological improvements are spread across jobs (Autor, 2015; Goos et al., 2014; Goos & Manning, 2007). Furthermore, future jobs are likely to require new skills, and some individuals may not be able to keep up with the pace that technological developments require (Kolade & Owoseni, 2022). Some researchers have proposed a symbiotic model of human-robot collaboration, in which machines contribute to efficient process execution, while workers undertake creative tasks (Autor, 2015; Jarrahi, 2018).

Therefore, the future of work presents both opportunities and significant challenges, particularly during the transition period (Wang & Siau, 2019; Bessen, 2019). However, it is unclear if these opportunities will outweigh the number of jobs lost due to automation (Arntz et al., 2019; Gordon & Gunkel, 2025).

2.5 The concept of AI

The concept of AI has evolved dramatically during the past few decades (Russell & Norvig, 2021). While it is challenging to define AI precisely and completely, Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) provide a clear perspective that AI is the ability of a system to learn from data, understand its environment, and use that knowledge to achieve a goal by adapting over time. This ability to learn distinguishes AI from traditional computers, encompassing four main approaches: thinking and acting like humans, and thinking and acting logically (Russell & Norvig, 2021). AI applications today fall into two main categories: Analytical AI, which focuses on logical thinking and pattern recognition, and Human-inspired AI, which adds emotional intelligence to the mix (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). This emotional aspect is essential in areas such as recruiting, where AI needs to balance efficiency with human sensibilities (Hermann, 2021). However, as Köchling et al. (2023) remind us, even the most sophisticated AI systems are still tools to support human decision-making rather than to replace it. This perspective is critical when considering AI in areas such as recruitment and HR. The rapid development of AI has brought both optimism and concern. Some experts see AI as a positive factor for society (Alsheibani et al., 2018; Hermann, 2021; Lichtenthaler, 2020), while others worry about its negative impacts (Alsheibani et al., 2018; Kelley, 2022). Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of AI is essential for organisations that want to use this technology effectively while ensuring human involvement when necessary.

2.6 Introduction to AI recruitment

Digitalisation has ushered in a transformational era, allowing HR professionals to consider a new recruitment model that embraces technological advancements (Pal & Chabane, 2018). AI recruitment is a technological development that precisely addresses the recruitment needs of HR professionals (Abdul et al., 2020; Black & Van Esch, 2020). AI recruitment serves multiple purposes, primarily automating recruiters' time-consuming, repetitive tasks (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). This automation affects various stages of the recruitment process, such as writing job descriptions, sourcing candidates, screening, evaluating, and selecting candidates. For example, AI-powered Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) can screen resumes and match qualified candidates to job openings by detecting and evaluating relevant keywords (Black & Van Esch, 2020; Mehrotra & Khanna, 2022). Popular ATS software currently used is Workday, Workable, SmartRecruiters, and Taleo (Abdul et al., 2020). One tool that supports the screening and testing process is Candidate Relationship Management (CRM) software, such as chatbots (Nawaz, 2019). Popular chatbots include Wendy, HireVue, and Mya (Michailidis, 2018). Additionally, companies are increasingly adopting AI tools such as robotic process automation (RPA) and video interviewing software for their recruitment processes (Albert, 2019; Du Plessis & Frederick, 2012; Majumder & Mondal, 2021). These systems use natural language processing and machine learning technologies to evaluate candidates based on their skills, experience, and cultural fit (Abdul et al., 2020; Mehrotra & Khanna, 2022). These tools analyse things like facial expressions, tone of voice, and how candidates solve problems, giving employers a better understanding of whether a candidate is a good fit for the job (Köchling et al., 2023). While AI can significantly improve efficiency, recruiters still play a vital role in making the final decision and maintaining personal interaction with candidates (Horodyski, 2023).

Table 1

Areas AI applications can be employed to support the recruitment process (Albert, 2019)

AI applications	Solutions	**Vendors**
Vacancy Prediction	Predicts employee turnover using behavioral data	Workday, BambooHR, Monster
Job Description Optimisation	Suggest improvements to job descriptions and language	Textio, Three Sourcing, 15Five
Targeted Job Advertising	Recommend jobs to the right candidates	ClickIQ, PandoLogic, Recruitz, Appcast
Multi-database candidate sourcing	Searches multiple platforms	Hiretual Pro, Ideal
CV screening software	Filters and ranks top resumes	IBM Kenexa, Ideal, CVViZ, Zoho Recruit, Talent Recruit, Talent Cube
AI Psychometric Testing	Engages and assesses candidates with personality tests	Arctic Shores, Pymetrics, Knack
Video Interview Analysis	Evaluates person-job and person-organisation fit	HireVue, Montage, Wepow, InterviewStream
Background Checking	Verifies criminal records, credit scores, and references	Checkr, Intelligo, GoodHire, HireRight, Sterling, Onfido
Employer Branding Monitoring	Analyses data to brand perception	Lexalytics, Semantria, Microsoft, Thematic, DiscoverText
Candidate Engagement Chatbots / CRM	Use public data to identify weak points	IBM, Nuance, NextIT, Kore, Inbenta, Personetics, Aivi, Mya, Beamery
Automated Scheduling	Detects scheduling needs	X.ai, Troops, Tact, Olono

2.7 Benefits of AI recruitment

According to research, using AI in recruitment offers many powerful benefits that encourage organisations to move from traditional to automated methods. One of the main advantages is a significant reduction in recruitment time and greater efficiency in administrative tasks (Black & Van Esch, 2020). AI can speed up the resume screening process by 60% to 90% while improving efficiency by 25%, allowing recruiters to focus on more critical parts of the recruitment process (Baratelli & Colleoni, 2022; Black & Van Esch, 2020). AI also improves the fit of candidates to jobs. AI can use advanced algorithms and predictive tools to assess candidates' skills, experience, and personality to find the best fit for open positions (Black & Van Esch, 2021). This approach helps with better recruitment and can reduce employee turnover by matching people with the right roles. Additionally, AI-enabled chatbots and virtual interviews allow for real-time communication and assessment, regardless of where candidates are, eliminating the geographical limitations that traditional recruiting has (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018).

Another significant benefit of AI is its ability to reduce human bias in the recruitment process. Traditional recruiting can sometimes be affected by unconscious biases, but well-designed AI systems can help ensure fairer candidate evaluations (Holm, 2012). Research shows that human recruiters can be influenced by a candidate's name or accent (Segrest Purkiss et al., 2006), while AI assessments are based purely on qualifications and other relevant factors. However, ensuring that AI systems are carefully built is essential to avoid replicating any biases in their training data.

Another vital advantage of AI in recruiting is improved employer branding. Companies that use AI-powered recruiting tools are often seen as innovative and modern, which can attract better candidates (Baratelli & Colleoni, 2022). AI enables more personalised interactions, provides quick feedback, and simplifies the application process, making the brand more caring, socially responsible, and growth-focused (Baratelli & Colleoni, 2022).

These benefits demonstrate that AI-powered recruitment enhances operational efficiency and improves the quality of recruitment decisions while positively impacting both candidate experience and organisational reputation.

2.8 Recruitment challenges

In today's ever-changing and growing world, attracting and recruiting talent is challenging for HR professionals, especially those in charge of recruiting (Ployhart, 2006). A significant problem is the high volume of job applications, with organisations receiving between 20 and 200 applications for each job opening, making screening candidates time-consuming and labour-intensive (Black & Van Esch, 2020; Nawaz, 2019). If traditional manual recruitment methods are applied, HR professionals must trade-off between the quality of hires and the hiring speed (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). Furthermore, the "War for Talent" is also a significant challenge in recruiting today (Chambers et al., 1998), when job mobility and the growing importance of human capital are increasing in every industry (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Wójcik, 2018). Therefore, HR professionals often handle multiple positions at once, leading to burnout and affecting their ability to effectively screen candidates (Abdul et al., 2020; Black & Van Esch, 2020). Another challenge is the reliance on bias and intuition in recruitment decisions. Sometimes, recruiters rely on their intuition, which can lead to unfair decisions based on factors such as gender, age, nationality, or personal bias (Hmoud & Laszlo, 2019; Kambur & Yildirim, 2023; Segrest Purkiss et al., 2006). As a result, recruiters may inadvertently select candidates who are like them, even if the candidate does not meet the requirements. Studies by Miles and Sadler-Smith (2014) and Rozario et al. (2019) show that relying on intuition can lead to poor recruitment choices, selecting candidates who may not be the best fit. These challenges can negatively impact candidate experience and retention, as poorly handled recruitment processes can lead to dissatisfaction and candidate withdrawal, especially in the early stages when they are less committed to the job (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018).

2.9 Challenges of using AI recruitment tools

The use of AI in recruiting offers many advantages, but it also raises significant concerns and challenges. A primary concern is the potential for algorithmic bias and discrimination, especially when AI systems are trained on biased data, leading to further bias in recruitment decisions (Bryson & Winfield, 2017; Ore & Sposato, 2022). For instance, Amazon's candidate evaluation algorithm systematically disadvantaged female applicants for software development and other technical roles because it was trained on historical resume data, which predominantly reflected male candidates (Yarger et al., 2020). This concern is significant as companies strive to maintain fair and inclusive recruitment practices while adopting new technologies.

Furthermore, there is scepticism about AI's accuracy, as these systems can still make mistakes, influenced by human-designed algorithms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019; Ore & Sposato, 2022). Therefore, inadequate data quality can lead to inaccurate recruitment results (Blackmore et al., 2023). Another challenge when using AI is the language barrier. Chen (2023) argues that people can express themselves better in their native language than in a second language, which can lead to misunderstandings or frustration when using AI recruitment tools in other languages. Hence, AI recruiting tools often rate non-native English speakers poorly on their ability to communicate, express emotions, and self-confidence. Furthermore, using AI tools that collect sensitive personal data, such as age, health, and gender, raises serious privacy and ethical concerns (Abdul et al., 2020; Black & Van Esch, 2020). This data's unauthorised collection and use can violate privacy and ethical standards (Blackmore et al., 2023). Although technology solutions constantly change, Fernández-Martínez and Fernández (2020) stress that human oversight is necessary to deal with these problems and ensure fair recruitment practices.

2.10 Attitude influences towards AI recruitment

Different views lead to various reactions from employees when AI is used, ranging from excitement to doubt and resistance (Dietvorst et al., 2015; Shank et al., 2019). From an individual’s perspective, opinions about AI differ depending on each person and are greatly impacted by their personality and level of technical comfort. Schepman and Rodway (2023) found that introverted individuals tend to be more accepting of AI despite its flaws. Lichtenthaler (2020) noted that people generally prefer AI when they perceive direct benefits but still value human interaction when technological advantages are unclear. HR professionals demonstrate mixed opinions about AI's impact on recruitment. While some view AI recruitment tools as valuable assets that enhance strategic functions (Hmoud & Laszlo, 2019; Son et al., 2019; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018), others express concerns about potential job losses and reduced job security (Basu et al., 2023; Black & Van Esch, 2020). According to Mrowinski et al. (2019), HR managers in NZ are especially concerned about significant interruptions to employment in the future. Khatri et al. (2020) argue that HR professionals' reluctance to embrace AI is due to their lack of readiness for new technology. So, users' perceptions of their power over technology significantly impact their views (Schepman & Rodway, 2023). As a result, such different viewpoints significantly impact successful AI adoption and organisational outcomes (Del Giudice et al., 2023; Glikson & Woolley, 2020; Ployhart et al., 2005; Tambe et al., 2019).

From an organisational view, AI has been widely used in many fields, including retail, banking, transportation, and logistics (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). However, its use in recruiting people is still in its early stages (Black & Van Esch, 2020; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). For instance, traditional organisations often hesitate to adopt AI recruitment tools due to concerns about reliability and accuracy (Ore & Sposato, 2022). Nevertheless, as AI technology continues to advance, it is anticipated that recruitment practices will experience significant changes (Albassam, 2023). Therefore, businesses must carefully assess their readiness to adopt AI and plan clear implementation strategies to be ready to participate in "talent wars" in an increasingly competitive labour market.

2.11 Strategic human resources management

According to Becker and Huselid (2006) and Wright and McMahan (1992), strategic human resource management (SHRM) is a conceptual shift from traditional HRM. SHRM recognises HR management systems as possible solutions to business problems and emphasises organisational success more than individual performance. The first idea of linking an organisation's strategy and HR plans originated in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Wright et al., 2005). Later, Dyer (1984) and Becker and Gehart (1996) went into more detail about the links between HRM and business strategy. According to Colbert (2004) and Wernerfelt (1984), the resource-based view (RBV) is now one of the most generally recognised theories in SHRM. From this theory, HRM activities that are planned and executed correctly will create and keep a competitive advantage over the competitors (Becker & Gehart, 1996; Sheehan, 2005).

SHRM is based on two main ideas: first, that an organisation's HR is critical to strategy because the skills, behaviours, and interactions of employees form the basis for making and implementing strategy; and second, that an organisation's HRM activities are very important for improving the strategic capabilities of its human resources (Colbert, 2004). SHRM differs from traditional HRM because it focuses on integrated HR systems instead of separate functions (Yang & Lin, 2014). This shows how important it is to ensure these activities align with the organisation's plan. For instance, routine tasks like recruitment, training, and job reviews are part of traditional HRM. SHRM, on the other hand, focuses on giving employees power, managing their careers, and making sure they are in line with the company's plan to create high-performance workplaces that help the company reach its goals (Becker & Huselid, 2006; Boon et al., 2018). Activities are connected to the company strategy and each other in a way that helps them reach their goals.

In summary, SHRM is becoming more widely known for its essential role in modern businesses in many areas, such as finance, human resources, capital markets, and accounting (Dyer & Reeves, 1995; Huselid, 1995; Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall, 1988). This will become even more influential as we enter the digital age, in which HR processes have changed and will continue to change.

2.12 Chapter summary

In summary, this literature review examined the complex landscape of recruitment, the future of work and the adoption of AI in recruitment practices from its theoretical foundations to practical implementations and challenges. The review found that while AI offers significant benefits in streamlining the recruitment process and reducing bias, its adoption also faces many challenges, including algorithmic bias, privacy concerns, and mixed attitudes among HR professionals. The literature demonstrates the need for further research into HR professionals' perspectives on AI recruitment (Ore & Sposato, 2022), particularly in the NZ context, where such research is limited. As organisations continue to navigate the integration of AI into their recruitment processes, understanding these perspectives becomes critical to successful implementation. The following chapter details the research methodology used to explore HR professionals' perceptions of AI recruitment in NZ organisations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study, including the research philosophy, paradigm, research approach, data collection, data analysis, researcher positionality, and ethical considerations. It provides an overview of the chosen methodology and the rationale behind the specific approach adopted for the study. By adhering to this methodological framework, the researcher has developed a step-by-step approach to answering the research questions regarding the perceptions of human resource professionals on using AI in the recruitment process in NZ.

3.2 Research philosophy

The research applies a relativist ontology with constructivist epistemology to explore HR professionals' perceptions of AI adoption in NZ recruitment processes. Ontology refers to the researcher's view of reality. We believe in relativism, meaning there are many socially built realities instead of one objective truth (Bryman, 2016). A relativist ontology assumes that reality is socially constructed, meaning no objective truth exists. Instead, multiple realities exist, shaped by individuals' experiences and contexts (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, we recognise that HR professionals may perceive AI in recruitment differently depending on their organisational culture, role, and exposure to technology. This method respects the different ideas that study participants have and recognises that reality is shaped by, and changes based on, the study participants.

Furthermore, epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. A constructivist epistemology posits that knowledge is co-created through interaction between the researcher and participants (Bryman, 2016; Grant & Giddings, 2002). This approach is particularly suited to exploring how HR professionals interpret and respond to AI technologies in recruitment. This recognises knowledge as constructed through researcher-participant interaction and the connection between the knowledge-seeking researcher and knowledge-possessing participant (Bryman, 2016).

3.3 Research paradigm

The interpretive paradigm was selected as a methodological framework for investigating HR professionals' perceptions of AI adoption in NZ recruitment processes. Interpretivism was chosen as the theoretical framework for this study because it acknowledges that reality is formed of many different points of view that can be compared (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This method is consistent with the research objective of learning individual perceptions and experiences of AI implementation within a particular cultural and organisational context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.4 Methodology

Qualitative research methods were used for this study so that the researcher could truly understand lived experiences, perspectives, and meanings (van Manen, 2016). The traditional phenomenological method used direct participant quotes to capture different perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological studies also focus on how people perceive and talk about objects and events, rather than describing phenomena according to a system of categories, concepts, and scientific exploration (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Simultaneously, we use an inductive approach allowing themes to gradually develop from our data rather than testing pre-existing theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thomas, 2006). This involves moving back and forth between raw data and emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method helped examine NZ HR professionals' perspectives on AI in recruitment, reflecting the distinct context of workplaces in NZ. It recognises that AI adoption involves more than technology; it touches on professional identity, values, and ethics (Moustakas, 1994). Our qualitative methods provide the flexibility needed to explore these interconnected dimensions.

Accordingly, we used a qualitative phenomenological methodology to guide our research questions and methods (Crotty, 1998). This approach allows interviewees to talk about their experiences and the information they truly want to share without any direction or assumptions from the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 2

Summary of selected methodological approaches

Methodological assumption	Selected approach
Ontology	Relativist
Epistemology	Constructionism
Research paradigm	Interpretivist
Research approach	Phenomenological qualitative
Research design	Inductive
Research analysis	Thematic analysis

3.5 Data collection method

The interview method is commonly used in exploratory studies and qualitative research because of its flexibility and consistency in creating reliable data (Bryman, 2016; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Gill et al., 2008). This study used semi-structured interviews to explore how HR professionals in NZ companies perceive the use of AI in recruitment. Firstly, the semi-structured interviews allow for exploring detailed, personalised answers while maintaining a consistent structure that ensures coverage of key research questions (Gill et al., 2008; Kallio et al., 2016). Secondly, the semi-structured interview technique allows participants to pause and reflect on their thinking (Qu & Dumay, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009), and the interviewer can prompt and probe for deeper information (Barriball & While, 1994). This adaptability is especially useful when discussing complex topics like AI, as it supports open expression beyond pre-defined responses (Barriball & While, 1994). Thirdly, this method works well in an interpretivist paradigm, which prioritises understanding participants' views, experiences, and interpretations (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Saunders et al., 2009). For these reasons, the semi-structured interview method is selected to uncover HR professionals' insights.

3.6 Recruitment

The recruitment efforts included posting research adverts and contacting HR networks on LinkedIn with introductions to the research study. Potential participants were sent participant information sheets and official invitations via email. The purposive sample strategy allowed researchers to select participants most suited to achieving the research aims (Etikan, 2016). It is beneficial for exploratory research in which participants should have a solid understanding of the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Etikan, 2016). In addition to purposive sampling (Bell et al., 2022), snowball sampling was used. According to Bryman (2016), snowball sampling is a method in which researchers approach relevant participants and then use these contacts to connect with new participants. Given the focus on HR professionals' perceptions of AI adoption in NZ recruitment processes, targeting individuals with relevant expertise was essential to ensure rich, meaningful data. Therefore, a variety of criteria were implemented to identify potential candidates: 1) An HR Professional, HR Recruiter, HR Manager, or AI Recruitment Ambassador who has utilised AI tools in recruitment practices or an individual with experience in AI-assisted recruiting processes, including ATS, chatbots, RPA, or video interview systems; 2) Must be located in NZ; and 3) Not an employee of AUT.

Through this approach, a final sample of 10 HR professionals was successfully recruited, comprising seven women and three men with HR experience ranging from two to over twenty years across various industries in New Zealand. This diverse group provided rich perspectives across differing roles, levels of experience, and industry contexts. The participant list is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant list

	Male (n=3)	Female (n = 7)
Industry sector		
Public sector		1
IT	1	1
Aged care		1
Transportation and logistics	1	
Education		1
Retail		1
Manufacturing and logistics		1
Construction		1
Supply chain and logistics	1	
Job title		
HR recruiter		2
HR Advisor		4
HR Director	1	
HR Manager	2	1

3.7 Interview guide

A clear interview guide was developed to conduct semi-structured interviews with HR professionals regarding their perceptions of adopting AI in recruitment processes in NZ organisations. According to Moustakas (1994), a standard interview guide contains common and unique questions that help anticipate the general question format for structured and semi-structured interviews. The interview procedure commenced with a structured protocol to build rapport and ensure ethical compliance. Initially, each interview began with a brief self-introduction by the researcher, reaffirmation of the research purpose, and an opportunity for participants to ask questions before proceeding. Second, consent documents were checked, and participants were reminded of their rights to privacy, confidentiality, and the ability to withdraw from the interview or refuse to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable (Qu & Dumay, 2011; Whiting, 2008).

The interview guide for this study was carefully prepared with brief and understandable language (Bell et al., 2022). It was refined with the help of a supervisor to ensure alignment with the research aim. The questions were grouped into five main topics: (1) HR professionals' experiences with AI adoption in recruitment, (2) perceived benefits of AI in recruitment, (3) challenges faced during implementation, (4) AI's influence on HR roles, and (5) suggestions for successful integration. There is a total of 19 questions. The whole set of interview questions is contained in Appendix B.

3.8 Conducting interviews

The interview process was carefully planned to understand how HR professionals in NZ companies perceive using AI in recruitment. For participants' preference and geographic flexibility, eight interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, and two were conducted in person. According to Barriball and While (1994) and Bryman (2016), using qualitative approaches, researchers should employ recordings rather than depending on memory. This method helps improve the accuracy and completeness of the information collected, while reducing the possibility of interviewer error. Before each interview started, basic checks were made, such as ensuring the microphone worked and the video quality was good, to ensure the conversation went smoothly. Additionally, consent to record was obtained from all participants at the beginning of each session. MS Teams recorded the online interviews, while the in-person interviews were recorded by the researcher's phone.

Each interview commenced with a structured introduction protocol. The researcher formally introduced herself, discussed the purpose of the study, and verified that the interviewee had received and reviewed the participant information sheet, signed the consent form or had conducted the oral consent form if they had not already done so. Five people signed a consent form on paper, and the other five completed an oral one. Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview without explanation and their freedom to decline answering any questions they felt uncomfortable with. Confidentiality confirmations were also provided, emphasising that participants' identities would be protected anonymously. For instance, their name will be coded as participant 1, 2, 3, etc. Moreover, the study is all about their own opinions and perspectives. There is no question requiring their organisation's information. In case they accidentally reveal their organisation's name while talking, it will be written as xxx in the transcription to protect their privacy.

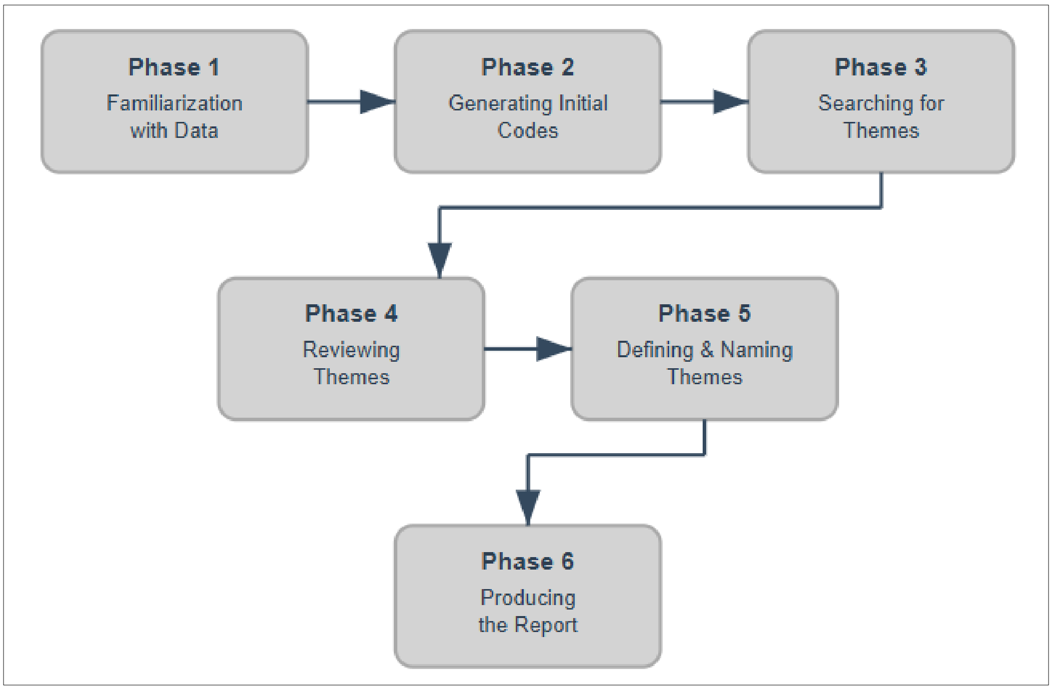
The interviews lasted around 60 minutes, with the longest lasting one hour and seven minutes and the shortest 35 minutes. Upon completion, participants were thanked for their contribution with a $50 shopping voucher as a koha. Notably, all the participants asked for copies of the results, showing they were very interested in the study.

3.9 Data analysis

This study’s data was conducted using thematic analysis, which adopted the six-phase theme analysis method (Figure 1) to understand qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the first step, researchers carefully listened to interview recordings, transcribed the words precisely as they were said, and read the transcripts many times to get their first ideas. For online interviews, the researcher used MS Teams’ auto-transcription feature. For in-person interviews, the transcription was done manually by the researcher. During the second step, initial coding was done, creating both pre-set and new codes that reflected the complex views of the participants. The third step was to look for themes by looking at how codes related and making the first links between themes. In the fourth step, the researcher looked over these themes carefully, thinking about how they could be improved by combining, separating, or enhancing thematic categories. This was done to ensure that the themes reflected the participants' experiences. The fifth phase involves establishing and labelling themes, carefully naming each thematic group, and creating an analytical narrative on HR professionals' views on AI in recruitment. The last step was to write a detailed report that connected the themes to the research question and compared the results with other literature. The researcher used NVivo software (version 15) to analyse and synthesise all codes and themes.

Figure 1

Six-Phase Thematic Analysis Method (Braun & Clarke, 2006)



3.10 Researcher reflexivity and positionality

Understanding one's positionality is crucial in qualitative research, as it shapes how knowledge is produced and interpreted (Holmes, 2020). The researcher has more than ten years of experience in HR in a global company in her home country. This background gives her deep insight into AI-based recruitment's practical challenges and opportunities. However, she acknowledges that her prior experiences may introduce bias into the analysis. To address this, she engages in reflexivity, a continuous process of self-awareness and critical reflection, to ensure her interpretations remain grounded in participants' perspectives (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

Positionality also refers to the researcher's relationship with the research context, shaped by gender, nationality, personal experience, and social role (Wilson et al., 2022). Despite having experience with AI recruitment tools, the researcher does not understand NZ's cultural and workplace norms.

This dual positioning allows her to be both an insider and an outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). She is an insider because she shares professional experience, and it is easy for her to understand what participants talk about. An outsider due to her unfamiliarity with the local context enables her to ask clarifying questions and uncover implicit assumptions (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Therefore, the researcher's combined positionality helped balance empathy with curiosity, leading to a richer interpretation of participants' perceptions and the broader landscape of AI recruitment in NZ.

3.11 Ethics considerations

From the start to the finish, ethical issues are of great relevance in all phases of research (Fossey et al., 2002; Whiting, 2008). Hence, the research prioritised ethical considerations throughout its design and implementation, following key principles outlined by Bryman (2016). The study obtained formal ethics approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (Appendix A), ensuring a rigorous ethical framework was established before data collection began. The approved ethics application number is 24/307, dated 7 October 2024.

Several steps were taken to ensure that participants' confidentiality was maintained. Firstly, all participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence, and participation was entirely voluntary (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Secondly, the study design was built around privacy and anonymity (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Grossoehme, 2014; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Whiting, 2008). The individuals' information was replaced with a pseudonym to protect privacy, only to be mentioned as an "HR professional" or "participant". Thirdly, participants were also given detailed participant information sheets explaining the study's aim before the data collection, which allowed for truly informed consent (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Qu & Dumay, 2011). As part of the data security procedure, all interview materials were kept on devices that required a password and on the AUT's OneDrive, which only the primary researcher and supervisor could access. Records will be kept safely for six years, as AUT requires, before they are destroyed using methods that protect confidential information. Importantly, the study design purposely did not request specific participants' company data, so there would not be any legal or brand problems with private company data. Lastly, as a token of appreciation for their time and expertise, each participant was given an NZD 50 shopping voucher after the interview. This information was transparently displayed in the advert.

By prioritising ethical considerations at every stage, the research created a trustworthy and safe environment for exploring HR professionals' perceptions of AI in recruitment processes in NZ organisations.

3.12 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the methodology used in this research. The process outlined here was undertaken as rigorously and carefully as possible to ensure that data collection and analysis were conducted in a fair, ethical manner and maintained the research's commitment to capturing deep, contextual insights into the application of AI in the NZ recruitment context, prioritising the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. The following section presents the findings from these interviews and key themes and narratives that reflect participants' perceptions of AI technologies in recruitment in NZ.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from interviews conducted with ten HR professionals regarding their experiences and perceptions of AI adoption in recruitment processes. The results are structured according to themes found during data analysis, following the six-phase thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes were identified and presented using descriptive codes developed using an inductive methodology (Thomas, 2006), drawing directly from the participants' responses. This chapter includes the participants' narratives and perspectives to highlight their actual experiences using AI. Four main themes identified from the data are 1) Evolving role of HR in AI-driven recruitment, 2) AI as a productivity enabler, not replacement, 3) Challenges and ethical concerns and 4) Adapting to an AI-enabled future.

4.2 Findings analysis

4.2.1 Theme 1: Evolving role of HR in AI-driven recruitment

This theme explores how AI adoption affects HR roles. It begins with the recruitment challenges that increasingly drive organisations to adopt AI technologies. Next, the analysis examines the wide variety of AI tools that HR professionals currently have experience in using. These developments have led to an evolution within HR functions. The findings reveal that rather than displacing human workers, AI tools enable HR professionals to expand their expertise, embrace multitasking responsibilities and move them away from traditional administrative functions toward more value-added activities. This finding directly addresses the research question of how HR professionals in NZ perceive the integration of AI in recruitment processes. This suggests these perceptions are mainly positive and centred on role enhancement rather than job displacement. Understanding this evolution is crucial because it highlights how technological advancement can enhance HR capabilities within organisational structures.

Recruitment context challenges

HR professionals in NZ reported many recruitment challenges that motivated them to use AI technologies. There are many applications, a shortage of skilled workers, concerns about branding, and restrictions on immigration. A common thread was that AI solutions help them solve the problems.

One recurring challenge involves the overwhelming number of applications, particularly in large organisations and seasonal industries. Participants 5 and 7, both from large firms, described receiving hundreds of applications for single roles, which significantly strains HR resources:

"So around 300 contracts for a year" (Participant 5)
"Two, three hundred applicants on a role" (Participant 7)

This problem is especially evident in the context of post-COVID economic recovery, as participant 3 explained:

"You're flooded with candidates, but it's hard to filter them" (Participant 3)

Furthermore, businesses with peak seasonal recruiting demands or high turnover, like retail, find the circumstances especially challenging. Participant 6 in this field claimed:

"For Christmas…we had about 3000 applications" (Participant 6)

These examples suggest that traditional screening methods are insufficient for managing application surges, pushing HR teams to seek AI-driven efficiencies.

However, volume is not the only concern. Some sectors face the opposite problem: the scarcity of qualified talent in NZ's relatively small labour market. Participant 7 noted the difficulty of sourcing candidates:

"NZ is quite small" (Participant 7)

Others highlighted limited access to specialised skills, particularly in technical industries:

"It's probably not that many people that have got skills in a particular technology" (Participant 8)
"There's a talent shortage here in NZ" (Participant 10)

These comments underscore that the disparity in hiring challenges: Some HR teams are overwhelmed by excessive applications while others struggle to attract suitable candidates. This duality reflects the nuanced nature of recruitment challenges in NZ and justifies the shift toward AI, which offers tools for efficient filtering and intelligent talent matching.

In addition, participants 4 and 9 voiced concerns about organisational attractiveness and employer branding. It suggests that securing talent is not only transactional but also influenced by reputation and public appeal:

"Another huge challenge … is maintaining the brand" (Participant 4)
"Getting people to actually want to come and work in the industry" (Participant 9)

Diversity and inclusion, especially in male-dominated and migrant-heavy sectors, added further complexity. As participants emphasised:

"Mostly NZ is a migrant country… strike that balance the diversity" (Participant 4)
"Like that candidate doesn't have the eligible working right" (Participant 5)
"We're trying to do is increase our diversity" (Participant 10)

These challenging contexts underscore that recruiting has evolved from a simple administrative function into a complex task. Overall, the findings show a strong correlation between the growing challenges of recruiting and the appeal of AI solutions to help HR professionals address those challenges.

AI tools used

Interviews revealed that HR professionals in NZ use various AI tools throughout recruitment (Table 4). These tools include application tracking systems (ATS), psychometric testing platforms, video interview platforms, generative AI, candidate relationship management systems, meeting schedules, document signing systems and AI-enhanced job boards.

Table 4
AI tools used

Category	Tool / System	Used by participant
ATS	SnapHire, SmartRecruiter, Taleo, Avature, Springboard, Workday	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10
Psychometric Testing	SHL, AI Psychometric Tools	1, 2, 4, 10
Video Interviews	HireView, Spark Hire	1, 4, 10
Generative AI	Copilot, ChatGPT	1, 8, 9
Coding Assessments	Chandler Coding	1
CRM Tools	JobAdder, Recruitee, 360 Track It, Net Promoter Approach	2, 4, 7
Scheduling Tools	Doodle	3, 5
Job Platforms	Seek, Trade Me, LinkedIn, Tribe Group	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Document Signing	DocuSign	3
Reference Checking	Checkmate	3

Among these technologies, ATS platforms were the most frequently mentioned, forming the backbone of recruitment operations. ATS platforms such as Springboard, SnapHire, Workday, Taleo, Avature, and SmartRecruiter were widely used to manage application flows and streamline candidate tracking. This consistent usage suggests that ATS tools are an essential infrastructure, particularly in managing high-volume recruitment:

"The company was using SnapHire" (Participant 3)
"We are moving from Taleo to Avature" (Participant 4)
"We are using at the moment is SmartRecruiter" (Participant 5)

Besides ATS platforms, psychometric testing has emerged as a key layer of candidate evaluation. Several participants described using platforms like HireView or Spark Hire to assess personality traits and cultural alignment. This suggests that employers are looking at more than qualifications but also on emotional intelligence and collaboration styles via AI tools.

"The psychometric testing and video interview like HireView or like Spark Hire." (Participant 1)
"We slowly evolved into psychometric testing" (Participant 4)
"We do psychometric testing" (Participant 10)

Furthermore, generative AI technologies have recently become a phenomenon employed by several participants to optimise the production of job descriptions and posting job listings. This usage highlights a growing trend where HR professionals use generative AI for operational tasks and content generation:

“We try to utilise ChatGPT and Chandler coding” (Participant 1)
“I used AI to create job descriptions…the chatGPT or Copilot” (Participant 8)
“Sometimes if we are a bit stuck on what to write for, we use chatGPT” (Participant 9)

In addition, participants reported using tools like Seek Talent Search, Tribe Group, Trade Me, and advanced search functions within Recruiter and Job Adder because these platforms allow HR professionals to more precisely target passive candidates. This suggests AI tools actively reshape sourcing strategies by enhancing search capabilities and expanding candidate reach.

“Which is calling Recruiter where I was able to leverage the advanced search filter” (Participant 2)
“We use Job Adder as our main CRM and then I use Seek and …also use the Tribe Group and Seek Talent Search” (Participant 7)

In short, some professionals have embraced a wide range of AI tools, while others have focused on a basic set. This difference shows that AI has helped HR professionals in different ways. However, more importantly, it shows how HR professionals actively customise AI integration to make their jobs easier and better.

Evolving HR Roles

The results show that using AI tools in the recruitment process has changed the roles and responsibilities of HR professionals significantly. As technology takes over more operational tasks, HR professionals can take on more varied and proactive roles. These roles often combine traditional duties with new ones that require critical thinking and working with people from different departments.

Many participants highlighted how AI tools free them from routine administrative tasks, allowing more time for strategic activities. This reflects a broader shift in HR's contribution, enabling teams to engage in planning, development, and employee experience activities that support organisational goals:

“I can do with more like strategy planning thing” (Participant 1)
“Doing something else, like maintaining a relationship with clients” (Participant 2)
“Looking at employee relations, looking at learning and development, but also looking at recruitment” (Participant 4)

Participant 1 stated that their HR role has changed from handling HR operations to planning and engaging talent at a higher level:

“Now we focus on a more strategic approach... on planning... attract talent… engage with passive candidate” (Participant 1)

Participant 10 also shared that this critical shift allows HR professionals to engage in more meaningful and impactful work. The goal is to enable HR to be more involved with the business and proactively address concerns rather than waiting for issues to escalate:

“Now they get to do more meaningful… planning a social event or a function or training… be out in the business, more talking to the key stakeholders, ensuring that they tackle issues sooner rather than things becoming an issue” (Participant 10)

In addition, Participants 4 and 5 reported that HR professionals no longer serve a single specialised role. Instead, they assumed multiple expertise at once and took on new responsibilities. These comments reflect how AI allows leaner teams to redistribute their time and develop skills beyond core HR functions:

“Everybody double hats…all double hatting and learning everything” (Participant 4)

A common thread across responses was the perception of AI not as a threat to job security, but as a tool that empowers professionals to focus on higher-value tasks:

“This system was created to empower human power” (Participant 5)
“They can start getting on to minor projects that we weren't able to get to before” (Participant 10)

Furthermore, some participants described a proactive recruitment strategy enabled by AI. Participant 8 comes from an executive search firm specialising in recruiting highly skilled professionals. Unlike traditional job postings, where candidates apply for open positions, he takes a proactive approach by identifying and reaching out to individuals who have the right skills and experience:

“Trying to find the people who would have the skills” (Participant 8)

Participant 3 had the same opinion that AI tools allow them to adopt proactive candidate searching strategies, rather than the passive approach:

“It will pull out automatically like job title, financial accountant and location is Auckland” (Participant 3)

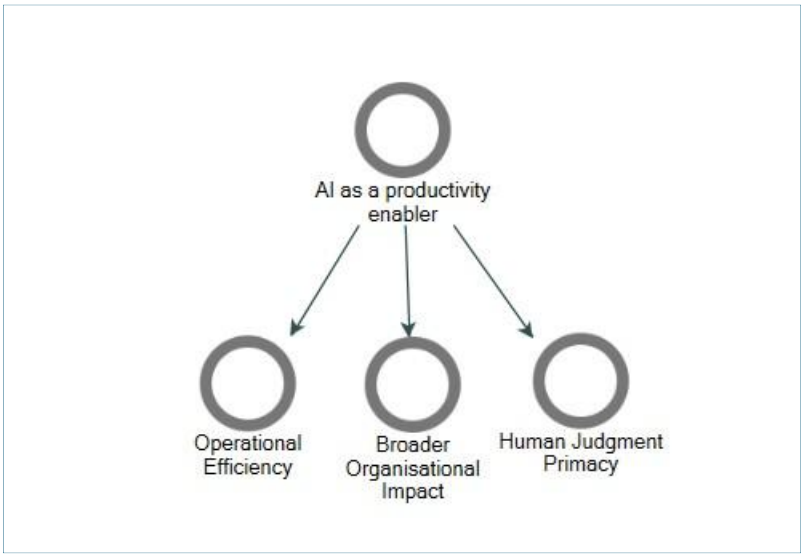
This finding suggests that professionals do not view AI as a reactive necessity. Rather than feeling burdened by increased demands, HR practitioners perceive AI as a tool that empowers them to redefine their roles, expand their impact, and contribute meaningfully to business goals.

4.2.2 Theme 2: AI as a productivity enabler, not a replacement

The second important finding shows that, rather than replacing human judgment, HR professionals in NZ recognise AI as a tool that increases recruitment productivity. This section is organised around three sub-themes that reflect this perception: operational efficiency, broader organisational impact, and the human judgment primacy. Each subtheme highlights how AI tools are being used to streamline workflows and extend the influence of HR professionals, while also reaffirming the essential role of human expertise in recruitment. These findings address the research question concerning how HR professionals perceive the integration of AI into recruitment, particularly its practical application and advantages.

Figure 2

AI as a productivity enabler



Operational efficiency

Operational efficiency, with the most associated codes, appeared as the most widely addressed category in interviews. This dominance shows that HR professionals see enhanced operational performance as the key benefit of AI adoption in recruitment. This subtheme involves various elements of operational improvement as mentioned below.

Several participants highlighted how AI tools contribute to resource optimisation by reducing administrative workload. Participants expressed joy in how AI took away manual work and how automation made it incredibly simple and quick for recruiters:

> *"I have to say that it saves a lot of time on admin work" (Participant 1)*
> *"Saving a lot of time in order to target the right candidate" (Participant 2)*
> *"AI you will go down like maybe half of the time" (Participant 3)*

These comments were reinforced by Participants 2, who reflected positively on email communication, document handling, and template updates. These insights suggest that AI is widely recognised as a valuable tool for operational efficiency, contributing to reduced recruitment timelines and better utilisation of HR resources:

> *"We have a template we would be able to send all of the rest of 300 candidates" (Participant 2)*

Moreover, participants compliment the candidate-matching feature of AI recruitment. Many participants reveal how AI systems improve screening accuracy through keyword analysis, resume parsing, and candidate ranking. These systems allow recruiters to focus more directly on high-potential candidates, reducing the time spent reviewing unsuitable applications:

“It can rank, compare the CV with the job description… how many percentages that this person matches” (Participant 3)
“And the system itself ranks them well, gives them a score out of five” (Participant 10)

Furthermore, integrating AI into job descriptions and advertisement tasks also received positive feedback. Participants 8 reported that AI enhances the efficiency of crafting job postings. Participant 9 highlighted the AI benefit of providing prompts that help shape job ads content, refine tone, and improve clarity, while participant 10 discussed leveraging AI to determine optimal posting times and platforms:

“Using AI to write that job description” (Participant 8)
“We might use some of the prompts that they give as a bit of an indication” (Participant 9)
“We've also looked at using AI to see where and when what times are best to start posting our job heads up” (Participant 10)

Additionally, Participant 10 added the benefit of consistent and explicit language used by AI, making job postings more professional and engaging:

“It makes language a little bit more precise and concise and more consistent across the board” (Participant 10)

These insights demonstrate that AI enhances professionalism, targeting, and strategic value of recruitment communications.

According to these responses, participants also valued AI’s ability to standardise and structure recruitment processes. Participants 3, 4 and 5 praised the visual clarity of their system in comparison with the ambiguous traditional method:

“It's quite clear cut. It's not a grey area” (Participant 3)
“They will know what's going to happen in the process” (Participant 4)
“This can provide us with a very clear picture” (Participant 5)

Automation of status updates and standardised communication were seen to reinforce professionalism and consistency throughout the recruitment cycle:

“All the templates have been improved all the time, and they standardise, I mean very professional” (Participant 5)

Additionally, participants recognised that AI systems enable better talent pool management and accessibility. When they need to fill a position, they can easily search the system to find suitable candidates based on the system. These practices reflect a growing emphasis on long-term recruitment strategies supported by AI. As participants reported:

“It helped you to store a candidate and help you build the talent pool” (Participant 1)
“I can look at previous applicants and filter out on the system” (Participant 7)

Participant 10 shared a success story where they revisited their talent pool to hire the second-best candidate after the first hire left. This demonstrates how talent pooling allows him to efficiently fill roles by keeping potential candidates in place:

"The next best candidate on board going through the talent pool" (Participant 10)

Finally, several participants emphasised the role of AI in promoting fairness and reducing bias. ChatGPT and Chandler coding were used to assess language neutrality in job ads, helping to eliminate gendered or exclusionary terms. This suggests that HR professionals recognise AI's potential to improve equity and consistency in recruitment:

"We try to utilise ChatGPT and Chandler coding website to check all the adverts and all the job descriptions to make sure that we don't have any bias" (Participant 1)
"we've used AI to make our language we have online, more neutral, more gender neutral" (Participant 10)

Overall, the findings indicate that HR professionals in NZ perceive AI as a valuable tool for enhancing recruitment productivity in terms of its capacity to reduce administrative tasks, enhance applicant screening, support effective job posting, build a talent pool, and remove bias. These perceived advantages help HR professionals to perform tasks more quickly, accurately, and consistently throughout the recruitment process.

Broader organisational impact

According to research, AI is recognised by HR professionals in NZ as an innovative instrument that can be used to advance positive change within the organisation. Participants acknowledged how AI can improve candidate experience, build employer branding, and support data-driven decision-making. All these factors are also considered critical to maintaining a competitive advantage in talent acquisition.

Several participants described how AI tools improve candidate experience by automating timely and consistent communication. This is a step from traditional recruitment processes, where non-selected candidates are frequently unnoticed because of time constraints. Automated systems ensure candidates receive immediate confirmation upon application and regular updates. The system contributes to a more respectful and transparent recruitment journey, as participants 2 and 8 described:

"That helps a lot for improving candidate experience" (Participant 2)
"If there's one person doing something very manually, I find the candidate experience is pretty bad" (Participant 8)

Furthermore, according to participant 6, AI automation allows for thoughtful timing of communications. Rejections are not sent immediately (which might suggest insufficient review), but are not delayed excessively either, creating a more natural and respectful candidate experience:

“We're not leaving people waiting long, but we're also not declining them straight away so that it feels like a kind of unnatural review of the CV” (Participant 6)

The findings consistently demonstrated that AI-enabled communication is a tool for relationship management, allowing even unsuccessful applicants to leave with a positive impression of the organisation. This suggests that HR professionals see candidate engagement as an operational task and a strategic brand-building opportunity:

“Candidate experience is something …people not being successful at roles… can either be a great ambassador or could be a detractor” (Participant 4)
“The ability to communicate through an automated system… is a big relationship management” (Participant 6)

In support of this, participant 4 talked about how AI-powered systems can be used as platforms to communicate the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) of the company. Before candidates even get to the interview stage, their candidate portal provides videos and benefits that give them an overview of the company culture:

“The portal will tell them a lot… all our benefits…the employer value” (Participant 4)

These examples suggest that HR professionals perceive AI as integral to brand presentation.

The participants also emphasised the importance of AI tools in facilitating data-driven decision-making. They explained how real-time performance tracking is now available in recruitment systems, assisting HR teams in better evaluating candidate pipelines and modifying job ad strategies:

“You can also utilise the application system to generate a report … we can amend and adjust it.” (Participant 1)
“it's helping with the analytics and reporting” (Participant 2)

Participant 4 shared how AI systems enable consistent assessment of candidates across multiple attributes in psychometric testing and use test results to generate targeted interview questions that probe specific areas:

“The hiring manager then creates interview questions based on the report” (Participant 4)

Participant 4 also mentioned their newly implemented “net promoter approach” to the recruiting system to collect candidate experience data through post-interview questionnaires. From there, they could identify trends in satisfaction or dissatisfaction and then act on this feedback with a “continuous improvement mindset”:

“We have started a net promoter approach for this touchpoint… with a continuous improvement mindset” (Participant 4)

This shows a greater shift in how HR professionals identify their duties. They now see themselves as more than just talent hunters. They leverage their roles as contributors to the business who can improve processes, engagement, and experience.

Human judgment primacy

While HR professionals acknowledged the benefits of integrating AI into the recruitment process, they also repeatedly highlighted the importance of the primacy of human judgment in decision-making. People only trust AI to a certain point, based on how well they think it can mimic human judgment.

They have a division of labour between AI tools and human factors in communicating with candidates during the interview stages, where automation is permitted in low-risk tasks (e.g., mass rejection emails) but high-touch stages demand personal involvement. This shows that efficiency alone is not enough, but the deeper the candidate engagement, the more important it is to have a human presence:

> *"Our hiring manager will send an e-mail to that candidate himself" (Participant 5)*
> *"We want to have that interaction with the person" (Participant 9)*
> *"In the selection criteria, we don't use AI in that respect" (Participant 10)*

Participants identified areas where they believe human judgment remains superior, such as cultural assessment, personality assessment, and communication interpretation, which AI has yet to replicate:

> *"It's not necessarily always about these skills or the qualifications, but also about the culture of the business" (Participant 7)*
> *"You can't tell if someone is going to be able to fit into your workplace culture from a CV or a cover letter" (Participant 9)*

HR professionals emphasised that human interaction cannot be eliminated from the recruitment process, even with advancements in AI technology. This represents a fundamental positioning of AI as a tool that enhances rather than replaces human recruiters:

> *"Not really something that can replace human because with recruitment is human dealing with human" (Participant 2)*
> *"You definitely need human intervention at any time during the cycle of the recruitment" (Participant 4)*
> *"I think it's important that we don't lose that aspect of recruitment and recruitment" (Participant 9)*

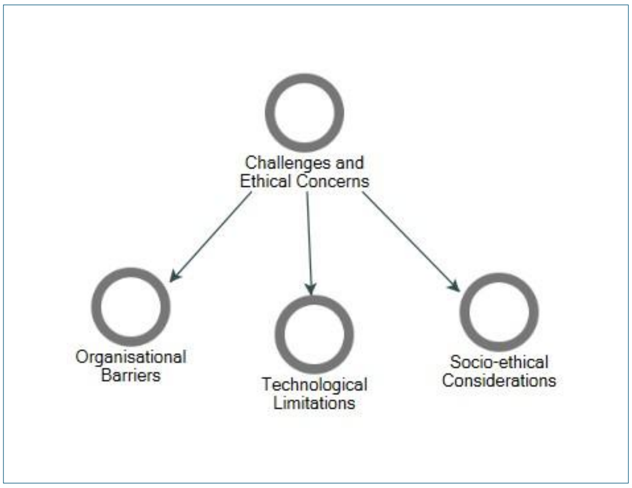
In summary, the findings suggest that HR professionals perceived AI as a significant productivity enabler in recruiting. They valued AI not only for its operational benefits but also for its broader contributions to organisations. In addition, the findings provide insights into HR professionals' perceptions of defining the boundaries of AI's scope of work and the priority of human judgment. These findings answer the research question about the advantages of adopting AI in recruitment as perceived by HR professionals in NZ.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Challenges and ethical concerns

This theme explores the practical challenges and concerns that hinder effective AI integration into recruitment. These include organisational barriers, technological limitations of AI, and socio-ethical considerations. This addresses the research question by highlighting that perceived disadvantages of AI are not just technological but also ethical concerns. This is important because even the best AI technologies still have drawbacks and space for improvement.

Figure 3

Challenges and ethical concerns



Organisational barriers

The analysis identified two key barriers under organisational factors: Resistance to change and cost constraint. Both factors directly impact how AI tools are perceived, adopted and used within NZ organisations.

Participants noted that they have encountered resistance from stakeholders to using new AI platforms in the recruitment process because they are accustomed to existing systems and processes, and their concern that new systems will decrease efficiency during the learning phase. This means that HR professionals have to deal with stakeholders in operating AI recruitment systems, and this can be a barrier if they are not cooperative:

“People don't like change” (Participant 4)
“Some hiring managers still like doing things manually” (Participant 5)
“It depends on who the hiring manager is” (Participant 6)

Participant 8 stated that recruiting is “viewed as an overhead cost”, which highlights a deeper resistance because it stems not from individual reluctance but from the organisation’s vision for change:

“AI’s going into the recruitment process would be at the bottom of the list of things that an organisation would consider implementing AI for” (Participant 8)

Moreover, HR professionals highlighted the high cost of implementing AI in recruitment. Particularly for smaller businesses, the initial cost threshold may prevent the exploring of AI recruitment technologies, regardless of potential benefits:

“Because they cost a lot of money” (Participant 1)
“Which we have to consider is really high implementation costs” (Participant 2)
“The first disadvantage I can think of is the cost of these systems” (Participant 4)

Besides initial investment, HR professionals expressed ongoing costs associated with maintenance and enhancement. This implies that AI is an expensive commitment that many companies are not ready to undertake:

“Those systems are not a one-time buy, but we have to continuously improve and enhance it. So, that cost is running” (Participant 4)
“It will take them a lot of time to recruit their recoup that cost” (Participant 9)
“It's not a one stop shop, it's an investment” (Participant 10)

Technological limitations

This subtheme addresses AI systems’ functional shortcomings and immaturity in recruitment settings. These limitations impact usability, data accuracy, and the overall reliability of AI, shaping HR professionals' perceptions of AI as a still-developing tool rather than a refined solution.

Firstly, participant 5 and participant 6 described a common frustration with system freezes and unexpected logouts. While participants seem normalised to these issues, the recurring nature of disruptions undermines user trust and slows recruitment workflows:

“Some hiring managers don't find our ATS very user friendly. So, they'll often say, I haven't received this. Oh, I can't access that” (Participant 5)
“The system will kind of freeze or just sort of kick you out. And that's happened a few times” (Participant 6)

Participants 4 and 5 revealed system integration issues, such as the transition from candidate to employee being interrupted or incompatible due to poor integration between the two software applications. These integration issues can result in manual work for HR professionals and duplicate data entry. This reveals that AI recruitment is typically used in single systems, and when systems are not working together, its benefits are lessened:

“The systems need to be well integrated with other systems that we have” (Participant 4)
“Sometimes the two systems are not sync” (Participant 5)

Furthermore, participants raised a clear causal relationship that poor data can lead to inaccurate results. They mean that AI could not think on its own. They operate within the constraints of their training data; they cannot reason, and importantly, they cannot self-validate or correct their inputs. This shows that advanced algorithms cannot think critically or make decisions based on context, which shows how important it is for humans to double-check everything:

“If you've got a poor data, it might can lead into inaccurate result” (Participant 2)
“AI tool is as good as what you have fed it… It won't think on its own” (Participant 4)
“It's still in this infancy stage… it is reliant on us entering our criteria” (Participant 9)

Participants described how poor question design led to the wrong screening of candidates:

"They were put 'no' just because they're a NZ citizen" (Participant 3)
"People were being discounted… for saying "no" to providing criminal consent" (Participant 6)

These limitations reinforce the cautious stance of HR professionals that while AI offers many benefits, it is not yet fully mature, and still has the potential to make mistakes, confuse or be defeated.

Socio-ethical considerations

This chapter presents the socio-ethical considerations HR professionals raised regarding AI recruitment tools.

An apparent generational disparity in engagement with AI tools was consistently observed. Participants noted that younger candidates, particularly from Gen Y and Z, were generally comfortable navigating AI-driven assessments. Conversely, older candidates from the Baby Boomer generation expressed significant discomfort with digital recruitment platforms:

"Gen Y or Z… really happy with this. But like the Boomer generation, it really troubles them" (Participant 1)

This suggests that reliance on digital platforms creates risks excluding older or less tech-savvy individuals, reinforcing the digital divide:

"People who don't have access to laptops, or they are not very familiar with laptop, they don't like that" (Participant 3)

The ethical implication here is that AI recruitment must account for differing levels of digital access and comfort, especially in roles not requiring technological proficiency. Recognition of this issue led some HR professionals to maintain face-to-face interviews for certain positions, highlighting an adaptive approach to inclusion:

"People applying for those roles probably do not have the capability to do those tests" (Participant 4)

Psychometric testing became a topic of argument. Participants 2 reported that hiring managers were confused when they turned down promising candidates because of their test scores. These problems reveal that AI assessment algorithms are complex to understand and not transparent, which can affect fairness in recruitment:

"They're doing psychometric tests, and they fail… not able to get hired" (Participant 2)
"My score will always be very low… but I've got a lot of experience." (Participant 4)

Furthermore, participants all expressed worry about how human connections would be devalued in AI-assisted recruitment processes. HR professionals kept saying that "the personal touch" is not only a preference but is at the core of what HR does. Participants 6 and 7 shared the view:

"The entire purpose of human resource… is to connect with people" (Participant 6)
"HR and recruitment are all about the people and culture of the business" (Participant 7)

This means that using AI more might damage the relationships that traditional HR methods are based on. Participants 9 and 10 said that AI cannot pick up on personality and emotional complexities, which is why real human-to-human interaction is still the best way to recruit people:

“AI… can’t take in that human interaction which I think is very important” (Participant 9)
“You still need that people element towards it” (Participant 10)

As for the consequences of lacking the human element in the recruitment process, participant 7 noted that too much automation can lead to more turnover, while participant 9 said that recruiting people who satisfy technical requirements but do not fit in with the company culture is a risk:

“You might… find that you have a bigger job turnover” (Participant 7)
“Your team would reflect that” (Participant 9)

On the ethical dimension, participant 9 considered screening entirely by AI unethical because candidates may not know that their applications are being processed and decided by machines. Instead, having a human (HR or hiring manager) responsible for important decisions also reflects ethical principles at work:

“Still involved in that recruitment process rather than leaving it all to AI” (Participant 9)

In addition, participant 10 described automated rejections after in-person meetings as “cold”. These comments suggested human involvement as an ethical obligation, not just a process consideration:

“By using a system to generate a rejection… I would say it’s quite cold” (Participant 10)

HR professionals mentioned that privacy and data protection should be considered when implementing AI in recruiting. Participants 1 and 3 highlighted the need to consent before retaining candidate information for future opportunities. Their remarks show that they appreciate candidates' autonomy and are in line with principles of ethical data management:

“If tick yes, I can contact them. But if they tick no, I shouldn't do it” (Participant 1)
“it's up to the candidate to say yes or no” (Participant 3)

Participant 1 acknowledged that many IT systems operate through third-party vendors. They highlighted the importance of ensuring that vendors comply with privacy regulations. This demonstrates an understanding of the expanded responsibilities in data management:

“We have to make sure… vendors comply with privacy” (Participant 1)

Participants 2 and 10 said that personal information is a sensitive element that needs to be protected. Therefore, they recommended having an expert in data privacy and security as a prerequisite for AI implementation. These insights highlight a proactive stance toward responsible data governance, especially in NZ, where privacy is culturally and legally prioritised:

“Have to have a good team to understand about data quality or data privacy and security” (Participant 2)

"Privacy is very extremely important for us here in NZ. …get your subject matter experts in it to review it" (Participant 10)

However, participant 6 openly admitted to having a limited understanding of data-sharing practices within recruitment platforms. This suggests some HR professionals have a gap in understanding data protection and privacy matters:

"To be honest, I don't know enough about how that data is shared" (Participant 6)

These results show that HR professionals know basic privacy and data protection but have different levels of knowledge and readiness.

In summary, while acknowledging the potential of AI, participants also expressed explicit opinions on the organisational barriers, technical limitations of AI, and their concerns about the ethical and social implications of adopting AI in recruitment. These findings address the research question of the challenges that HR professionals perceive in NZ organisations.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Adapting to an AI-enabled future

Continuing our exploration of HR professionals' perceptions of AI integration into recruitment processes, our findings are that in addition to being aware of the impacts of AI on their HR roles (covered in theme 1), HR professionals are also aware of how to respond to this AI-driven recruitment push. Therefore, theme four represents how HR professionals in NZ are navigating to thrive in an increasingly AI-driven recruitment landscape. Our analysis uncovered two key aspects of this adjustment: The need for continuous learning and a new vision of the future of recruitment processes.

Continuous learning as a career necessity

Our finding reveals that HR professionals acknowledged that thriving in this new landscape demands an evolving open mindset, updated skillset, and a commitment to lifelong learning. The theme matters because it reveals a shift in professional identity, from HR as primarily people-oriented to HR as tech-savvy, agile, and adaptive in a digital workplace environment.

The interviews revealed that successful adaptation to AI in recruitment begins with nurturing an open mindset. Many HR professionals emphasised that openness to change and willingness to experiment are foundational attitudes required to thrive in an AI-driven recruitment landscape:

"If the person cannot have the strategy mindset or cannot open minded upgrade, so it is any risky for their job" (Participant 1)
"I'll open the mindset of open to change" (Participant 3)
"There is a willingness to change and move along with the technology" (Participant 4)

Participants 4 and 10 emphasised trusting new technologies rather than clinging to manual processes. This requires overcoming scepticism about AI systems and having a tolerant view of minor errors compared to the greater benefit:

"I might want to change my mindset of trusting the technology" (Participant 4)
"The benefits… outweigh the error rates" (Participant 10)

Besides mindset, HR professionals agreed there is an increasing need for digital literacy. Participant 4 noted that understanding basic technology was considered essential in their work so that they could navigate the tool effectively. Similarly, participant 7 said that being familiarised with AI would help them know how to communicate with AI systems and tailor their inputs effectively:

"It's really important… improve their skill on data analysis… embrace new systems" (Participant 4)
"You definitely need to have a basic understanding of systems to be able to navigate those platforms" (Participant 7)

Furthermore, learning is not isolated to formal training; participants highlighted peer networking, self-directed research, and engagement with industry tools as meaningful ways to stay relevant:

"I think continuous learning keeps us updated with AI advancement" (Participant 2)
"I do my own reading; I do my own research" (Participant 6)

Several participants expressed concern about the potential obsolescence of HR roles that fail to evolve. Recruitment was identified as high-risk due to its process-heavy nature. There was a shared urgency to upgrade skills for personal development and maintain employment security. Participant 1 noted:

"They are out of date if they're not update with the technology" (Participant 2)
"Recruiting… is high risk" (Participant 3)
"I definitely think if someone is not tech savvy, it might be a bit tricky for them" (Participant 7)

In short, these findings suggest that HR professionals recognise that continuous learning is not just a personal preference but a career necessity. They also imply that those who fail to adapt may marginalise themselves in a rapidly digitising field.

Strategic future vision

Our analysis found that HR professionals with a strategic vision for the future will help them navigate the adoption of AI into their recruiting processes. Our study identified three key events for this sub-theme: AI era, contemporary recruitment dynamics, and organisational context agility.

First, a common point of view among the participants was that they all saw AI as a powerful force, changing recruitment and the general. Participant 2 described AI applications being used widely in many industries, and suggested that AI adoption today is a powerful trend:

"It's applied everywhere, every industry" (Participant 2)
"It is a world where our skills change frequently, or new technology comes out quite a lot" (Participant 8)

Additionally, participants 8 and 9 predicted that manual and administrative jobs would be replaced by AI in the future:

"The more administrative tasks will be replaced" (Participant 8)
"I think a lot of those manual tasks will be eradicated because AI" (Participant 9)

Therefore, participant 9 made predictions about workforce restructuring, anticipating the need for downsizing or changing team composition (fewer admins, potentially fewer recruiters), and potentially optimising costs by reducing staff and paying for software.

"Bottom level roles vanish… reduce the head count" (Participant 9)

These findings suggest that HR professionals understand the strengths of AI, and those who embrace and leverage AI trends will have many advantages in their future jobs.

Second, HR professionals highlighted a generational shift in recruiting. They are now recruiting more Gen Z candidates with different expectations than previous generations. These younger candidates are more tech-savvy and comfortable with technology. This means that technological adoption is no longer just an efficient move but a reflection of cultural alignment:

"Not because of AI, but because the culture and the environment and the people we engage different there" (Participant 1)
"The young generation is very the accommodate more tech savvy more AI" (Participant 1)

Moreover, HR professionals now face pressure to adopt tools for their effectiveness and to attract and retain top talent. Participants 1 and 4 acknowledged a fundamental shift in power dynamics. In contrast, participant 9 warned that failure to keep up with digital norms could result in loss of talent:

"They have many choices, but now you need them more than they need you" (Participant 1)
"So that in a market where you have limited resources of manpower, you want to make sure that your processes are good" (Participant 4)
"You might run the risk of losing them completely" (Participant 9)

Even participants 2 and 4 revealed that candidates now expect more from employers in terms of regular updates on the status of their applications; they demand clear and timely feedback on the outcomes, reasons why they were not selected, and a streamlined application process:

"Put yourself into a candidate shoe. You would love to know why I'm not selected" (Participant 2)
"I didn't even get a call for the interview. Next time that thing comes up, I'm not going to spend my 30 minutes on it" (Participant 4)

Interestingly, HR professionals themselves demand workplaces that invest in AI. This finding reveals that recruitment technologies have become operational tools and markers of modernity and professionalism:

"I would not join a company who doesn't have an ATS full stuff" (Participant 3)
"It probably wouldn't be the right company for me" (Participant 6)
"I think I will, if I am then able to implement those systems" (Participant 7)

Lastly, HR professionals generally agree that AI recruitment systems make more sense for large organisations that handle high-volume recruitment. However, the investment may not be justified for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with low recruitment needs. This shows that small and medium-sized enterprises may fall behind without considering financial capacity due to a lack of technological responsiveness:

"It will depend on the size of the organisation" (Participant 1)
"For those small organisations, they might not be able to afford" (Participant 2)
"I think for high volume recruitment, yes" (Participant 6)

Not only the size of the organisation, participant 3 also highlighted that the nature of the roles being recruited has a significant impact on the value of AI. For white-collar professional roles (such as financial accountants), AI can effectively screen structured CVs based on keywords and skills. However, current AI capabilities may be less effective for blue-collar or lower-level roles. This suggests that AI is more suitable for structured, skill-based roles than those relying on human attributes. Thus, strategic vision entails choosing the right tools for the right tasks:

"So that is more durable with a more professional role" (Participant 3)

Additionally, other participants strongly emphasised that AI tools must align with organisational values. This highlights that recruiting technology should not be adopted just because other companies are using it, but should meet the needs and reflect the company's values:

"Using the right tools to make sure that it aligns with the organisation" (Participant 4)
"Like every business is so different" (Participant 6)
"Let's understand the need of the business" (Participant 10)

Moreover, participant 4 and participant 10 both recommended a thoughtful, phased approach to AI implementation. New companies should start small and roll out incrementally, rather than implementing multiple AI features simultaneously:

"My advice would be to start small…then gradual implementation" (Participant 4)
"Don't jump on boots and all" (Participant 10)

Participant 4 suggested the importance of proper change management to gain buy-in from users and that stakeholders need to understand the long-term benefits of adopting technology into their workflows. Leadership endorsement is especially critical to successful adoption:

"Make sure that those users… have all gone through a change management process and understand the benefits" (Participant 4)
"We need to highlight the benefits and also ensure that we have leadership endorsement" (Participant 4)

In summary, conversations with HR professionals revealed that the strategic future vision should be a multi-dimensional approach - integrating into the AI era, contemporary recruitment dynamics, and organisational agility so that they can effectively respond to AI-driven recruitment changes in NZ.

4.3 Chapter summary

This chapter presents findings from the study of integrating AI technology into the recruitment process in NZ businesses. Four key themes formed a story of the transformation in the evolving recruitment landscape and the benefits, challenges, and responses to this technological development, as perceived by HR professionals.

The first theme explored how AI is fundamentally transforming the role of HR professionals. Participants outlined the challenges they face in recruiting, the AI tools they use, and how these tools are enabling strategic transformation of their HR function. The second theme identified AI as a powerful productivity enabler that still requires human oversight. Findings demonstrated significant operational efficiencies. These benefits extend beyond immediate recruitment functions to positive organisational impact. Importantly, participants consistently emphasised the primacy of human judgment in the final decision-making processes. The third theme addressed the many challenges and ethical concerns associated with adopting AI in recruitment, such as organisational barriers, technological limitations and socio-ethical considerations. Finally, the fourth theme focused on adaptive strategies for an AI-enabled future. Participants emphasised that continuous learning is a professional necessity, and their vision of future recruitment needs to be considered all factors, including the AI era, new recruitment dynamics, and organisational flexibility.

The next chapter will discuss these key themes further and link them to the literature review to better understand HR professionals' perceptions of AI adoption in recruitment in NZ businesses.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to explore how HR professionals perceive and experience the adoption of AI technologies in recruitment processes. Two research questions guide this thesis. The first research question, “What are the experiences of HR professionals towards adoption of AI in recruitment?” seeks to understand the lived experiences of HR professionals as they navigate the integration of AI technologies into their recruitment process. The second research question, “What are the advantages and challenges of adoption of AI in recruitment as perceived by HR professionals?” examines both the benefits and obstacles that HR professionals identify in their AI implementation experiences.

The findings presented in the previous chapter reveal an evolving landscape of AI integration within NZ’s recruitment processes. Through interviews with HR professionals, this study uncovered four themes that illustrate the remarkable impact of AI on recruitment practices: (1) HR’s evolving role in AI-driven recruitment, (2) AI as a productivity enabler, not replacement, (3) challenges and concerns, and (4) adapting to an AI-powered future. These results give us a clear look at how AI is used in recruitment, showing real professional stories, not just the theoretical potential of what AI might do.

The study successfully aimed to understand HR professionals’ perceptions and experiences of AI adoption in recruitment within the NZ context. Capturing the real experiences of HR professionals contributes to academic understanding and illustrates how AI is applied in practice. This chapter examines the significance of these perceptions and their connection to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

5.2 Theme 1: The evolving role of HR in AI-driven recruitment

The theme provides empirical evidence that AI adoption enables HR professionals to move beyond traditional operational tasks and engage in higher-level strategic thinking. This finding highlights how AI enhances its pivotal value and organisational impact, indicating a fundamental shift in the HR profession that transcends mere technological adoption.

5.2.1 Recruitment context challenges

Recruitment in NZ is shaped by recurring recruiting challenges that create pressure for innovation. These challenges include both external and internal factors. External recruitment challenges arise mainly from NZ’s market conditions and economic changes. The post-COVID-19 economic recovery has altered recruitment dynamics, resulting in a candidate-flooded market where organisations receive over 100 applications per role. This makes manual screening more difficult for HR professionals. Besides, a significant talent shortage in specialised areas due to NZ's small labour market and rapid technological evolution generates a demand for new skills that few candidates have. This challenge is further complicated by immigration and regulatory issues, such as visa complications and work permit restrictions that reduce the available talent pool.

Internal challenges influencing AI adoption focus on operational efficiency and workforce strategy. Large organisations face challenges in volume management, such as processing hundreds of contracts each year and addressing peak seasonal demands, recruiting over 150 individuals in four months, and managing more than 3000 applications nationwide during busy periods. Additionally, organisations encounter broader challenges in employer brands, particularly in less favourable industries. HR professionals also face unconscious biases related to gender, nationality, age, and personal preferences (Hmoud & Laszlo, 2019; Kambur & Yildirim, 2023). Therefore, achieving diversity and inclusion goals in managing NZ's multinational workforce is more challenging. These difficulties in large volumes of job applications, creating time-consuming administrative tasks, have been widely reported in previous studies (Black & Van Esch, 2020; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). However, this finding extends to the immediate context of NZ, a small labour market, limited immigration, and the need to ensure diversity and inclusion in organisations.

These conditions form a "perfect storm" that compels HR professionals to seek more efficient and equitable recruitment methods. This aligns with the findings of Sahay (2015), which highlight that key recruitment bottlenecks in the recruitment process are the reliance on traditional sourcing methods with limited reach, resulting in ineffective targeting and resource waste. Furthermore, paper-based workflows and excessive time spent on manual screening and assessment represent significant process inefficiencies that do not add value (Sahay, 2015). This finding further supports the notion of a 'capitalist imperative' - the pressure on firms to innovate and remain competitive in increasingly dynamic markets (Deranty & Corbin, 2022; Ghosh et al., 2024). Adopting AI across recruitment reflects the strategic necessity to enhance efficiency, stay ahead in the labour market, and sustain competitiveness. Therefore, HR professionals increasingly embrace AI and automation, offering practical solutions to common talent challenges from streamlining manual tasks to enhancing lean processes (Guenole & Feinzig, 2018). Although Dhurandhar and Dai (2021) contend that New Zealand's limited labour market may pose barriers to AI adoption in recruitment, this study reveals that localised pressures can drive innovation.

HR professionals in NZ use various AI tools to tackle different challenges, depending on their specific demands. At the basic platform level, application tracking systems (ATS) such as SnapHire, SmartRecruiter, Taleo, Avature, Springboard, and Workday are the central systems for the recruitment process. Almost all HR professionals use ATS and recognise them for their superior features (Van Esch & Black, 2019). At a more advanced level is integrating psychometric testing tools (SHL testing), where systems assess cultural and personality fit, and video interview platforms

(HireView, Spark Hire) to automate the candidate screening step. Further demonstrating how AI is being incorporated into current recruiting systems to improve and assist the recruitment process is the usage of AI-enhanced job boards and talent sourcing platforms (Seek Talent Search, Tribe Group, Recruiter), which offer features like advanced search filters and candidate matching recommendations. Participants also mentioned the growing use of generative AI tools (ChatGPT, Copilot, Chandler coding) to optimise job descriptions and identify bias, as well as the increased use of these tools to create job postings and descriptions. The current AI recruiting literature does not cover these tools, highlighting the growing gap between technical advances in HR and academic research. Administrative management tools such as meeting scheduling, document (Docusign) and reference checking (Checkmate) are also mentioned but are not commonly used. Surprisingly, HR professionals do not mention candidate engagement chatbots.

Generally, most of them use basic platform tools such as ATS or job boards, a few adopt advanced tools such as predictive recruitment systems, employer branding analytics, and psychometric assessments, and no one has yet fully adopted all the AI recruitment platforms mentioned. This shows that HR professionals in NZ are in the early stages of integrating AI tools in recruitment (Black & Van Esch, 2020; Dhurandhar & Dai, 2021; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018).

5.2.2 Evolving HR roles

One of the most important findings is that AI-driven recruitment increases the influential role of HR professionals. As AI takes over routine administrative tasks, HR professionals are increasingly free to focus on higher-value functions such as workforce planning, stakeholder engagement, and data-informed decision-making. The evidence strongly supports theoretical frameworks that emphasise the evolution of HR from administrative functions toward value-driving partnership (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016; Ore & Sposato, 2022; Ulrich, 1997).

Also, the participants repeatedly reported that AI allowed them to engage in more meaningful work, which enables HR to be more engaged with the business and proactively address concerns rather than waiting for issues to escalate and become more involved in broader organisational decision-making. The findings provide empirical support for the theory of Opportunity Perception, which posits that individuals proactively craft their jobs when faced with technological disruption (Wang et al., 2025). Rather than viewing AI as a threat to traditional HR functions, participants demonstrated opportunity-seeking behaviour by repositioning themselves as data interpreters, integrated advisors, and systematic change agents. Similarly, the findings align with the Challenge Appraisal Model (Ohly & Fritz, 2009), which suggests that challenges motivate higher levels of creativity and increase proactive behaviour. The study's findings demonstrate that HR professionals who viewed AI adoption as a challenge reported greater engagement in workforce analytics, planning, and cross-functional collaboration. This challenge-driven creativity enables the transition from reactive HR practices to proactive partnership roles. While prior research emphasises identity threat and professional devaluation due to AI adoption (Perez et al., 2022; Strich et al., 2021), the study highlights a more optimistic viewpoint that HR professionals in NZ perceive the emergence of AI as an opportunity to redefine their expertise and broaden their responsibilities.

5.3 Theme 2: AI as productivity enabler, not replacement

The second theme shows that HR professionals in NZ see AI as a significant productivity enabler that boosts their ability to find, evaluate, and hire candidates faster and with better results in their recruitment processes. This finding reveals a deep understanding of the benefits and capabilities of AI by describing in detail and practical applications for the technology's implementation, as well as the role of humans in the important candidate interactions and final recruitment decisions.

5.3.1 Operational efficiency

This study found that HR professionals in NZ view AI recruitment tools as valuable for improving efficiency and streamlining processes. Consistent with prior research (Black & Van Esch, 2020; Horodyski, 2023; Nawaz, 2019), participants highlighted that AI helps save time and reduce workload by automating tasks such as resume screening, interview scheduling, and candidate tracking. One participant noted that time-to-hire dropped from 60 to 42–44 days, offering empirical support for faster recruitment outcomes (Jha et al., 2020; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). Besides, participants shared examples of successful talent pool management, such as recruiting previously screened candidates (Dawson & Agbozo, 2024; Li et al., 2021). In line with Fernández-Martínez & Fernández (2020), participants also confirmed AI's role in improving job fit by analysing applications and keywords.

Furthermore, two important findings appear underrepresented in the current literature. First, AI's ability to create professional and creative recruitment content emerged as a significant benefit. AI makes language "more precise and concise" while maintaining consistency and professionalism, and it can generate new ideas for job descriptions or recruitment postings for entirely new positions. Second, participants valued AI's ability to standardise processes. They appreciated the "black and white" clarity AI provides compared to traditional recruitment methods' "grey area" ambiguity.

While AI has the potential to streamline the recruitment process and bring many benefits, the impact on long-term outcomes must be critically examined. Efficiency gains may lead to superficial screening processes prioritising technical qualifications over soft skills and cultural alignment (Kim, 2024). Studies have shown that AI tools often emphasise person–job fit while neglecting person–organisation fit, which is critical for long-term performance and satisfaction (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Existing commercial fit-based systems are generally under-researched, often focusing on a single dimension of fitness without addressing deeper cultural compatibility (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This creates tension between operational metrics such as time-to-hire and strategic outcomes like employee engagement and retention. In addition, over-automation raises relational concerns. AI-driven recruitment processes can marginalise candidates by reducing human interaction, making it difficult for applicants to assess organisational values, culture, and authenticity (Singh & Kularatne, 2025). Future research should investigate the relationship between AI effectiveness and measurable recruiting outcomes, such as quality of hire, diversity, retention, and employee engagement. Longitudinal research would offer valuable insights into AI adoption's short-term versus long-term impacts on recruitment.

In addition, several participants highlighted the potential of AI to reduce unconscious bias, particularly through bias screening tools that improve the language of job advertisements and standardise candidate evaluations (Cheng & Hackett, 2021; Koch-Bayram et al., 2023; Köchling et al., 2023). Bias-screening tools were used to improve language in job ads and ensure all candidates were assessed fairly. However, recent studies have shown that bias can be embedded in algorithmic design and training data (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Singh & Kularatne, 2025). Ethically, this raises concerns about fairness and transparency, which are hidden by opaque AI technology (Tambe et al., 2019). Therefore, applying AI recruitment methods requires controlling algorithm designs, training data, and system outputs to ensure the risk of bias is minimised rather than shifting it to different areas.

These experiences directly answer the first research question by providing insight into how HR professionals interact with AI tools in recruitment settings, discuss candidate perception, trust, and the risk of over-automation.

5.3.2 Broader organisational impact

Another finding that has received little attention from the existing literature is that AI recruitment has a broader impact on the organisation besides the operational benefits of HR. This finding reveals how HR professionals perceive AI as a powerful tool for transforming the candidate's experience, strengthening employer branding, and enabling more data-driven decision-making.

First, HR professionals improve candidate experience by utilising AI recruiting tools. The advantages of AI recruitment, including quicker candidate feedback and shorter recruitment times, were covered in earlier studies (Albert, 2019; Nawaz, 2019; Ore & Sposato, 2022; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018; Van Esch et al., 2021). The results of this study expand into how AI can improve employee satisfaction through more thoughtful and respectful communication practices. Instead of rushed rejections or long delays, AI helps recruiters send timely and balanced updates. Even when there is no recruitment progress, candidates receive status updates, creating a smoother, more courteous experience (Miles & McCamey, 2018). This finding reflects a shift in HR perception, from viewing the recruitment process as not only aiming to attract qualified candidates but also to providing candidates with positive experience throughout the application process (Miles & McCamey, 2018), and AI recruiting tools have made this easier for them.

Second, AI tools were also seen as key to strengthening employer branding. Participants explained how digital platforms communicate value propositions through videos, benefit highlights, and snapshots of company culture, aligning with research by Malik et al. (2022) and Ore and Sposato (2022). Participant 4 discussed how successful AI-driven recruitment processes can turn even unqualified applicants into brand ambassadors. Additionally, Participant 6 explained that a "pre-sales" strategy, where AI enables early engagement, can boost brand awareness. These insights add new perspectives to theories on AI-driven brand differentiation (Braddy et al., 2006), contributing important empirical evidence to literature.

Third, participants recognised real-time tracking of recruiting performance metrics as one of the most significant benefits of AI recruiting tools for data-driven decision making. They described using data not only to measure performance but also to adjust processes proactively. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how real-time analytics enable continuous improvement thinking rather than just retrospective reporting. In addition, participants highlighted using AI to generate targeted interview questions based on psychometric test results and implement continuous improvement processes based on net promoter approach tools. This supports Bondarouk and Brewster (2016) and Brockbank et al. (2018), who emphasised HR's data potential to influence broader enterprise outcomes.

The shift from viewing AI as a tool to improve efficiency to viewing AI as a business differentiator marks a significant step forward in the perception of HR professionals in applying AI recruitment technology. While they leverage the strengths of AI to help businesses gain a competitive advantage in attracting talent in an increasingly complex recruitment landscape, they demonstrate their forward-thinking approaches and position themselves as business-driven contributors, not just administrative facilitators.

5.3.3 Human judgment primacy

This study found that HR professionals in NZ apply AI tools selectively, focusing on tasks where automation adds clear value, such as resume screening, early-stage communication, and data management. In contrast to Strohmeier (2020), who highlights AI's potential for full automation, participants emphasised the importance of human oversight in assessing cultural fit, personality, and interpreting complex data. This functional distinction reinforces that humans and AI play complementary roles that AI excels at processing data at scale (Langer & Landers, 2021), while humans provide creative, ethical, and contextual decision-making capacity (Altemeyer, 2019; Jarrahi, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Singh & Kularatne, 2025; Tambe et al., 2019). The practice also supports the idea of "human-in-the-loop," in which AI serves as an advisor rather than a final decision maker, and demonstrates how AI would transform but not replace human roles (Altemeyer, 2019; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Tambe et al., 2019). Finally, the overall narrative emerging from the study supports a balanced integration of AI and human judgment. Rather than seeing AI as a danger, HR professionals position it as an augmentation tool which enhances decisions through analytics while preserving human-centred judgment where it matters most. This approach aligns with calls for hybrid models of AI and human collaboration (Anthony et al., 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2023; Jarrahi, 2018).

However, participants apply AI to specific recruitment tasks based on individual assumptions and preferences, rather than following a standardised framework. Currently, there is a lack of scientific research guiding the optimal division of labour between humans and AI in recruitment. As such, further investigation is needed to establish evidence-based principles for allocating tasks that leverage the distinctive strengths of both. Additionally, empirical evaluation is essential to refine and optimise this collaborative process, ensuring its effectiveness in diverse recruitment contexts.

5.4 Theme 3: Challenges and ethical concerns

The findings from this theme reveal a complex landscape of challenges organisations face when implementing AI in recruitment processes. These include organisational, technological, and socio-ethical barriers. The significance of these findings is particularly pronounced given the limited empirical research on AI recruitment implementation because only 35% of papers in this field provide empirical evidence (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). This study contributes valuable empirical insights that bridge the gap between theoretical AI capabilities and practical implementation realities.

5.4.1 Organisational barriers

The organisational barriers reflect the challenges in the NZ context of adopting new technologies (Gavaghan et al., 2019; Gavaghan et al., 2021). First, participants revealed they faced resistance from stakeholders, particularly hiring managers who preferred to work with the old system rather than use AI recruitment systems. This perception from HR professionals supports previous literature on different stakeholder perspectives that may influence the implementation of AI recruitment (Langer et al., 2023) such as resistance to change (Wang, 2022), skepticism about technology (Glikson & Woolley, 2020; Ore & Sposato, 2022), and lack of understanding of the benefits of innovation (Senbeto & Hon, 2021).

This raises a critical question: Were NZ organisations adequately well-prepared to introduce AI recruitment tools to relevant stakeholders? Introducing these technologies is not only a technical improvement but is also deeply involved in aligning with the organisation's visionary goals. This process requires active participation and engagement from relevant departments, including HR, IT, the hiring manager, and senior management. In addition, this finding contributes to the broader literature on institutional resistance, suggesting that hesitation to adopt new technologies does not necessarily stem from a lack of individual willingness but from a shift in company perceptions of the role of AI in HR operations. This is consistent with Albert (2019), who states that most organisations remain cautious about AI recruitment technology.

Second, the study's participants pointed out a high implementation cost, despite earlier research claiming AI recruitment is cost-effective (Horodyski, 2023; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). The cost burden also includes continuing system maintenance and upgrades. It raises concerns that high costs are one of the main challenges in adopting AI (Aparna & Kumar, 2025), especially for small businesses in NZ. This has an impact on market position and competitive advantage since larger organisations can use AI to boost recruitment effectiveness and performance, while smaller rivals are still limited by conventional techniques (Albert, 2019; Hynes, 2021; Nascimento et al., 2024; Van Esch & Black, 2019). Thus, this finding shows that high costs are a practical challenge and reduce access to advanced recruitment technology.

5.4.2 Technological limitations

Participants recognised that AI systems are in their “infancy”, in NZ (Black & Van Esch, 2020; Dhurandhar & Dai, 2021; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). This perception highlights concerns about system reliability and accuracy (Bogen, 2019; Fernández-Martínez & Fernández, 2020; Ore & Sposato, 2022).

First, participants listed issues such as system crashes, unexpected logouts, limitations related to AI document processing capabilities and poor data extraction (Bevara et al., 2025; Li et al., 2020; Vukadin et al., 2021). The technical issues indicate that once technology is implemented into a process, HR professionals become dependent on external technical support for basic job functions. Furthermore, integration problems between AI tools and other HR systems were also prominent. As participant 4 noted, the inability of systems to “talk to each other” results in inefficiencies and increases the risk of data errors. These concerns reflect broader challenges in creating seamless, user-friendly HR technology ecosystems (Malik et al., 2023). This finding suggests that AI adoption in recruitment among NZ companies tends to be a targeted response to recruitment bottlenecks rather than part of a comprehensive HR system strategy or an approach designed for seamless integration with existing systems and workflows.

Second, this study reveals that participants are concerned about the reliability of AI systems because they are only as good as the data inputs. If input data is not efficiently managed and updated promptly, AI tools can produce incorrect results (Blackmore et al., 2023; Horodyski, 2023; Ore & Sposato, 2022; Raghavan et al., 2020). The reason is that AI cannot detect incorrect data inputs or self-validate its inputs, as quoted by participant 4, “It won’t think on its own”. Participant 3’s example highlights how confusing questions about employment rights in NZ led to unfair screening outcomes. This echoes broader research showing that AI systems can reinforce preexisting biases when trained on biased or incomplete data sets (Bogen, 2019; Cappelli, 2019). These concerns reflect a deeper ethical issue: flawed algorithms could unfairly disqualify capable candidates, resulting in missed opportunities and reduced workforce diversity (Mori et al., 2025; Persson, 2016). Their insight underscores the critical need for human oversight in recruitment processes (Fernández &

Fernández, 2019). However, this hybrid approach (Chapman & Webster, 2003; Kapse et al., 2012) appears more theoretical than practical in the current implementation context because the critical challenge is that HR professionals, who do not have the technical expertise to assess the integrity of AI systems fully, are being held accountable for technology algorithms that they cannot fully understand or control.

Third, participants expressed concerns about candidates "gaming the system" once they understood how AI assessments worked. For example, candidates can manipulate structured interview platforms and psychometric tests to get around AI-driven assessment systems, or they can add keywords that match the job description to their resumes to help AI match its filters (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2025; Levashina et al., 2014). This gaming behaviour may turn the AI recruiting process from a collaborative assessment into a technological arms race where success depends more on tech literacy than job competencies. There is little information about psychometric tools that are increasingly used in pre-employment assessment. These tools are increasingly emerging as technological innovations, rather than scientifically based research (Dattner et al., 2019; Raghavan et al., 2020). As a result, it is not always clear how well the assessment mechanisms predict job candidate performance (Cappelli, 2019; Strich et al., 2021). Therefore, if the AI recruitment system is not managed correctly, it can lead to incorrect results and risky decisions (Blackmore et al., 2023; Lacroux & Martin-Lacroux, 2022). These challenges highlight the urgent need for more science-based AI recruiting practices. Furthermore, employers should also provide HR professionals with AI training, set apparent screening tool validation requirements, and evaluate applicants holistically rather than algorithmically.

5.4.3 Socio-Ethical considerations

Socio-ethical considerations in using AI refer to the broader societal and moral implications of how AI technologies are developed, deployed, and governed. The socio-ethical concerns identified in this study represent perhaps the most complex and challenging aspects of AI adoption in recruitment (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022).

First, the digital divide issues among candidates noted among NZ HR professionals align with concerns about the potential for AI to exacerbate existing inequalities. Generational differences in comfort levels with AI tools (Fernández-Martínez & Fernández, 2020; Malik et al., 2023), especially the challenges faced by older candidates, or those who have difficulty accessing technology, not to mention candidates with disabilities (Nugent & Scott-Parker, 2022; Pacheco & Burgess, 2024; Tilmes, 2022). This raises important questions about equity and inclusion, which are the foundation of professional ethics and social responsibility in recruitment (Gavaghan, 2021; Kelan, 2024). To address this, participants 3 and 4 shared that they still use traditional interview methods for roles that do not require technical skills or for lower-level positions. This approach reflects a growing awareness by participants that AI assessments lack diversity in user experience and may not represent all candidates equally. Hence, AI recruitment tools are often expected to reduce direct discrimination by removing intuition and focusing only on qualifications when screening job candidates. However, they can introduce other biases in practice, such as limited access for specific groups. This can lead to practices that seem bias-neutral and technically legal but do not reflect fairness as a moral or ethical ideal (Rigotti & Fosch-Villaronga, 2024). The issue is not just avoiding illegal bias but ensuring every candidate has an equal opportunity of getting a job. Therefore, we need good guidelines to protect people's rights and make recruitment fairer and inclusive.

Second, one of the main concerns with adopting AI is the emphasis on dehumanising workplace interactions. Participant 9 considers screening entirely by AI unethical because candidates may not know that their applications are being processed and decided by machines, and participant 10 describes automated job rejections as "cold", especially after in-person interviews. These views suggest that human involvement in recruitment is not just procedural but ethically essential. This viewpoint challenges dominant discussions in AI ethics, which often focus on algorithmic fairness and bias mitigation (Bogen, 2019; Cappelli, 2019). Instead, this finding adds new value to the current study, which shows how AI-based decisions are made is just as important. Moreover, participants 6 and 7 raised concerns that the growing use of AI will threaten the human-oriented nature of HR. These participants argue that human interactions are an essential workplace factor and that HR's relational functions are early indicators of cultural fit and employee engagement that AI cannot replicate. The advantages of implementing AI may come at the expense of long-term employee satisfaction and cultural fit, as participant 7 warned that over-automation of processes could increase employee turnover (Newman et al., 2020). This raises a concern about how companies evaluate AI success. If success is measured primarily by efficiency, metrics may overlook more profound impacts on retention, morale, and organisational culture. This research aligns with previous studies on pushing organisations to think about AI's long-term effects on morality (Leicht-Deobald et al., 2019), interpersonal justice (Noble et al., 2021), and human autonomy (Lin et al., 2021) in addition to its immediate advantages. Regarding research questions, this means that HR professionals' perception of AI is not only based on whether AI tools work well but also on deeper beliefs about human-centred employment practices.

Third, this study adds new insights to existing research on privacy concerns in AI-based recruitment (Dattner et al., 2019; Jha et al., 2020), focusing on how NZ HR professionals view candidate data protection. Participant 1 acknowledged that many systems are run by third-party providers and highlighted the importance of ensuring that providers comply with privacy regulations. This demonstrates an understanding of the responsibilities of data management extending to third-party compliance (Raghavan et al., 2020). However, HR professionals are often positioned as gatekeepers of data protection, but this reliance on external providers introduces ambiguity about data ownership and governance. This research emphasises how crucial it is to consider privacy regulations when using AI recruiting tools (Blackmore et al., 2023).

In addition, while understanding the importance of candidate data security, some participants were unsure how to implement more in-depth, specific data management practices. For instance, Participant 6 admitted having little knowledge of candidate data sharing processes, while Participant 3 expressed uncertainty regarding consent forms. This highlights a gap between the pace of technological adoption and the level of ethical preparedness of HR professionals in NZ. The findings suggest an urgent need for targeted training to address this critical issue and to implement robust data protection practices.

5.5 Theme 4: Adapting to an AI-enabled future

The findings from Theme 4 reveal that HR professionals in NZ demonstrate a thorough understanding of the adaptive strategies required to thrive in an AI-enabled recruitment landscape. The need for continuous learning and developing a strategic future vision are two important aspects of this theme.

5.5.1 Continuous learning as a career necessity

The interviews revealed that successful adoption of AI in recruitment begins with cultivating an open-mindedness. This perspective aligns with Acemoglu et al. (2022) and Kellogg et al. (2020), who argue that AI does not simply reduce jobs but also creates new job opportunities. This insight addresses the first question, showing that HR professionals accept new technologies and perceive AI adoption as a pathway to career advancement. However, this optimism contrasts with studies that underscore concerns and aversions toward algorithmic decision-making in recruitment (Lacroux & Martin-Lacroux, 2022) or a cautious and conflicted attitude towards adopting AI (Tandon et al., 2025).

Additionally, participants indicated that trust in technology is a key component in fostering open-mindedness. That is, the capacity to overlook minor mistakes made by AI systems in favour of bigger gains. Compared to 80% benefits, HR professionals said they were willing to accept an error rate of roughly 20%. This demonstrates a realistic and mature understanding of the trade-off nature of technology. Such trust underscores how HR professionals weigh benefits and challenges in their AI implementations. This result is in line with earlier studies that indicated a prerequisite for successful technology use is overcoming scepticism about AI and preserving trust in the system (Dawson & Agbozo, 2024; Langer et al., 2023; Mirowska & Mesnet, 2022).

In order to effectively use AI tools, participants acknowledged the increasing significance of technical skills. Some participants shared experiences of familiarising themselves with terms like “cloud-based environment” or regularly reporting on “data analysis,” describing a steep learning curve. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that HR professionals understand that they need to advance their HR expertise to develop more complex technical and analytical capabilities. This aligns with earlier research showing that technical and digital competencies are crucial for HR professionals in the AI era (Budhwar et al., 2022; Jaiswal et al., 2022; Nawaz, 2019). It also extends the technology adoption framework of Davis (1989), suggesting that perceived career survival is the driving motivator for HR professionals. HR professionals with greater analytical skills and data literacy reported better job performance and valuable business partners (Malik et al., 2022; Ore & Sposato, 2022; Ulrich & Dulebohn, 2015) who can navigate the intersection of human judgment and technology-driven processes (Wiblen & Marler, 2021).

The study's findings do not imply that HR professionals are concerned about AI replacing them. AI-savvy people are less afraid of losing their jobs because they see potential and opportunity rather than threat (Ore & Sposato, 2022). This finding contrasts with previous research that presented AI as a danger to HR identity and job security (Basu et al., 2023; Black & Van Esch, 2020). However, they do caution that this risk is likely to occur for those who are reluctant to adopt new technology and resist change (Georgieff & Hyee, 2022).

Therefore, HR professionals consistently emphasised the importance of continuous learning as a necessary response to AI technologies' unpredictable and non-intuitive nature (Anthony et al., 2023; Singh & Kularatne, 2025). Adapting to these systems is not a one-time effort but an ongoing skill enhancement and openness process. The proactive upskilling and evolving of roles by HR professionals show that they are preparing to remain competitive and influential in an increasingly automated workplace. This insight aligns with broader literature that positions upskilling and personal development as strategic assets in successful human–AI collaboration (Bhattacharyya & Nair, 2019; Jarrahi, 2018).

5.5.2 Strategic future vision

AI era

Participants consistently assert that this is the era of AI; therefore, embracing this trend is one of the advantages of successful technology implementation. Indeed, AI is being widely applied in various fields and industries such as retail, banking, online shopping, transportation and logistics (Allal-Chérif et al., 2021; Huang & Rust, 2018; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019; Mrowinski et al., 2019). Understanding technology in general or AI will demonstrate an organisations or individual's agility (Balcioğlu & Artar, 2024; Singh & Kularatne, 2025; Van Esch et al., 2021). Evidence of the widespread popularity of AI tools such as ChatGPT shows that HR professionals use AI within the scope of work and gradually integrate the technology into their daily lives. Therefore, it is predicted that in the future, AI technology will be used much more widely by organisations in NZ (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018).

While AI is gradually replacing humans in many tasks, especially in areas with high labour costs such as recruitment (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018; Wilson & Daugherty, 2024), HR professionals consciously perceive that AI replacement is mainly at the task level rather than the entire job (Huang & Rust, 2018). This task-level analysis shows that participants are learning to know their "rival" not only to respond but also to maintain the essential value of human beings in the face of increasingly widespread automation.

Contemporary recruitment dynamics

Although HR professionals perceive that using AI in recruitment can be challenging for some demographic groups, they also see a new market trend. Younger people, like Gen Z, are beginning to join the workforce. They grow up with technology and expect modern, digital recruitment experiences.

In addition, participants emphasised that modern candidates tend to view AI positively, especially appreciating the role of this technology in driving innovation and development (Da Motta Veiga et al., 2023; Tursunbayeva et al., 2025; Van Esch & Black, 2019). Specifically, these HR professionals also want to work for organisations that apply AI recruitment technology. They are hesitant to apply to companies that use traditional methods because they do not want to be left behind. Black and Van Esch (2020) even warn that companies that are slow to innovate in recruitment technology risk losing employees to competitors using advanced AI technology. Consistent with research on generational expectations, participants stressed that companies must adapt their recruitment practices to remain attractive to these new workforce groups (Van Esch & Black, 2019; Wilson & Daugherty, 2018).

Notably, HR professionals are also aware of a power shift in recruitment. It is no longer just businesses choosing who to hire; it is now a two-way assessment process. This has led to a reshaping of recruitment, moving from a business-centric model to a candidate-centric model (Rąb-Kettler & Lehnervp, 2019). Implementing the “net promoter approach” demonstrates this shift towards treating candidates as valuable stakeholders. This observation highlights that HR professionals are directly experiencing the need to adapt to a new recruitment landscape, which adds to existing research on modern AI recruitment practices.

Organisational context agility

The study participants demonstrated a deep understanding of the role of organisational context in facilitating or hindering the adoption of AI in recruitment. Rather than viewing AI as a one-size-fits-all solution, they believe implementation effectiveness will increase significantly when AI tools are integrated harmoniously with the organisation’s scale, values and strategies. These findings challenge the assertions of Pan et al. (2021) that company context does not significantly influence the use of AI in recruiting.

In addition, participants also suggested “don’t jump on boots and all” that AI be applied gradually, rather than implementing several AI features at once. This finding supports the study that companies must understand which technologies perform which tasks, prioritise project portfolios based on business needs, roles and develop plans for scaling across the company (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018; Li et al., 2021). Such reflections reveal a practical awareness of the complexities of embedding new tools into existing workflows and suggest that HR professionals recognise the need to minimise operational disruption. These experiences offer valuable directions for future research, particularly regarding frameworks that can guide effective phased AI implementation across various organisational settings.

Another prominent finding highlighted by participants was the role of leadership in an organisation. They argue that strong endorsement and commitment from leadership are critical to the diffusion and maintenance of AI adoption. This shows that HR professionals do not apply AI to the process simply as a system upgrade to the HR process, but as part of a change management initiative. Importantly, they know how to overcome challenges by actively seeking strong and sustainable support from leadership at all levels. These findings are consistent with research highlighting the role of leadership in driving successful digital transformation (He et al., 2023; Peifer et al., 2022).

In summary, the findings from theme 4 demonstrate that HR professionals in NZ are developing comprehensive adaptive strategies beyond simple technology adoption. Integrating continuous learning imperatives with strategic future vision represents a mature perception of technological advancement that acknowledges opportunities and challenges. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on AI adoption in human resource management by providing empirical evidence of how HR professionals perceive and navigate the complex landscape of digital evolution.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter comprehensively analyses four key themes emerging from research on AI adoption in HR recruitment practices in NZ. The research findings reveal four major themes characterising HR professionals' perceptions and experiences with AI adoption in recruitment. First, the study findings demonstrate an evolving role for HR professionals, where AI adoption enables them to transcend traditional operational boundaries and engage in higher-level planning and decision-making. Second, the research identifies AI as a productivity support tool that requires human oversight. HR professionals perceived a deep understanding of leveraging AI capabilities while maintaining human judgment at critical decision points and emphasising the importance of balanced human-AI collaboration. Third, the study explores the challenges and ethical concerns associated with adopting AI, revealing a complex landscape of organisational, technological, and ethical barriers that must be navigated. Fourth, the research demonstrates how HR professionals adapt to an AI-supported future through continuous learning and future-oriented visioning.

This study provides empirical evidence that AI adoption enhances rather than threatens HR professionals' roles, emphasising human-AI collaboration. It bridges the gap between theoretical AI capabilities and practical application while highlighting the need for a careful plan to address ongoing technological developments and ethical considerations.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Thesis overview

As AI technologies continue to reshape global recruitment strategies, their impact on how organisations identify, assess and select talent is becoming increasingly important. However, because of their potential problems, the quick integration of these technologies also presents challenging issues. Therefore, to ensure that the use of AI in recruitment is both ethical and successful, it is essential to understand the viewpoints of HR professionals, who are important users in the process. Their experiences offer insightful context on the application, interpretation, and adaptation of AI in practical settings. Despite the growing global attention, there is a lack of clear empirical research exploring the adoption of AI in recruitment in the NZ context, particularly in understanding how HR professionals perceive and engage with this evolving landscape in practice.

Two key research questions guide this study. The first explores how HR professionals experience and respond to the integration of AI technologies. The second examines the perceived advantages and challenges of implementing AI in recruitment from their perspective. This research adopts a qualitative methodology using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to explore the perceptions and experiences of HR professionals in NZ organisations. It prioritises their voices as key stakeholders in adopting AI technologies for recruitment, offering insight into potential and limitations.

The study reveals four main themes. First, AI facilitates a significant change in the scope of expertise of HR professionals. Rather than being limited to repetitive and administrative tasks, HR professionals can increasingly engage in more value-added activities. Second, while AI tools offer significant benefits in efficiency, speed, and data-driven insights, HR professionals emphasise the indispensable role of human oversight in guiding and interpreting AI outputs. A common emphasis is that successful implementation depends on a balanced partnership, where AI supports rather than replaces human judgment. Third, the adoption of AI poses a complex set of challenges. These include issues of organisational readiness, ethical concerns, and technological limitations. Fourth, HR professionals demonstrate an adaptive mindset, responding to AI adoption through continuous learning, upskilling, and strategic vision. This perception is not only about the effectiveness of recruitment practices but also highlights the importance of preparedness for the future of work.

The concluding chapter will discuss how these insights contribute to academic literature, inform HR practice, acknowledge research limitations, and propose directions for future study.

6.2 Theoretical contributions

This thesis makes several theoretical contributions to the academic literature on AI adoption in recruitment. First, it advances SHRM theory (Wright & McMahan, 1992; Ulrich, 1997). It demonstrates that AI adoption promotes strategic elevation, empowering HR professionals to shift from operational functions toward higher-value contributions. Second, it extends the job crafting theory (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) by showing how AI integration proactively enables HR professionals to redefine their roles through adaptive job crafting strategies. Similarly, the study provides empirical support for the theory of Opportunity Perception (Wang et al., 2025), which posits that individuals proactively reshape their work in response to AI disruption.

Furthermore, the results support the Challenge Appraisal Model (Ohly & Fritz, 2009). This challenge-driven mindset marks a shift from reactive HR practices to forward-thinking collaboration. Finally, the study identifies a notable gap in existing literature by exposing the ambiguity surrounding data ownership and accountability when AI recruitment tools are sourced from third-party vendors.

6.3 Practical contributions

This research provides useful information for multiple stakeholders involved in AI implementation within HR contexts.

6.3.1 For HR practitioners

Based on our empirical findings, this research will benefit HR practitioners. First, it emphasises the practical importance of deploying AI primarily in the early stages of recruitment, such as resume screening or initial candidate matching, where its algorithmic efficiency can enhance productivity. Limiting AI to these phases lowers the risk of bias from relying too much on automated systems for complex decisions and helps make recruitment fairer and more open to all. A clear division of labour between AI and human decision-makers ensures that each side does its part based on its strengths. Second, responsible AI use requires people to learn more about data protection, privacy compliance, and algorithmic transparency. Because AI can worsen existing biases, HR professionals need to know how to look at AI outputs, understand how algorithms work, and step in when results go against ethical or legal standards. Third, the study highlights the importance of tracking and interpreting HR metrics, particularly engagement, performance, and retention rate, during digitalisation. AI integration should not compromise these core metrics. HR professionals need to be able to show impact, not just feel empowered by the new technology. Visualising how AI improves performance, streamlines processes, or cuts costs using quantifiable metrics reinforces its role as a data-driven contributor. Finally, HR professionals should continuously learn and develop to remain agile in an evolving technological landscape. This includes developing technology skills, which fosters more effective collaboration between humans and intelligent systems. Ongoing development empowers HR to lead change and stay relevant to the company's goals.

6.3.2 For business leaders

This research provides practical insights for business leaders applying AI to recruitment. One important finding is that leadership is important in how well AI is adopted. Employees see AI as a business innovation or a threat to their jobs based on how well leaders can explain their strategic vision for AI. A clear communication strategy, outlining why the change is necessary and how it benefits people and performance, can foster strong employee collaboration. Moreover, a phased strategy is recommended. Organisations can identify pain points in recruitment by starting with a need assessment, setting realistic goals, and mapping where AI can deliver meaningful impact to organisational value and vision. Pilot programs allow teams to test tools in controlled settings and adjust before scaling. Regular audits help ensure alignment with outcomes and expectations as technology expands across functions. Training is also essential because HR professionals and other stakeholders, like hiring managers, need to know more than just how to use the platform. They need to improve their skills in technical knowledge, ethical awareness, algorithmic transparency, and data governance. Finally, businesses should set up a governance framework, risk assessments, and validation protocols for data privacy and protection to ensure their practices follow local privacy laws.

6.3.3 Technology vendor

This study highlights several key recommendations for technology vendors. Vendors should also offer ongoing training tailored to different users' needs. This will help HR professionals understand AI outputs, deal with ethical issues, and handle data responsibly. To keep things running smoothly and avoid problems, it is also important to ensure new systems work well with existing HR systems. Also, vendors should include governance controls, ensure that data usage policies are clear, and follow local privacy laws. Crucially, technology providers must actively engage HR teams during the whole implementation process.

6.3.4 Education provider

With the rapid advancement of technology, this study urges educational institutions and universities to modernise HR management curricula to include AI competencies, digital literacy, and ethics-based content. Practical workshops and certification programs can equip students and HR professionals with the hands-on skills to run AI-enabled HR systems and lead technology-driven changes.

6.3.5 Policy makers

While NZ has a Privacy Act 2020 (New Zealand Government, 2020) and AI and the Information Privacy Principles 2023 (Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 2023), this study highlights the absence of specific regulations governing the use of AI in recruitment. It asks for targeted government guidance to support individuals and organisations adopting AI-based recruitment technologies. Such policies should emphasise transparency, promote bias mitigation and data accountability, and set clear tool validation and privacy protection standards.

6.4 Limitations

While this research achieves its aim of exploring HR professionals' perceptions of AI adoption in NZ, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study employed a qualitative methodology with a small sample size. Even though we tried to get more people to participate, the data collection period fell during the holidays at the end of the year, when many people were unavailable or travelling overseas. The sample was limited to ten people so the thesis could stay on schedule. Second, the results provide valuable insights but may not reflect the full range of experiences across different organisational types, sizes, or industries. Since most companies in NZ are small and have not yet implemented AI in recruitment, some potential participants declined to participate due to limited knowledge of the subject. As a result, the sample only covers professionals from public sector, IT, aged care, transportation, logistics, hospitality, education, retail, construction, manufacturing, supply chains, and recruitment agencies. Third, the research offers a snapshot of AI adoption experiences at a particular time. Given the fast-paced development of AI technologies, the tools, challenges, and benefits discussed in this study may quickly become outdated. Fourth, as with many qualitative studies, the research relies on self-reported perceptions and experiences. Social desirability bias, inaccurate recall, and subjective interpretation are possible.

6.5 Future research

This research encourages several promising follow-up studies. Long-term studies that look at the effects of adopting AI over long periods would be beneficial in understanding how AI affects HR practices, professional development, and the effectiveness of organisations in the long run. Second, the qualitative insights offered by this study would be enhanced by quantitative research assessing the objective effects of AI adoption on recruitment efficiency and candidate satisfaction. Such research could examine metrics including time-to-hire, cost-per-hire, candidate quality, diversity outcomes, and long-term employee retention to provide evidence-based assessments of AI adoption benefits. Third, more research exploring the perspectives of other stakeholders, including candidates, hiring managers, the senior management team, IT professionals, and technology vendors, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of AI implementation dynamics. This broader understanding will support more inclusive, practical, and ethically grounded integration of AI into recruitment systems. Finally, researchers can conduct validation studies to examine how specific AI tools perform within real HR environments. By testing these tools against practical recruitment tasks, they can assess accuracy, fairness, and usability in context. This research helps organisations and professionals decide which technologies to adopt and how to integrate them responsibly.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics approval

AUT
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

7 October 2024

Betty Ofe-Grant
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Betty

Re Ethics Application: **24/307 HR professionals' perceptions of adopting artificial intelligence in the recruitment process in New Zealand organisations**

Thank you for your responses to AUTEC's conditions.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 7 October 2027.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz
(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: dck7914@autuni.ac.nz

Auckland University of Technology, D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, New Zealand.
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316; E: ethics@aut.ac.nz; www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

Appendix B: Interview guide

Interview Questions and Protocols

This is a schedule for in-person and MS Teams interviews. The objective of this interview is to investigate the perspectives of HR professionals regarding the integration of artificial intelligence into the recruitment process of New Zealand organisations. The interviews will commence with a warm-up with easy questions, which will be followed by open-ended questions that aim to uncover the individual experiences of the participants. The sequence of questions and prompts may differ slightly from one interview to another.

The interview questions are designed to gather data from HR professionals who have experience with one of the AI technologies (e.g., ATS, chatbot, RPA, video interview) in the recruitment process. The questions are based on the following themes:

1. Stories of HR professionals towards adoption of AI in recruitment
2. The advantages of adoption of AI in recruitment
3. The challenges of adoption of AI in recruitment
4. How did AI affect their job?
5. Recommendations

Part 1: Introductions

- A brief self-introduction, reaffirm about research purpose and introduce the interview process
- Thank you, participants, for agreeing to participate in this research
- Opportunity for a participant to ask for questions
- Check the consent form is signed
- Reminder about privacy and confidentiality
- Start recording (with prior permission)

Part 2: Interview Questions

I. Warm-Up Questions: Tell me about yourself? Some example prompts

1. How long have you been working in HR, and what's your current role?
2. If you oversee recruitment, how many positions (average) do you often handle?
3. What aspects of recruitment do you find most challenging?

II. This question is intended to find out about stories of HR professionals towards adoption of AI in recruitment

1. Can you tell me about a time when you first encountered using AI in your recruitment process? What was that experience like?
2. Have you been involved in implementing any AI tools for recruitment? If so, what AI you used?
3. What aspects of HR is covered by the AI?

III. This question is intended to find out about the advantages of adoption of AI in recruitment

1. What do you see as the main benefits of using AI in the recruitment process?
2. Can you share an example of how AI has improved the speed of your hiring process?

3. Can you describe any ways in which AI has helped in talent pooling or relationship management with potential candidates?

IV. This question is intended to find out about challenges of adoption of AI in recruitment

1. What do you see as the main obstacles to implementing AI in recruitment processes?
2. How have you addressed data privacy and security concerns related to AI in recruitment?
3. How do you ensure fairness and avoid bias when using AI in your recruitment processes?
4. How have you dealt with resistance or skepticism from colleagues or management regarding AI adoption in recruitment?
5. What concerns do you have about the potential for AI to make errors or misjudgments in candidate selection?
6. What challenges do you foresee in keeping AI recruitment tools updated and relevant as job requirements evolve?

V. This question is intended to find out about how AI affected their job

1. How has the introduction of AI changed your day-to-day responsibilities as an HR professional?
2. What new skills have you had to develop to work effectively with AI in recruitment?

VI. This question is intended to find out their recommendations

1. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to organisations considering AI adoption in their recruitment processes?
2. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C: Participant information sheet

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

15 Aug 2024

Project Title

HR professionals' perceptions of adopting artificial intelligence in the recruitment process in New Zealand organisations.

An Invitation

My name is Hang Kim Nguyen, and I am a Master of Business in Management student at Auckland University of Technology. I'm eager to start a research project for my master's program that explores the application of artificial intelligence to the hiring process. If you are a human resource professional actively engaged in AI recruitment in New Zealand, I cordially invite you to participate in this study.

What is the purpose of this research?

This study aims to explore the perceptions of Human Resources (HR) professionals in New Zealand regarding the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in recruitment processes. As organisations increasingly adopt AI technologies to streamline hiring practices, it's crucial to understand how HR professionals view these changes. The research will uncover your perceptions and experiences with AI-powered recruitment tools.

By participating in this research, you will significantly contribute to the study of ongoing transformation of HR functions in the face of rapid technological advancements. Your contribution could lead to more efficient, fair, and effective hiring practices that benefit both employers and job seekers. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified as a prospective participant in my research project via my Facebook/ LinkedIn group or personal/professional network. I have sent you an invitation to join in this study, which includes my contact information in case you have any further inquiries

How do I agree to participate in this research?

After reading this information sheet and accompanying consent form, if you wish to participate in this research, please email your interest to my email at dck7914@autuni.ac.nz. You will have a 14-day period to consider this matter and raise any inquiries. For your convenience, the consent form can be signed just before the interview commences (or completed orally in the case of online interviews).

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request that any data identifiable as belonging to you be removed up until 14 days after the interview. After this date, it will no longer be possible to withdraw your data as the dataset will be anonymised and analysis will have begun. If you withdraw before this date, you will be offered the choice between having your identifiable data removed or allowing it to continue to be used in the study.

What will happen in this research?

I will schedule a convenient appointment for the interview, which can be conducted in person or online via Microsoft Teams, based on your preference. For in-person interviews, we will meet at an agreed location that ensures privacy and comfort such as your office or AUT campus or library. For online interviews, I will provide a secure link to join the Microsoft Teams meeting.

Prior to the interview, we'll obtain your informed consent and address any questions or concerns you may have about the research process.

During the interview, you will be asked approximately 10 to 15 questions regarding the research topic, which will refer to your perceptions and experiences with AI-powered recruitment tools. The interview will last approximately one hour. A digital recording device will be used to capture the interview. When conducting a virtual interview via Microsoft Teams, the 'record' feature of the software will be utilized.

All information shared will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for this research study. Following the interview, you will have the opportunity to request and review the interview transcript. You will have two weeks to review and offer any feedback on the transcript before it's used in the study.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It is possible that during the interview you may feel uncomfortable answering a particular question or have difficulty recalling past experiences. However, you may choose not to answer any question or withdraw at any time. You may always take a break whenever you need to or if you feel stressed or uncomfortable. Additionally, you will be able to read and review the interview transcript upon request. You may comment on the transcript or share any missing information before the transcript is used to create a finding report.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If during the interview you feel uncomfortable, stressed or upset, you can ask to stop the interview at any time to take a break. You also have the right to withdraw at any stage of the interview.

What are the benefits?

AI technology is growing and has been widely applied in the recruitment sector. However, the benefits and difficulties of applying AI in recruitment are only experienced by HR professionals Therefore, this research provides an opportunity for HR professionals to share their unheard experiences. The research findings aim to gain a deeper understanding of the various benefits, challenges and expectations of HR professionals in managing AI recruitment.

As a participant, you will benefit personally by sharing your story with me as a researcher in a one-on-one interview. You will have the opportunity to share your experiences and contribute to research in an area of expertise in which you are working. The research findings may be a driving a motivation for other HR professionals or organisations in New Zealand to apply AI in recruitment. In addition, software companies can also consider the difficulties you are facing or the useful features you want from AI recruitment to include in their plans to upgrade their recruitment software in the future. You will also receive an NZD 50 shopping voucher as a Koha for your time.

Ultimately, this research will not only contribute to the completion of the researcher's Master of Business thesis but also provide valuable insights that could shape the future of AI-driven recruitment practices in New Zealand.

How will my privacy be protected?

Any information shared by you will remain strictly confidential throughout the study. Additionally, your personal information will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed in any form. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym, and your answers will not identify you. All data, including interview transcripts and audio files, are securely encrypted and stored on a dedicated AUT drive, accessible only to the primary researcher and the supervisor. AUTEC normally requires that the data be stored securely for a minimum of six years. After that, all related data will be destroyed through the secured confidential paper destruction bins located in the Department of Management, Technology & Organisation at AUT.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Participating in this research is designed to be cost-free and convenient. We require a maximum of 60 minutes of your valuable time. For online interviews, Microsoft Teams will be used at no cost to you, while in-person interviews can be conducted at a location of your choice. It is understandable that the value of your time away from work, so the schedule will be very flexible, including before/after work hours or during lunch breaks, to minimize disruption to your workday if needed. For sure, there are no hidden costs or expenses. As a token of an appreciation, you'll receive an NZD 50 shopping voucher.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

After reading this information sheet and accompanying consent form, if you wish to participate in this research, please email your interest to my email at dck7914@autuni.ac.nz. You will have a 14-day period to consider this matter and raise any inquiries.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive the transcripts of the interviews, and you will have two weeks to review and provide feedback. If you would like, a brief overview of the research findings will be emailed to you after the thesis is approved.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, *Senior Lecturer Dr Betty Ofe-Grant, betty.ofe-grant@aut.ac.nz, (+64) 9 921 9999 extn 6871*

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, *ethics@aut.ac.nz*, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Hang Kim Nguyen

Email: dck7914@autuni.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Senior Lecturer Dr Betty Ofe-Grant

Email: betty.ofe-grant@aut.ac.nz

Telephone: (+64) 9 921 9999 extn 6871

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEC Reference number *type the reference number*.

Appendix D: Consent form

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: ***HR professionals' perceptions of adopting artificial intelligence in the recruitment process in New Zealand organisations***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Betty Ofe-Grant, Senior Lecturer of Management, Technology & Organisation, AUT University, New Zealand***

Researcher: ***Hang Kim Nguyen: MBus student in Management, Technology & Organisation at AUT University, New Zealand***

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated ....
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.
- ○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: ....

Participant's name: ....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

....

....

....

....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 7 Oct 2024 AUTEC Reference number 24/307

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Oral Consent Protocol

For use when interviews are being conducted by videoconference.

Project title: ***HR professionals' perceptions of adopting artificial intelligence in the recruitment process in New Zealand organisations***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Betty Ofe-Grant, Senior Lecturer of Management, Technology & Organisation, AUT University, New Zealand***

Researcher: ***Hang Kim Nguyen: MBus student in Management, Technology & Organisation at AUT University, New Zealand***

The participant joins the videoconference

○ Do you agree to my recording your consent to participate?

If they agree, then the record function will be activated and they will be asked the following:

○ Have you read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated ....

○ Do you have any questions about the research?

○ Do you understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that the interview will also be audio-recorded and transcribed?

○ Do you understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (your choice) and that you may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.?

○ Do you understand that if you withdraw from the study then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used? However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

○ Do you agree to take part in this research?

○ Do you wish to receive a summary of the research findings? (please tick one): Yes○ No○

○ Do you want me to send you a copy of the audio recording for this consent? Yes○ No○

○ Please confirm you name and contact details

Participant's name: ....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate) :

....

....

....

....

I will now turn off the recording of the Consent and then will start a separate recording for the interview.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 7 Oct 2024 AUTEC Reference number 24/307

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix E: Invitation letter to participants

Invitation to participate in the research study: HR professionals' perceptions of adopting artificial intelligence (AI) in the recruitment process in New Zealand organisations.

Dear HR Professional,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study exploring how HR professionals in New Zealand perceive the use of AI in the hiring process. Your insights and experiences are invaluable, and I would love to hear from you!

Who we are looking for:

- ✓ HR professionals responsible for recruitment.
- ✓ Experience with AI tools in the recruitment process.
- ✓ Located in New Zealand.
- ✓ Proficient in English (it doesn't have to be your first language).
- ✓ Not currently employed by Auckland University of Technology.

What's involved:

A one-hour interview to share your perspectives on AI in recruitment. You will make a substantial contribution to the research on the ongoing transformation of HR services in the face of rapid technological improvements.

Why participate:

- ✓ Make a significant impact on research that could transform HR practices.
- ✓ Share your unique experiences and insights.
- ✓ Be part of a study that highlights the evolving role of AI in HR.
- ✓ Participation is entirely optional, and we respect your choice. Please note that once the findings report is prepared, the information you provide cannot be removed.

Attached is the Participant Information Sheet with detailed information about the study. Feel free to share this invitation with other HR professionals in New Zealand who might be interested.

If you have any additional inquiries, please don't hesitate to reach out to me on via email at dck7914@autuni.ac.nz.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. I look forward to your response and keen to learn about your experiences!

Warm regards,
Hang Kim Nguyen

Encl: The Information Sheet

Appendix F: Social media advert