

When Computers Update Your Team: Team Socialization of New Members Hired by AI

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Bachelor of Science

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Purpose/Motivation: More and more recruitment and selection (R&S) actions are being taken over by AI technologies (Hmoud & Laszlo, 2019, p. 26). This circumstance might change team reactions towards a newly hired team member. Considering Kinnunen & Parviainen (2016), one could suggest that constructs like affect, intuition, moods, and emotions are crucial for ensuring the right person-environment-fit of applicants (pp. 16-17). Assuming that AI is not yet capable of all “abilities that come naturally to people” (Kamar, 2016, p. 4070), a preference for human recruiters and skepticism towards the team fit of automatically hired, new team members could be conceivable.

Theories/Hypotheses: This thesis aims to explore the research question whether the use of AI in R&S could raise skepticism which may be directed towards the usage itself and, as a consequence, towards the newly hired employee. Additionally, it analyzes the potential of this skepticism to result in a team socialization penalty for the newcomers. Further, it intends to discuss various factors that could either mitigate or intensify this skepticism.

Approach/Methodology: This paper shows characteristics of phenomenon-driven research. In contrast to theory-driven research, phenomenon-driven research tries not to “fill a theoretical gap” but to “understand a managerial or organizational phenomenon” (Schwarz & Stensaker, 2014, p. 486). The paper utilizes an abductive approach, which could be depicted as a combination of an inductive and a deductive methodology (Haig, 2018, pp. 35-36). Hereby, the thesis derives practical insights from qualitative interviews conducted with employees and complements these with academic theory to establish propositions.

Findings: The thesis proposes a moderated mediation model.

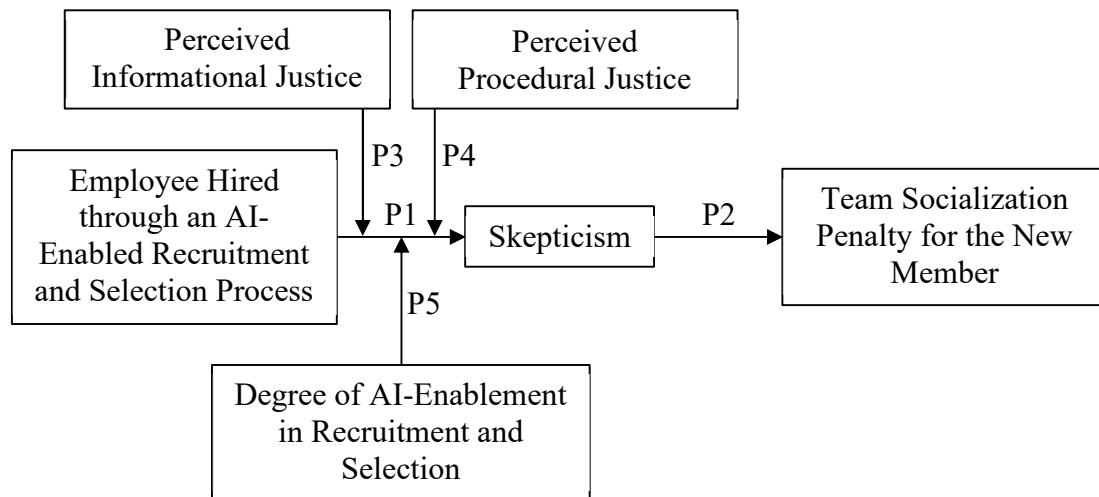
Proposition 1: Hiring an employee through an AI-enabled recruitment and selection process provokes skepticism.

Proposition 2: Skepticism induced through hiring an employee through an AI-enabled recruitment and selection process results in a team socialization penalty for the new member.

Proposition 3: High perceived informational justice decreases skepticism induced through hiring an employee through an AI-enabled recruitment and selection process.

Proposition 4: High perceived procedural justice decreases skepticism induced through hiring an employee through an AI-enabled recruitment and selection process.

Proposition 5: A high degree of AI-enablement in the recruitment and selection process increases skepticism induced through hiring an employee through an AI-enabled recruitment and selection process.



Research Limitations: Although the focus on incumbents appears to be useful for the purpose of the thesis, this should not neglect the fact that a holistic approach would have considered both incumbents and newcomers. Furthermore, the interviews included in the thesis were conducted in a software company, i.e., a firm working in a technical environment. This could imply a higher employee affinity for technologies such as AI in general, which could result in an underestimation of the universal reactions to AI in R&S. In addition, the generalizability of results could be further harmed by the low number of interviews.

Research Implications: Further research on the paper's results might be needed to empirically test the proposed moderated mediation model by using a large sample size, or even by conducting a non-hypothetical field experiment. Additionally, one could try to enhance the model, for instance by investigating the potential moderators that were not included in the final model in more detail, or by examining other potentially related factors. Another way would be to alter the model's assumptions and, for instance, to observe responses to AI in R&S in firms that did not recently introduce this technology. Moreover, it might be interesting to contrast employee reactions to AI in R&S of organizations with different sizes, or who are active in distinct industries to eventually discover discrepancies.

Practical Implications: Organizations should not neglect potential employee reactions to new technologies, as the implementation of AI might evoke emotions (Hornung & Smolnik, 2022, p. 124) which indeed could be negative (e.g., skepticism) and have unintended

consequences (e.g., team socialization penalty). To prevent this, firms should concentrate on creating a transparent process, which incorporates open communication, as well as on giving a voice to the workforce. Further, companies should carefully select AI applications while keeping its acceptance by important stakeholders in mind. After the employment of a new employee, team familiarization could help to overcome prejudices against the newcomer as it hopefully might show that skepticism was unjustified (Koethe, 2005, p. 2).

Contribution: The thesis contributes to group socialization theory and responds to the claim that researchers often counterintuitively examine socialization on the organizational level instead of on the team level (Bell & Kozlowski, 2013, p. 423). Additionally, it enhances HR literature on AI in R&S as well as applied, non-technical AI literature. Further, it helps to understand potential negative effects that should be kept in mind when utilizing AI in R&S.

Paper type: conceptual

Further readings:

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