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AI Disclosure Across Recruitment Stages: Effects on Applicants' Perceptions and
Job Pursuit Intention

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) have expanded its use across organizational and societal contexts. AI systems are associated with potential gains in productivity, efficiency, and decision support, but their adoption also raises concerns regarding privacy, security, bias, misuse, and misinformation (Dwivedi, et al., 2023). These competing opportunities and concerns make it important to examine not only the performance of AI systems, but also how individuals respond to their use in consequential decision-making contexts.

Recruitment is one field in which organizations are increasingly using AI-supported tools. These technologies can support activities such as candidate sourcing, application screening, assessment, and interviewing by automating repetitive tasks and processing applicant information more efficiently (Horodyski, 2023). They also show to improve efficiency by automating processes, reduce the administrative workload and even provide better consistency into the screening processes, claiming to produce higher quality recruitment (Fraij & Várallyai, 2021). Although these potential benefits are often discussed from the organizational perspective, the introduction of AI also changes how applicants encounter and evaluate the selection process. Existing research shows that applicant reactions to AI-enabled selection are not uniformly positive, and that concerns about fairness, control, and acceptance are important (Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020).

At early recruitment stages, applicants generally have limited information about the organization and its selection procedures. They may therefore use the information available in job advertisements and recruitment communications as cues when forming expectations about the process (Spence, 1973; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). These early evaluations are relevant because applicant perceptions of selection procedures are associated with applicants behaviours such as their willingness to accept a job , recommend the employer, and on their perception of the wider organizational image (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Anderson, Salgado , & Hülshager, 2010).

One such informational cue proposed by this study is the disclosure that AI will be used during recruitment. AI disclosure refers to informing applicants that an AI system or AI-supported tool will be involved in activities such as screening applications, evaluating candidates, or conducting initial interviews (Keppeler, 2024). The issue has also gained regulatory importance. Under Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, AI systems intended for recruitment or selection are classified as high-risk, and deployers may be required to inform affected individuals that such a system is being used (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). The regulation does not classify every use of AI in recruitment in the same way, so the disclosure requirements depend on the system and its intended use.

Previous experimental research showed that informing applicants about AI involvement can influence their interest in a position and their evaluation of the recruitment process (Keppeler, 2024). Even if

people know that the algorithm works better than humans at forecasting, the disclosure of the use of AI can provoke negative reactions, and people tend to prefer human decision makers even if they are riskier and often worse performing decision methods (Dietvorst & Bharti, 2020). However, applicant reactions may depend on many factors, like the role assigned to the system, the stage at which it is used, the level of human involvement in the decisions, or the information provided about how it operates. Disclosure should therefore not be treated as just a technical communication detail, and the different responses to the disclosures and the applicant's psychological responses should be investigated in more depth.

Empirical findings on applicants' perceptions of AI-enabled selection are mixed. Some applicants associate AI recruitment tools with usefulness, ease of use, faster responses, and efficiency (Horodyski, 2023). Other studies report less favourable reactions to AI-enabled selection, including lower perceived fairness, controllability, social presence, acceptance, organizational attractiveness, and job pursuit intention compared with human-led procedures (Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020; Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). These differences may partly reflect variation in the recruitment procedures examined, since some literature works focus specifically on automated or AI-evaluated interviews, where the absence of human interaction is especially visible (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Suen, Chen, & Lu, 2019; Lukacik, Bourdage, & Roulin, 2020). Some studies focus specifically on automated or AI-evaluated interviews, where the absence of human interaction is particularly visible, whereas others examine AI-supported résumé screening or algorithmic decision-making across recruitment more broadly (Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020; Köchling & Wehner, 2020). Wesche and Sonderegger (2021) found that negative applicant reactions were stronger when automation extended to the interview stage than when it was limited to screening. Building on these differences, the study examines how AI disclosure affects anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection across pre-screening and the first-interview stage, and whether these evaluations statistically account for changes in job pursuit intention, and if general AI use or previous AI recruitment experience moderates these effects.

This thesis focuses on two process-related evaluations: anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. Anticipated procedural justice refers to applicants' expectations about whether a future selection procedure will be fair, and these expectations may involve characteristics such as consistency, job-relatedness, opportunity to perform, and the appropriateness of the selection method (Gilliland, 1993; Bauer, et al., 2006). The construct is particularly relevant before applicants have direct experience with a procedure, because they must form expectations from the limited information available to them (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019).

Perceived privacy protection refers to applicants' confidence that their personal information will be collected, processed, and protected appropriately during recruitment, and these evaluations may be influenced by the amount of information collected, applicants' perceived control over their data, and

their awareness of how the information will be used (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004). Privacy is especially relevant in technology-mediated selection because applicants may have limited knowledge of how their data are processed or who can access them (Bauer, et al., 2006).

To investigate these issues, the present study uses a scenario-based mixed factorial experiment focusing on two early recruitment stages: application pre-screening and the first interview. AI disclosure condition was manipulated between participants, with participants assigned either to an AI-disclosure condition or to a human-disclosure condition. Recruitment stage was examined within participants, meaning that each participant evaluated both the pre-screening and the first-interview stage under the same disclosure condition.

By keeping the fictitious organization, job description, and main scenario information consistent across conditions, the design allowed the effects associated with AI disclosure and recruitment stage to be compared under controlled conditions. The study examined whether AI disclosure affected anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention, and whether these effects differed between recruitment stages. It also examined whether anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection statistically accounted for the relationship between disclosure and job pursuit intention.

The early stages of recruitment were selected because applicants begin forming expectations about the organization and the selection process before directly experiencing its procedures (Verhoeven T. , 2016). From a signalling perspective, information about AI involvement can be conceptualized as a cue that applicants may use when forming these expectations (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). However, the study did not directly measure the particular meaning that participants assigned to this cue.

Research Question: *How does the disclosure of AI involvement in recruitment at different stages of the hiring process, specifically during pre-screening and first interview, shape applicants' perceptions of anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection? Furthermore, how are these perceptions associated with applicants' job pursuit intentions?*

Research Objective: *To examine how disclosing AI use at different stages of the recruitment process (pre-screening and first interviews) influences applicants' perceptions of procedural justice and perceived privacy protection, and how these process perceptions, in turn, relate to applicants' job pursuit intentions.*

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Applicant reactions to selection procedures

Recruitment and selection research can be traced back at least to early work published in 1917, and this research area started becoming more popular on the 1970s, thanks to the economic changes and the need for skilled talent, which lead organizations to invest in identification and attraction of the most talented candidates (Ployhart, 2017). Over the past years, the interest in applicants' reactions has been growing, although it started strongly cantered in the organizational perspective, by focusing on the recruiters and the hiring manager's views as well as their financial benefits coming from the increased efficiency in the hiring decisions and the competitive advantage in the so called "War for Talent", while the applicants perspective was seen as "the dark side of the moon", to illustrate how often it was overlooked and lacking information and focus (Anderson, 2004). The focus has shifted to integrate and acknowledge the applicant's perspective, which at the beginning was mainly focused on the reactions to specific selection procedures, it has now developed into the understanding of the complexity and multidimensionality of the applicants reactions, and the consequences and implications of the different aspects that surround the hiring process (Chan & Schmitt, 2004).

Research now shows that how candidates perceive a recruitment process can influence key outcomes for both the applicant and the organization. How applicants perceive and experience the selection process has been link to shaping their evaluations of the organization, job performance, as well as their willingness to apply or purse a job and even more surprisingly this can be reflected also in their subsequent behaviours such as their intention to accept the job offers, their organizational commitment, and also expand to their consumer behaviours, like word-of-mouth communication or future product and service purchases (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Schinkel, van Vianen, & Van Dierendonck, 2013).

Chan & Schmitt (2004) point out that early studies on applicant reactions initially focused on describing how candidates felt about traditional selection methods such as interviews, cognitive ability tests or work-sample assessments. They note that three dimensions emerged as central in theoretical and empirical discussion: face validity, perceived predictive validity, and fairness perceptions. They also highlighted that applicants' perceptions vary across stages of the process (pre-test vs. post-test) and that methodological rigor is critical for interpreting these reactions correctly.

As the field progressed, studies shifted toward explaining the antecedents and consequences of these reactions rather than just describing them. For example, Schinkel, van Vianen, & Van Dierendonck (2013) found that applicants' fairness perceptions significantly shape both their well-being and their evaluation of the organization's attractiveness. Specifically, hired applicants who perceived the selection outcome as fair reported the highest levels of well-being and organizational attractiveness, and among rejected applicants, those who perceived the procedure as fair also reported higher organizational

attractiveness compared to those who perceived it as unfair. Their findings show the effects of fairness perceptions may remain relevant after both acceptance and rejection decisions.

Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas (2004) point out that negative experiences during recruitment can also lead high-performing candidates to withdraw from the application process or even reject offers, reducing the organization's access to top talent. Additionally, applicants' perceptions can have broader public relations (PR) effects by influencing organizational reputation, employer brand, and consumer attitudes and their later behaviours toward the hiring company. They highlight that the recruitment experience serves as a critical first encounter that can expand into how individuals view and engage with the company in the roles of customers, advocates, or future applicants

As selection practices increasingly operate across borders, researchers have emphasized the need to consider cross-cultural and international dimensions of applicant reactions. Hülshager & Anderson (2009) argue that, as organizations globalize their recruitment and assessment systems, applicant reactions should be interpreted in relation to broader societal, cultural, legal, and economic contexts. They point out that reactions to selection procedures should not automatically be assumed to generalize across national boundaries, because factors such as local labour market conditions, cultural norms regarding authority and fairness, and differences in legal frameworks may shape how applicants interpret the fairness, transparency, and relevance of selection tools. Their argument suggests that applicant reactions research should account for contextual variation and benefit from cross-cultural or comparative approaches, as well as comparable methods across studies, to allow more valid comparisons of applicant experiences in a global labour market.

Over the years, several integrative frameworks have tried to explain how applicant perceptions form and evolve during selection. Building on Gilliland, (1993) justice-based model, Ryan & Ployhart (2000) proposed a structure distinguishing four types of applicant perceptions: those of the procedure, one's affective and cognitive states, the outcome and the entire selection process. Their model also incorporated antecedent variables such as personality, job attractiveness and contextual conditions, as well as moderators like hiring expectations or job desirability. Later, Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas (2004) expanded this model in their meta-analysis, identifying additional perceptual factors such as test anxiety and motivation. Studies on applicants' perceptions use other theoretical perspectives to better explain the applicant reactions, some of the most applied frameworks are justice perceptions framework, expectations theory, fairness heuristic theory, and attribution theory, other less common applied are signalling theory, theories of trust, decision-making theory, Image theory, psychological contract theory and social identity theory (McCarthy, et al., 2017).

Previous studies have examined how applicants react to information about selection procedures disclosed in job advertisements, treating such information as signals about the recruitment process.

Reeve and Schultz (2004) found that applicants' ratings of organizational attractiveness and intention to apply were linked to their perceptions of the accuracy of different selection methods. Job advertisements that specified in-person interviews received the most favorable evaluations of organizational attractiveness, whereas methods based on transcript information and college GPA received the lowest ratings. Although these studies did not examine AI-based selection tools, they provide a useful example of how disclosing a specific selection method can influence applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness and their intention to apply.

The present study focuses on applicants' perceptions formed at an early point in the recruitment journey, before any actual interaction with the organization or selection outcome has taken place. In this context, anticipated procedural justice is an appropriate construct for examining applicant reactions, because it captures how fair applicants expect the recruitment procedure to be based on the information available to them. This focus is consistent with the broader applicant reactions literature, in which perceptions of fairness and justice have long been treated as central to how applicants evaluate selection procedures (Gilliland, 1993; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Constructs such as affective and cognitive states during evaluation (e.g., anxiety, engagement, or self-efficacy) and outcome-related perceptions (e.g., satisfaction or distributive justice following acceptance or rejection) are left out of the present study's scope.

2.2 Candidate experience, candidate journey and recruitment signals

The concept of candidate experience is commonly used to describe how individuals perceive and evaluate their interactions during a recruitment process with the hiring organization (Verhoeven T. , 2016). The concept is closely related to the marketing one of Customer Experience Management (CEM), especially in the idea that the experiences are formed across multiple points of contact between the individuals and the organisation. In each contact point or "Touchpoints", candidates have cognitive and emotional reactions to the interactions, and the candidate experience is the whole sum of the touchpoints between the hiring company and the applicant (Kootz, 2014; Verhoeven T. , 2016).

Candidate journey helps map the touchpoints between candidates and hiring organisations, various models exist to map this journey by identifying key touchpoints, and the structure of the journey can differ depending on the perspective taken, either it is viewed from the candidate's point of view, from the moments in which they encounter organizational information, or from the internal steps of the organization's hiring process. A framework used to structure the candidate journey adapted from sales is the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), which considers the psychological stages consumers move through before making a purchase decision. In recruitment, a simplified version divides the candidate journey into three main stages: before, during, and after the application process. A more detailed perspective is offered by the six-phase model, like the AIDA model but a bit more detailed includes: Attraction, Information, Application, Selection, Onboarding and Retention, this complete

mapping shows the ideal progression from the candidates' initial awareness of the employer to their full integration in the organization. By measuring perceptions and reactions across these phases, organizations can conduct Candidate Journey Mapping, this assigns relevance to each touchpoint and allows them to evaluate and optimize the whole candidate experience (Verhoeven T. , 2016).

Managing the candidate experience is important for the competition for talent, since now recruitment demands fast, transparent, engaging and positive experiences (McFarland, Ployhart, Shepherd, & Ward, 2024), organizations have developed company philosophies to ensure a positive candidate experience at the centre of their recruitment (Allden & Harris, 2013). From both a practical and legal point of view, measuring candidate experience is important because perceptions of fairness can also influence applicants' behavioural and legal responses and candidates who perceive unfair or biased treatment may experience dissatisfaction or in some cases even pursue legal action if they feel discriminated (Anderson, Salgado , & Hülsheger, 2010).

Several factors may shape candidate experience and applicant reactions across the recruitment process. These include the clarity and transparency of information, communication quality, perceived fairness, opportunity to perform, interpersonal treatment, feedback, employer image, and the usability of recruitment technologies (Hausknecht et al., 2004; McCarthy et al., 2017). As candidates move from early stages (e.g., application, screening) to later stages (e.g., interview, offer), the signals weight on candidates can change, early stages tend to highlight procedural characteristics like fairness, job relatedness and transparency and later stages, especially those that involve interactions, feedback or decisions, have more focus on interpersonal communication and the quality of interactions with the recruiters, for example the employer prestige declines and instead other signals like perceived quality of the recruitment process, including prompt communication and responsiveness, become more important in shaping their experience and perceptions (McCarthy, et al., 2017; Ryan, Abdifatah, Hauer, & French-Vitet, 2017).

Timeliness satisfaction has also an important role in shaping applicants' perceptions of fairness during recruitment. Timely communication can reduce uncertainty and may outweigh other aspects of the process such as the employer prestige, organizational information, technology usability, opportunity to perform and interpersonal treatment. Delays or lack of feedback can also diminish the positive effects of organizational reputation and perceived opportunity to perform, especially during the early stages of recruitment (Ryan, Abdifatah, Hauer, & French-Vitet, 2017). This is also relevant for AI-enabled recruitment, as one frequently discussed advantage of digital and automated tools is their potential to increase efficiency and reduce response times. For example, AI recruitment technologies can support outreach, screening, assessment, and coordination activities, which may make recruitment processes faster and more responsive (Cai, Zhang, & Zhang, 2024). Similarly, Horodyski (2023) found that

applicants may evaluate AI-based recruitment technologies positively when they perceive them as useful and easy to use, with reduced response time being one of the perceived benefits.

Nevertheless, the use of AI in recruitment also introduces new concerns into the candidate journey. Recent applicant reactions research increasingly examines digital, automated, and AI-mediated selection procedures, including automated screening, online assessments, and AI-supported interviews. These studies suggest that applicants do not evaluate recruitment technologies only in terms of speed or convenience, they also consider whether the process allows sufficient fairness, transparency, human contact, control, and opportunity to perform (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021; Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020).

A further dimension that becomes especially relevant in digital and AI-mediated recruitment is privacy protection. New recruitment technologies often require applicants to submit personal information before they know how the information will be collected, processed, stored, or used in decision-making. Prior research on online selection has shown that privacy concerns can shape applicant reactions and may influence outcomes through justice perceptions (Bauer, et al., 2006). This is also consistent with broader information privacy research, which emphasizes the importance of data collection, awareness, and control in individuals' evaluations of information practices (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004). For the present study, this means that candidates' reactions to AI disclosure will not be examined only through anticipated procedural justice, but also through perceived privacy protection as parallel mediators. Applicants may ask not only whether the process seems fair but also consider their perceptions of privacy protection.

One important thing to note is that the candidates' journeys are not the same for everyone, as some candidates are directly approached or headhunted and therefore bypass standardized early-stage procedures. By concentrating on the first stage of the journey, where most candidates formally engage with the organization this research considers the stages where candidates most likely will encounter AI-enabled processes disclosures for the first time (Verhoeven T. , 2016).

2.3 Signalling Theory and recruitment

Signalling theory provides a useful framework to understand how candidates may interpret the organizational actions during recruitment, the theory is concerned with situations of incomplete information, where one party must make judgments about another party without being able to observe all relevant qualities directly, in this situations the individuals rely on observable cues or signals to infer less visible characteristics of the other part (Spence, 1973). In the context of organisations, signals can take different forms, including organizational actions, attributes, communication, and procedural information . In signalling theory, a signal is meaningful when it allows the receiver to infer something about otherwise unobservable qualities, and the credibility of a signal is usually linked to its cost,

because signals that require effort, resources, or commitment are more difficult to imitate and may therefore be perceived as more reliable (Connelly, Certo, Reutzel, DesJardine, & Zhou, 2025; Spence, 1973).

Organisations also signal to prospective employees, applicants may interpret visible recruitment practices, communication patterns, recruitment advertisement, prestige of executive members, or selection procedures as broader indicators of how the organization treats people and that can affect the organisational attraction and employee retention. For example, they may disclose information about prestige, sustainability, corporate social performance, innovation, or employee orientation to attract and retain strong candidates. Recruitment practices are not only a process of evaluating applicants but also a communication process in between organizations and potential employees where signals play a role shaping expectations and impressions (Connelly, Certo, Reutzel, DesJardine, & Zhou, 2025).

Recruitment is characterized by information asymmetry because applicants typically possess limited information about potential employers. Consequently, they rely on observable cues from job advertisements and selection procedures as signals of salient organizational and job attributes (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012; Reeve & Schultz, 2004). During the early stages of recruitment, influential factors may include job and organizational characteristics, such as company reputation, the status of the functional area, career opportunities, geographic location, and attitudes toward the organization's products or industry. Applicants' impressions may also be shaped by their interactions with organizational representatives, contact with other employees, and delays in communication (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991).

In recruitment, signals can be understood as either instrumental or symbolic. Instrumental signals communicate concrete information about the job or the selection process, such as salary, benefits, working conditions, selection methods, or response times. Symbolic signals, on the other hand, allow applicants to infer less visible characteristics of the employer, such as whether the organization appears innovative, efficient, caring, impersonal, or highly standardized (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Recruitment experiences themselves can also function as signals. For example, recruiter behaviour, communication quality, and delays in the process may be interpreted by applicants as indicators of how the organization treats people more generally (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991; Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012). In the present study, AI disclosure is conceptualized as an instrumental signal. It provides applicants with concrete information about the recruitment procedure, specifically whether AI or humans are involved in the pre-screening and first interview stages. The study examines whether this information shapes applicants' perceptions of the selection process in terms of anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. Although the disclosure of AI use may also generate symbolic interpretations, such as perceptions of innovativeness, development fostering efficiency, impersonality, or people orientation (Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2025; Tursunbayeva, Fernandez, Gallardo-Gallardo, &

Moschera, 2026) , these symbolic meanings are not directly measured in the present research and therefore remain outside the empirical scope of the study.

Research on recruitment communication shows that applicants use job advertisements and other employer-branding communications to develop early impressions of both employment opportunities and hiring organizations (Reeve & Schultz, 2004). These materials are often encountered before applicants have any direct interaction with recruiters or employees, which makes them important early touchpoints in the candidate journey (Verhoeven T. , 2016). From a signalling perspective, such recruitment materials reduce information asymmetry by providing applicants with cues about what the organization values, how it communicates with candidates, and what kind of employment relationship it appears to offer (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012). Job advertisements and employer-brand messages can shape employer knowledge and organizational attraction before applicants gain direct experience with the organization (Reeve & Schultz, 2004; Cable & B. Turban, 2001).

This study proposes that the disclosure of AI use in recruitment can be analysed through signalling theory because it provides applicants with observable information about a selection process that would otherwise remain largely unknown to them. During the early stages of recruitment, applicants typically have limited information about the hiring organization and its selection procedures. They may therefore rely on information presented in job advertisements and other early recruitment communications as cues from which to infer characteristics of the selection process and the organization (Reeve & Schultz, 2004; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). In the case of AI-enabled recruitment, applicants may also lack information about the extent of human involvement, the functioning of the technology, and the collection and processing of applicant data, raising concerns related to transparency, privacy, and human oversight (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). Under these conditions, disclosing that AI is used in screening, interviewing, or decision support can become more than a technical description of the procedure. It may function as a signal through which applicants infer broader qualities of the recruitment process and the hiring organization (Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2025; Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012; Black & van Esch, 2020).

The application of signalling theory in this context requires some qualification. In classical signalling theory, signals are observable actions or attributes that convey information about less observable qualities, while their credibility may depend on the costs associated with producing or imitating them (Spence, 1973). Later applications of the theory also emphasize the roles of the signaller, the receiver, and the interpretation of communicated information (Connelly, Certo, Reutzel, DesJardine, & Zhou, 2025). Although implementing AI may require organizational investments in software, system integration, vendor selection, and employee training, these expenses should not automatically be understood as signalling costs because they may not be visible to applicants or systematically related to an underlying organizational quality. AI use becomes observable to applicants once it is disclosed

through job advertisements, recruitment communications, or in the case of this study, in an experimental scenario. Applicants may then use this information to infer less directly observable characteristics of the selection process and the organization, including how candidates are evaluated and treated (Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2025; Reeve & Schultz, 2004; Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012). The organizational intention behind adopting AI may nevertheless remain ambiguous, but the intention behind adopting the technology should be distinguished from the effects of communicating its use. Once AI use is disclosed, applicants may interpret the information in ways that extend beyond the organization's intended technical message. For this reason, the present study treats AI disclosure as an applicant-interpreted signal during early recruitment. This formulation emphasizes the receiver's perspective, regardless of the organization's original reason for adopting AI.

In contexts characterized by limited information and uncertainty, applicants may interpret AI disclosure not only as a technical detail, but also as a cue about the degree of human involvement, transparency, and individual consideration in the process. Mirowska and Arsenyan (2025) examined artificial intelligence evaluation of job interviews as a signal and showed that applicants are more likely to interpret AI evaluation as an indication of how the organization treats people than as a sign of innovativeness. Because of this, AI disclosure may not always create the positive image of a technologically advanced employer that organizations might expect. Instead, especially in selection stages that normally involve interpersonal exchange, such as interviews, AI use may be interpreted as a sign that the organization prioritizes automation over personal interaction, previous research shows that AI-based interviews are often evaluated less favourably than human-led interviews, particularly because applicants may perceive reduced two-way communication, lower social presence, and less opportunity for human judgement (Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020; Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019). These concerns may be especially relevant in interview stages, where applicants typically expect interpersonal interaction and an opportunity to present themselves beyond the information contained in their application documents (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021).

From a signalling perspective, AI disclosure may therefore be interpreted as a negative procedural signal when applicants infer that the organization gives greater priority to automation than to personal interaction, procedural fairness, or individualized assessment (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012; Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2025; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). This process-related interpretations may also extend beyond the selection procedure itself and influence broader perceptions of the hiring organization, including its perceived attractiveness and people orientation (Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2025; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021)

Empirical findings on AI-based selection suggest that applicant reactions are not uniform. On their study, Lavanchy, Reichert, Narayanan, & Savani (2023) found that algorithm-driven procedures are perceived as less fair than human-based selection regardless of the outcome suggesting that the mere

use of algorithms influences fairness judgments. Other studies show a more context-dependent approach, for example Suen, Chen, & Lu (2019), examined AI decision agents in asynchronous video interviews and found that applicant reactions depended not only on whether a human or AI decision agent was involved, but also may depend on the design and setting of the technology, and that transparent and careful design of AI use can lead to more favourable fairness perceptions. For this reason, AI disclosure can be understood as a potentially ambivalent procedural signal.

Building on signalling theory, the present study conceptualizes AI disclosure as a salient early-stage procedural signal that applicants may use to form expectations about the recruitment process and possibly also further characteristics of the employer recruitment practices. More specifically, the study examines whether disclosing AI involvement in pre-screening and first interview stages influences the applicants' anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and their job pursuit intention under conditions of limited information. The focus is therefore not on if AI disclosure changes symbolic perceptions of the organization, such as innovativeness or employer image, but on whether this procedural signal shapes applicants' early evaluations of the fairness and privacy protection of the selection process, and if this later affect the applicants willingness to pursue a job opportunity with the hiring company.

2.4 Fairness Heuristics and recruitment

When individuals face uncertainty or have limited control over decision-making processes, fairness perceptions can function as heuristic judgments that help them interpret whether an authority or institution can be trusted (Lind, 2001; van den Bos, 2001). Fairness Heuristic Theory proposes that fairness judgments, particularly those formed from information available early in an interaction, can function as cognitive shortcuts that guide subsequent evaluations and reactions (Lind, 2001). This mechanism is particularly relevant in recruitment, where applicants often have limited insight into how selection decisions are made and must form expectations based on the information, experiences, and prior beliefs available to them (Bell, Ryan, & Wiechmann, 2004; Reeve & Schultz, 2004; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021).

In personnel selection, procedural fairness is therefore especially important because applicants evaluate not only the outcome of a selection process, but also the way in which the procedure is designed and communicated. Gilliland's (1993) organizational justice model of selection systems emphasizes that applicants' fairness perceptions are shaped by procedural features such as consistency, job-relatedness, opportunity to perform, feedback, and explanations. These fairness perceptions are relevant because they can influence both organizational and individual outcomes. Truxillo, Steiner, and Gilliland (2004) argue that selection fairness matters not only for organizational outcomes, such as organizational attractiveness and applicants' intentions toward the employer, but also for applicant-related outcomes, including self-perceptions and self-efficacy. Therefore, procedural fairness is a central mechanism

through which applicants interpret the quality of the selection process and form reactions toward the hiring organization.

This reasoning is particularly relevant for AI-mediated recruitment. When AI or algorithmic tools are involved, applicants may have limited insight into how their personal information is processed, which criteria are weighted, and how recommendations or decisions are generated (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). Recent research on AI-based resume screening shows that applicants tend to perceive AI replacing human decision-makers as less fair, particularly when the decision process is difficult to understand or when the expertise of the AI system is unclear (Cai, Zhang, & Zhang, 2024). Similarly, research on automated selection demonstrates that even information provided before the process begins, such as a job advertisement stating that AI will be used in screening or interviewing, can shape applicants' pre-process expectations, perceptions, and intentions (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021).

Fairness Heuristic Theory therefore provides a useful basis for understanding why AI disclosure may influence anticipated procedural justice. When complete information about a decision-making procedure is unavailable, individuals may rely on early fairness-related information as a heuristic for evaluating whether an authority and its procedures are likely to be trustworthy and fair (Lind, 2001; van den Bos, 2001). Applicants may consequently interpret the disclosure of AI use as an early fairness cue and use it to form expectations about whether the forthcoming selection process is likely to be procedurally just.

In their review of 145 studies and several meta-analyses published since 2000, McCarthy et al. (2017) show that the field has expanded beyond its original emphasis on organizational justice. More recent research has examined additional applicant reactions, including anxiety, motivation, and test-related self-efficacy, as well as reactions to emerging selection technologies, cross-cultural differences, and contextual boundary conditions. Nevertheless, fairness remains one of the central constructs in the field because it is consistently associated with important applicant outcomes. Specifically, fairness perceptions are related to organizational attractiveness, intentions to pursue and accept a job, recommendation intentions, actual job-offer acceptance, and performance in selection tests (McCarthy, et al., 2017)

This supports the relevance of anticipated procedural justice as a central construct in the present study model. From the perspective of Fairness Heuristic Theory, fairness judgments become particularly important under conditions of uncertainty because they help individuals assess whether an authority or organization can be trusted (Lind, 2001). Applied to AI-mediated recruitment, the disclosure of AI use may therefore function as an important early fairness cue. Before applicants know the outcome of the recruitment process or have direct experience with the selection procedure, they may use this information to infer whether the process is likely to be procedurally just and whether they wish to

continue pursuing the opportunity (Reeve & Schultz, 2004; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021; Bell, Ryan, & Wiechmann, 2004).

2.5 Procedural justice perceptions in recruitment

Procedural justice is a central construct in the present thesis because it explains how applicants evaluate the fairness of a selection process before any hiring decision has been made (Bell, Ryan, & Wiechmann, 2004). In applicant reactions research, organizational justice has become one of the main frameworks for understanding how candidates respond to selection procedures, because applicants do not evaluate recruitment only by its outcome, but also by how the process is designed, communicated, and experienced (Gilliland, 1993; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Bell, Ryan, & Wiechmann, 2004).

Truxillo, Steiner, and Gilliland (2004) argue that fairness perceptions are a dominant framework in the applicants' reactions literature, and the most critical dimension to the reactions to selections procedures, they emphasize that selection fairness is relevant because it is linked to both applicant outcomes, such as self-perceptions and motivation, and organizational outcomes, such as organizational attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and willingness to recommend the employer. Within this justice perspective, procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the methods and decision-making procedures used during the process, while distributive justice concerns the fairness of outcomes and interactional justice concerns the quality of interpersonal treatment (Bell, Ryan, & Wiechmann, 2004). This distinction is especially important for the present study, which focuses on anticipated procedural justice and not on outcome fairness or interpersonal treatment. Because participants evaluate AI disclosure before receiving any decision or interacting directly with recruiters, their judgments are based primarily on expectations about whether the procedure itself appears consistent, job-related and capable of allowing applicants to demonstrate their qualifications (Gilliland, 1993).

A very frequently used theoretical framework for explaining fairness perceptions in recruitment is procedural justice, a popular model used in Organizational Justice Theory (Greenberg, 1990). The concept was first introduced by Thibaut (1975) for legal decision-making, showing that people evaluate not only the fairness of outcomes but also the fairness of the procedures leading to those outcomes. This distinction between distributive and procedural justice was later extended to organizational settings by Leventhal (1980) who proposed six rules for fair procedures: consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, representativeness and ethicality. Lind (2001) highlights the primacy effect, which suggest that procedural, distributive and outcome fairness experiences will affect the general fairness judgment, and that the strongest influence will depend on which information is available first, for which the procedural and process fairness play a bigger role affecting the fairness driven attitudes and behaviour than the distributive fairness, unless the outcome information would be available before the process information, in which case the distributive justice experience would have a bigger impact on the general fairness judgment.

Gilliland's (1993) model of applicant reactions incorporates central principles of procedural and distributive justice to explain how individuals form fairness perceptions during personnel selection. The model proposes that both situational factors, such as the type of assessment used, organizational HR policies and recruiter behavior, and individual factors like prior experiences, shape how candidates evaluate the fairness of selection procedures and outcomes. Gilliland identified ten procedural justice rules, grouped into three categories: formal characteristics (e.g., job-relatedness, opportunities to perform, consistency), explanation-provided during the procedures (e.g., feedback, transparency, and accuracy of information) and interpersonal treatment (e.g., respect, communication, and appropriateness of recruiter behaviour). Applicants' procedural justice perceptions emerge from their judgments about whether these rules are satisfied or violated, and these evaluations collectively shape their overall fairness assessment of the selection system (Gilliland, 1993). Distributive justice, on the other hand, concerns the perceived fairness of the outcomes produced by the selection process, such as test results, rejection decisions, or hiring decisions (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Although equity is typically the dominant principle in distributive evaluations, other allocation principles, such as equality or need, may also become relevant in specific contexts, for example where disability accommodation, equal opportunity, or discrimination concerns are involved (Leventhal, 1980).

Gilliland (1993) proposed that procedural and distributive justice interact, fair procedures can mitigate negative reactions to unfavorable outcomes, and favorable outcomes can reduce dissatisfaction coming from imperfect procedures. The model links these justice perceptions to individual and organizational outcomes like applicants' job acceptance intentions, motivation during testing, self-efficacy, organizational attractiveness and future job-search behaviour. Through this framework, Gilliland established fairness as a multifaceted and dynamic process that shapes how candidates experience and interpret recruitment and selection practices.

The use of AI in interviews can increase the levels of uncertainty, as AI is a new technology, which can lead to applicants relying more on fairness heuristics and the lack of personal contact can signal that the organization values efficiency over social support and negatively impact the justice perceptions, on the other hand the use of AI can also be seen as a signal of the organizations value for equality, lack of bias and consistency of application which can positively impact the formation of fairness heuristics (Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020).

Ryan and Ployhart (2000) conceptualize applicant reactions as a sequential process in which characteristics of the selection procedure shape applicants' perceptions of their treatment, which then influence downstream behavioural outcomes. Later methodological developments, most notably improvements in the measurement of procedural justice like (Bauer, et al., 2001) have enabled more rigorous empirical testing of Gilliland's propositions (Konradt, Garbers, Böge, Erdogan, & Bauer, 2017).

Anderson, Salgado, and Hülshager's (2010) meta-analysis show relatively consistent patterns in applicants' perceptions of different selection procedures, while also indicating that reactions can vary across national and cultural contexts. Selection methods that are perceived as more job-related and familiar, such as interviews, work samples, and résumés, tend to receive more favorable applicant evaluations. In contrast, methods such as cognitive ability tests, personality tests, and reference checks are generally evaluated less favorably, while more controversial or less transparent methods, such as graphology or reliance on personal contacts, tend to produce particularly negative reactions. More recent research includes new technologies like digital or online selection methods like e-recruitment (Sylva & Mol, 2009), algorithmic use (Zhang & Yench, 2022) and the use of AI in recruitment (Horodyski, 2023; Hocken & King, 2023; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021; Hosain, Bin Amin, Debnath, & Rahaman, 2025). Not only the different tools and recruitment methods are studied, also the multi-cultural and multi-national contexts, showing how cultural values and contextual factors within a country influence fairness perceptions and acceptance of selection procedures (Steiner, Gilliland, & Gillil, 2008).

As applicant-reactions research has developed, it has moved beyond examining preferences for individual selection methods and increasingly addressed broader concerns related to fairness, transparency, communication, and contextual differences in selection processes (McCarthy, et al., 2017; Hülshager & Anderson, 2009). These concerns become especially relevant when recruitment activities are not conducted solely by human recruiters but are instead supported or partly replaced by digital and algorithmic technologies (Horodyski, 2023).

Procedural justice provides the central framework for explaining how applicants evaluate a selection process before they have experienced it or received a hiring outcome. Applicants can form justice expectations from prior experiences, existing beliefs, and information communicated before the procedure begins (Bell, Ryan, & Wiechmann, 2004). In AI-mediated recruitment, disclosure of AI use may therefore influence expectations regarding whether the process will be consistent, job-related, transparent, and capable of allowing applicants to demonstrate their qualifications.

2.6 AI in recruitment

2.6.1 AI and generative AI

The term "Artificial Intelligence" is commonly traced back to the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence, held in 1956, which is widely regarded as a foundational moment in the development of AI as a research field (Cordeschi, 2007). The idea was formulated in the 1955 proposal for the workshop by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude Shannon. In this proposal, the authors advanced the idea that aspects of learning and intelligence could, at least in principle, be described with enough precision to be simulated by machines (McCarthy, Minsky, Rochester, & Shannon, 1955). This proposal was important because it framed intelligence as something

that could potentially be formalized, modelled, and simulated by machines, laying the conceptual foundation for AI research.

Earlier work had already raised questions about whether machines could display intelligent behaviour, which shows that the conceptual origins of AI were not limited to the Dartmouth conference. One well-known and frequently cited contribution is Turing's (1950) article "Computing Machinery and Intelligence", which anticipated later debates about machine intelligence and introduced the concept of the "imitation game" (Cordeschi, 2007). In his 1950 article, Turing wanted to answer the question "can machines think?" by proposing the imitation game. In this game, three agents take part: one is the interrogator, who must determine which of the other two agents is the woman. The machine's goal is to deceive the interrogator into believing it is the woman. Turing proposed that if a machine could imitate human responses so convincingly that the interrogator could not reliably distinguish it from a human, the question of machine intelligence could be approached in a more practical way (Turing, 1950). This test is now known as the "Turing Test". In the last years with new and more developed AI models, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to distinguish it from humans, which contributes to a feeling of uncertainty and unease towards this technology. The AI has new versions who already claim to have passed the Turing Test, showing that humans can no longer recognise if they are talking with a machine or with a human, and previous knowledge or frequency of interaction with AI does not show any advantage in recognizing the machines (Robert Jones, Rathi, Taylor, & Bergen, 2025).

Artificial intelligence can be understood as a broader field of technologies concerned with the development of systems that can interpret data, learn from it, and use these learnings to achieve specific goals or perform tasks usually associated with human intelligence (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). AI should not be understood as one single technology, but as an umbrella term that includes different methods and application that for example in organizational contexts, the AI Systems are increasingly being used to process large amounts of information and support predictions or decisions that would otherwise require human judgement (Jarrahi, 2018).

A central function of many contemporary AI systems is their ability to use data to support prediction and decision-making. From an economic perspective, Agrawal, Gans, and Goldfarb (2022) describe AI as a technology that reduces the cost of prediction, because it enables organizations to transform available data into decision-relevant estimates more efficiently. However, stronger predictive capacity does not automatically guarantee fairer decisions. If AI systems are trained on biased, incomplete, or historically discriminatory data, they may reproduce or even amplify unequal outcomes (Köchling & Wehner, 2020). This is particularly relevant in recruitment, where algorithmic systems may learn from past hiring decisions or employee profiles that already reflect unequal opportunities or organizational biases. As a result, AI-based recruitment tools may increase the risk of unfair treatment, implicit discrimination, and reduced trust among applicants (Köchling & Wehner, 2020).

Since the release of ChatGPT, generative artificial intelligence has become one of the most visible developments in the field of AI. While earlier applications of AI were mainly associated with prediction, classification, and decision support, GenAI shifted attention toward systems that can generate new outputs, such as text, images, code, or other forms of content. This matters for recruitment because AI is no longer only relevant as a tool for screening, ranking, or predicting applicant suitability, but also as a technology that can shape communication, feedback, job advertisements, and other forms of interaction with candidates. Generative AI represents an important step in the evolution of AI, moving from systems primarily designed to predict outcomes toward systems that can also create outputs that appear original and context-sensitive (Hermann & Puntoni, 2024). While AI increases efficiency, it may simultaneously undermine applicant perceptions of fairness and trust, which are critical for organizational attractiveness and application intention (Verhoeven T. , 2020).

The need for future research is to examine fairness perceptions within technology-mediated and globalized selection contexts, because the increasing use of automated and virtual assessment tools introduces new challenges for ensuring procedural transparency and maintaining trust in organizational justice principles (Truxillo, Steiner, & Gilliland, 2004).

2.6.2 Use of AI in recruitment

The adoption of artificial intelligence in recruitment processes has grown in the past years, not only because of the increasing strategic importance of human capital but also because of the digitalization of how organizations and job seekers interact (Black & van Esch, 2020). As firms shift their competitive power from physical assets to talent-based capabilities, recruitment is expected to deliver processes that are faster and more efficient. At the same time, digital recruiting has evolved from job boards to social networks and is now entering an AI-enabled phase referred to as “Digital Recruiting 3.0”, where the algorithms identify, rank and even interview candidates at scale (Black & van Esch, 2020). Digital recruitment systems transform hiring into an experience-driven interaction, where candidates evaluate not only outcomes but also process quality (Verhoeven T. , 2020).

Recruitment evolved through successive waves of technological advancement. Digital Recruiting 1.0, dominated by online job boards and corporate websites, digitized traditional advertising but maintained largely transactional interactions. Digital Recruiting 2.0 introduced interactivity through social networks and professional platforms, allowing organizations to build employer brands and candidates to access peer information (Nikolaou, 2014). Digital Recruiting 3.0, the current phase, integrates AI and predictive analytics into different stages of the recruitment funnel (Black & van Esch, 2020).

In the field of human resource management (HRM), recent studies also suggest that AI adoption is accelerating. Across recruitment, performance management, workforce planning and employee support, AI can automate repetitive tasks, support decision-making, and reshape HR roles (Benabou & Touhami,

2025). However, AI adoption in HRM also raises ethical concerns, data privacy concerns, resistance to change, and risks of algorithmic bias, which highlights the need for careful governance, human-AI collaboration, and human supervision (Benabou & Touhami, 2025). The integration of AI into recruitment can be understood as an extension of electronic human resource management (e-HRM), which refers to the use of internet-based technologies to enable HRM practices and strategies through individual and group-level interactions (Marler & Fisher, 2013). Over time, e-HRM has evolved from a focus on efficiency and standardization toward a more strategic role in data-driven decision-making, and AI-enabled HRM represents a further stage in which algorithms support or partly replace complex decision processes that were traditionally carried out by humans (Benabou & Touhami, 2025).

From an outcomes perspective, previous studies suggests that AI-supported recruiting may improve HR efficiency, for example by reducing time-to-hire and administrative effort, and may contribute indirectly to organizational effectiveness, particularly when systems are perceived as easy to use, presented with transparency and giving a sense of control to users (Alnsour, et al., 2024; Laurim, Arpaci, Prommegger, & Krcmar, 2021; Hosain, Bin Amin, Debnath, & Rahaman, 2025). However, e-HRM reviews caution that strategic payoffs are context-dependent and that rigorous causal evidence linking HR technology to strategic outcomes remains limited, underscoring the need for theory-informed and evidence-based evaluation (Marler & Fisher, 2013).

Wesche & Sonderegger (2021) studied how job seekers react when job advertisements communicate that AI is used in different stages of selection, their results showed a weaker negative effect of screening conducted by AI vs human, and stronger negative effects at the interview stage, and this were associated with applicants' pre-process expectations, their perceptions of the selection procedure, and their intentions to continue with the application process. They also identified some perceived advantages of the use of AI, participants associated AI screening with greater efficiency, time savings, reduced stress, and a potential decrease in nepotism, favouritism. and stress reduction thanks to the elimination of social evaluation situations, but the overall the negative evaluations were more salient.

Horodyski (2023) found that applicants may also perceive recruitment technologies as useful and easy to use. In the study, reduced response time was perceived as the main advantage, while the main disadvantages were the lack of human judgement, concerns about accuracy and reliability, and the perceived immaturity of the technology at the time of the study. Similar findings were reported by Hosain, Bin Amin, Debnath, & Rahaman (2025) in their study using the Technology Acceptance Model, who found that applicants have positive dispositions to the use of AI in recruitment, and that the factors of the model (perceived ease of use, perceives usefulness, and perceived trust) are positively associated with perceived procedural fairness, similarly other studies found no significant fairness concerns in AI-led interviews (Suen, Chen, & Lu, 2019).

On the other hand, other studies suggest that AI-based interviews are perceived as less procedurally and interactionally fair than human-based interviews (Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). This mixed evidence shows the importance of further research on how applicants perceive AI-enabled recruitment procedures.

Across the recruitment journey AI can support tasks such as drafting job advertisements, screening résumés, ranking candidates, and evaluating video interviews through machine-learning-based pattern detection (Black & van Esch, 2020). Laurim, Arpacı, Prommegger, and Krcmar (2021) outline these applications across five recruitment stages: job advertisement, job search, information and communication, application, and evaluation and selection. Their review illustrates how AI systems have become embedded throughout the recruitment process. Their findings also highlight important applicant concerns, as candidates may perceive AI-driven video analysis as unsettling and even frightening because of its opaque and potentially intrusive nature. Similar patterns appear in other studies showing that algorithmic decision-making can be evaluated as less fair and less trustworthy and may trigger negative emotions when individuals feel that they are being evaluated by an automated system rather than a human decision-maker, and some applicants experience algorithmic evaluation dehumanizing (Lee, 2018).

Black and van Esch (2020) distinguish four main areas in which AI can be used in Digital Recruiting 3.0: candidate outreach, screening, assessment, and coordination:

a) Candidate outreach

In candidate outreach, organizations may use AI to analyse data from professional and social platforms to identify potential candidates and match them with suitable job openings. AI is not only being trained in the most effective methods to reach candidates, but it is also learning how to optimize the job descriptions to reach active and passive job candidates (Black & van Esch, 2020).

With AI companies benefit not only from reaching many more candidates and showing them their open positions but adapted to the candidate interests and personal preferences, but also by allowing the companies to examine past candidates from talent pools and match them to current job openings (Black & van Esch, 2020).

b) Candidate Screening

Although strong causal evidence for the benefits of AI screening remains limited, there are company cases which claim to have reduced time to hire, and lead time, proving to be a big advantage specially for industries with high turnover (Black & van Esch, 2020). AI screening has evolved from simple keyword matching toward systems that attempt to infer candidates' capabilities from natural language in résumés, profiles, or application materials (Black & van Esch, 2020)

c) Candidate Assessment

AI-enabled candidate assessment can take different forms, including gamified tests, asynchronous video interviews, and chatbots. These are some examples:

- Gamified assessments: Candidates need to perform different games that evaluate their cognitive abilities and provide insights into skills, capabilities and even personality traits (Black & van Esch, 2020).
- Video recorded Interviews with AI-enabled technology: One method for first-round interviewing is asynchronous video interviews (AVI) , often referred to as one-way, on-demand, or pre-recorded video interviews. In this format, candidates connect to an online platform to record the responses to the interview questions, which are later reviewed by humans, AI systems, or a combination of both (Dunlop, Hickman, Holtrop, & Powell, 2025). AI systems may analyse candidates' responses, word choice, tone, and facial expressions, although the validity and fairness of such analyses remain debated (Black & van Esch, 2020).
- Chatbots: AI-enabled chatbots can interact with candidates, answer questions, and collect responses to screening questions that may later be analysed in terms of content, sentence structure, or vocabulary (Black & van Esch, 2020).

d) Candidate Coordination

The use of AI-enabled technologies can improve the efficiency by supporting companies to improve the general candidate experience during their application journey, one way is by improving the communication with candidates and in handling the large volumes of rejections to applicants in timely manner, another way is by using AI systems that can ease the application process by creating the applications of candidates in the companies portal without having the candidates manually fill out, meaning, it can infer the information of the candidates from other profiles, like LinkedIn, and fill the application for them (Black & van Esch, 2020). The implementation of Chatbots may also support communication with the candidates by accompanying them through the process and answering their questions about process or about the role (Black & van Esch, 2020).

2.6.3 Ethical challenges in AI recruiting: bias, transparency and data protection

The ethical relevance of AI in recruitment is linked to the high-stakes nature of hiring decisions, since recruitment systems can affect access to employment, future career prospects, and livelihoods (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). Because of this, AI systems used in employment and recruitment are classified as high-risk under the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, particularly when they are used for recruitment, candidate evaluation, promotion, termination, or the monitoring of workers' performance and behaviour. The EU AI Act also recognizes that such systems may perpetuate historical patterns of discrimination and that the monitoring of people's performance

and behaviour may undermine their rights to data protection and privacy (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024, Annex III).

The use of AI in recruitment should be evaluated also in relation to potential risks, bias, transparency, accountability, and respect for candidates' fundamental data protection and privacy rights. This section addresses the key ethical risks associated with AI in recruiting, with attention to how bias can be reproduced through data and design choices, how opaque systems can limit the transparency and the candidates' ability to understand or challenge decisions, how monitoring of performance and behaviour can undermine data privacy, and how organizations remain responsible for the consequences of automated or AI-supported hiring practices.

In their study, Hunkenschroer & Luetge (2022) conducted a systematic review of the literature regarding the ethicality of AI recruitment practices and found mixed results across three dimensions: opportunities, risks and ambiguities. They point in terms of opportunities, that AI may reduce some forms of human bias in hiring and enable faster feedback to applicants. However their review identifies significant ethical risks, including algorithm bias, lack of transparency and explainability in “black box” systems, privacy loss and power asymmetry for applicants, as well as the lack of accountability between recruiters and the technology itself. Their study also emphasize that the ethicality of AI recruiting is not straightforward, as several issues remain ambiguous. For example, applicant reactions to AI-based recruitment are mixed, with some studies finding lower perceived fairness and others showing more neutral responses depending on context, information provided, and prior experience with discrimination (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). The authors also suggest that AI recruiting cannot be evaluated as simply ethical or unethical, but that its ethical value depends on how the technology is designed, implemented, explained, monitored, and governed.

Bias and the limits of bias reductions

The use of AI in recruitment is often justified by the premise that human judgement and decision making are often affected by irrationality and bias, leading to discriminative outcomes, and the belief that automated systems can make hiring decisions more efficient, accurate, fairer and less biased (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Seppälä & Malecka, 2024). Some vendors of AI-powered recruitment tools claim that their systems remove bias from the process and enable a more objective assessment of candidates, support workforce diversity, and can help identify the organization's ideal candidate (Drage & Mackereth, 2022).

AI-enabled recruitment tools are often presented as impartial because they apply the same computational procedure to all candidates, but the neutrality cannot be assumed, as AI systems are developed and trained within existing social and organizational contexts, meaning that they can reproduce or even amplify historical inequalities when they rely on biased and unrepresentative data (Hunkenschroer &

Luetge, 2022; Köchling & Wehner, 2020). Since the systems learn from previous hiring decisions, employee profiles, resumés and assessment data that may already reflect gendered, racial, ethnic or socioeconomic inequalities, as a result, this data will train and influence the system predictions and can reproduce historical inequalities (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Köchling & Wehner, 2020).

Because of these risks, vendor claims about bias mitigation and objectivity should be evaluated against actual development and deployment practices. Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg, and Levy (2020) show that vendor choices about what outcomes to predict and what data to use can create feedback loops and measurement problems that complicate fairness claims, especially when historical hiring patterns are included in the training data. Their analysis shows that fairness is shaped by several design choices, including what outcomes the system is trained to predict, which data is selected and how bias is measured or corrected. Even highly accurate algorithmic systems can produce discriminatory outcomes when the training data contain inequalities or when some groups are under or overrepresented. Studies on algorithmic video analysis found that predictive models can replicate and partly amplify bias in the data, raising doubts about the assumption that algorithmic recruitment is automatically more objective than human judgment (Köchling, Riazzy, Wehner, & Simbeck, 2021).

Drage & Mackereth (2022) examine the claims made by recruitment AI companies about their attempts to debias recruitment, pointing out that companies rely on two main assumptions: First, that AI systems can objectively assess candidates by removing gender and race from the recruitment process. Second, that this removal makes recruitment fairer, helps organizations achieve their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) goals, and contributes to the creation of a meritocratic workplace culture. The authors argue that these claims are misleading because they simplify the meaning of gender and race by treating them as isolated attributes that can be simply removed from the data, rather than as broader systems of power that shape people's opportunities, experiences, behaviour, language, and self-presentation. In this sense, AI tools may still reproduce gendered and racialized inequalities even when explicit demographic indicators are excluded. The authors also argue that the supposedly neutral assessment of candidates hides existing power relations, because AI systems classify traits, behaviour, communication style, and word choice according to standards shaped by the existing labour market. Recruitment AI does not simply identify the "ideal candidate", it also helps construct this ideal. Therefore, anti-bias measures should not replace broader efforts to address systemic inequalities in hiring, since bias cannot be solved through technical adjustments alone.

Another mechanism through which discrimination can persist is the use of proxy variables. Even when explicit demographic indicators such as gender, race, or ethnicity are removed, algorithms may still rely on variables that indirectly correlate with the protected characteristics (Barocas & Selbst, 2016). For example, information such as educational background, postal code, employment gaps, language

patterns, or career trajectories may appear neutral but still reflect broader social inequalities, and this can make the algorithmic bias harder to detect (Barocas & Selbst, 2016).

The Amazon recruitment-tool case is frequently used as an industry example to illustrate this problem. Their system reportedly learned from historical hiring data that lacked gender neutral titles, and the historical male-dominated technical workforce skewed the results and generated a gender bias by downgrading resumes that included words like “Woman” (Kodiyan, 2019). This unintentional error shows how historical organizational patterns can become embedded in automated screening tools (Kodiyan, 2019).

Although scholars acknowledge the severity of these risks, recent work also identifies the work that is being done to mitigate this. Benabou & Touhami (2025) argue that technical solutions like improved data selection, algorithmic auditing, or model redesign, can reduce but not eliminate bias. They also emphasize that ethical AI in recruitment requires robust oversight structures, transparency practices, legal compliance and clear lines of responsibility. Human judgment remains essential in interpreting AI-generated outcomes and ensuring that automated tools do not replace but complement fair decision-making processes (Benabou & Touhami, 2025).

Transparency, explainability and accountability

Transparency and explainability are also important ethical concerns. In the context of AI-mediated recruitment, transparency refers to the degree to which applicants are informed about when, how, and why artificial intelligence systems are used throughout the hiring process (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). This is not only about whether applicants are informed that AI is being used, but also about whether they can understand how their data are gathered and processed, which criteria are considered, and how a decision can be questioned (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022).

Often the predictive and decision-making process of algorithms is opaque, even for the programmers of the technology (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). Because algorithmic hiring systems may use large amounts of data, it can be difficult to identify which attributes are being used in decision-making and how they may influence the final recommendations or decisions (Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg, & Levy, 2020). . This becomes a bigger problem when accountability is not clearly set between recruiters and the technology itself, since the AI itself cannot be held accountable, the responsibility of the results falls in an obscure area where responsibilities and accountabilities are not easily delegated between the recruiters, hiring managers, data scientist or companies a whole, and since many companies outsource the services to thirds parties and do now own or develop AI’s themselves, it may become more difficult to ensure adherence to ethical norms, data protection requirements, and labour law (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022).

Transparency, accountability, and explainability are not only ethical concerns but also increasingly embedded in European data protection and AI governance frameworks, including the EU Artificial Intelligence Act (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). These regulations aim to make AI practices more transparent and accountable.

2.6.4 AI disclosures, privacy and regulatory transparency in recruitment

2.6.4.1 AI disclosure as a transparency practice

For this thesis, AI disclosure is understood as the explicit communication that an AI system is involved in a specific part of the recruitment process. This can include informing applicants that AI is used to screen CVs, evaluate online assessments, analyse interview material, or support recruitment decisions. The definition used here is therefore practical rather than purely technical: AI disclosure refers to making the role of AI visible to applicants before or during the selection process, without necessarily explaining the technical functioning of the system.

This understanding is in line with previous research on selection-process information in job advertisements and applicant reactions to automated selection procedures. Wesche and Sonderegger (2021) studied job seekers' reactions to job advertisements that communicated the use of AI in different stages of the selection process. Their study is relevant here because it treats information about automated selection as something applicants may encounter before entering the recruitment process and shows that this information can shape expectations of justice, organizational attractiveness, and intention to apply.

AI disclosure should not be confused with full explainability. Informing applicants that AI is used does not necessarily explain how the system works, which criteria it applies, or how much influence it has on the outcome. This distinction is also reflected in the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, which separates general transparency and information obligations from broader questions of system explainability and accountability (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). Recruitment and selection systems are treated as high-risk when they are used to place targeted job advertisements, analyse or filter applications, or evaluate candidates. This classification reflects the fact that AI in recruitment can affect access to work and career opportunities (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024).

Article 13 of the AI Act is useful for understanding transparency, although it is mainly directed at the information that providers must make available to deployers, rather than at applicants directly. It states that high-risk AI systems must be transparent enough so that the users can interpret the output and use it appropriately (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). It also requires instructions for use that provide clear and comprehensible information to deployers. This means that employers using high-risk AI systems should receive enough information to understand the system's purpose, limits, performance, and output before relying on it in recruitment decisions. For applicant-

facing disclosure, Article 26(11) is also relevant. It requires deployers of high-risk AI systems listed in Annex III to inform natural persons when they are subject to the use of such a system in decisions related to them (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024, Art. 26(11)). In recruitment, this means that transparency is not only an internal requirement for employers using AI systems but also concerns the information applicants receive about AI involvement in the selection process.

2.6.4.2 Data privacy concerns in AI supported recruitment

The adoption of AI tools in recruitment has expanded the scope of personal data that is collected and analysed during the hiring process (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). Traditional hiring decisions were typically based on résumés, cover letters, structured interviews and reference check, now AI-driven recruitment systems operate with the applicant's data, often gathering vast volumes of sensitive personal data, including social media profiles, online behaviour, video recordings and detailed psychometric measures as part of the candidate's screening (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). The collection and analysis of such information raise important privacy and ethical concerns, particularly because applicants generally occupy a weaker position than employers. Even when applicants are informed about how their data will be processed, they may not feel able to refuse or opt out if doing so could disadvantage them in the selection process (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022).

Privacy concerns have also been studied in other digital contexts, such as e-commerce Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal (2004) provide a useful theoretical basis through the construct of Internet Users' Information Privacy Concerns (IUIPC). Their framework conceptualizes privacy concerns through three dimensions: concern about the amount of data collected, concern about control over personal information, and concern about awareness of how information is used. The expansion of data use can increase applicants' privacy concerns, since candidates may feel uneasy about the scope of data collection and possible secondary uses of their information beyond the original hiring context (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004; Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg, & Levy, 2020). For example, some AI hiring tools may analyse video interview data, language patterns, online profiles, or other behavioural indicators, raising concerns about intrusive surveillance and loss of privacy (Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg, & Levy, 2020).

In this thesis, perceived privacy protection refers to applicants' expectation that their personal information will be collected only to the extent necessary and handled in a secure and responsible manner within the recruitment process. This construct is suitable for the present experimental design because participants evaluate brief recruitment scenarios rather than actual privacy practices, legal notices, or detailed data-processing conditions. In recruitment processes, AI disclosure may be one of the first moments in which applicants become aware that their data could be processed by an AI system. This awareness may shape how they evaluate the recruitment process and how protected they expect their personal information to be.

2.6.4.3 Applicants' reactions to privacy and data usage

As discussed before, job applicants may experience uncertainty and distrust when interacting with algorithmic assessments, especially when it is unclear what data are being used and how decisions are made (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Horodyski, 2023). Some candidates claimed to not know what the AI is searching for and fear they will not be selected if they do not fit the algorithm's hidden criteria (Horodyski, 2023). Opaque data-driven selection processes can create the perception that candidates are being judged by a "black box", which may undermine fairness and trust in the selection system (Horodyski, 2023; Lee, 2018).

Bauer et al. (2006) found that applicants' personal-information privacy concerns were associated with their perceptions of procedural justice in online selection. Across both a laboratory study and a field study, procedural justice mediated the relationships between privacy concerns and applicant outcomes, including test-taking motivation, organizational attraction, and organizational intentions. Computer experience also moderated the relationships between procedural justice and test-taking motivation and organizational intentions in the field study, although these effects were not observed in the laboratory study. Their research concerned online screening rather than AI-based recruitment specifically, but it demonstrates that privacy concerns can shape applicant reactions through procedural justice and that general computer experience may influence some of these relationships.

More recent research brings these concerns closer to AI-supported recruitment. Langer, König, and Papathanasiou (2019) studied highly automated interviews and found that participants reacted more negatively to highly automated interviews than to video interviews in several respects. Privacy concerns were higher for highly automated interviews, but the authors caution that the privacy-related effect was relatively small.

On their study, Tursunbayeva, Fernandez, Gallardo-Gallardo, & Moschera (2026) provide a more direct and recent connection between AI, digital data, and applicant reactions. Their vignette experiment examined how candidates respond when AI is combined with professional and personal digital data in recruitment. Their findings suggest that candidates may generally view AI in recruitment positively but become more cautious when AI is combined with professional and personal digital data. In particular, the use of personal digital data that was not directly provided by the candidate can reduce candidates' willingness to apply, especially when candidates have lower trust in technology. Although this study is limited to students of engineering and business, it shows some interesting insights in regards of applicant reactions to AI recruitment.

Bauer et al. (2006) showed that privacy concerns matter in online selection, but their study connects privacy concerns to applicant reactions through procedural justice rather than examining AI disclosure directly. Langer et al. (2019) provide more direct evidence in the context of highly automated interviews,

but their findings are limited to the interview stage, and privacy concerns were not the central focus of the study. Although Wesche and Sonderegger (2021) studied how information about automated selection in job advertisements affects reactions to screening and interview stages, their focus was on applicants' expectations, perceptions, and intentions rather than on data privacy concerns specifically.

Accordingly, the present study extends this literature by examining how AI disclosure influences perceived privacy protection across the pre-screening and first-interview stages and whether these privacy-related perceptions help explain applicants' job pursuit intentions.

2.6.4.4 Regulatory context: GDPR and the EU AI Act

As AI recruitment involves the processing of applicant data, the regulatory context is also relevant for understanding the disclosure of AI-enabled tools in recruitment processes. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is the central European Union regulation governing the protection of personal data. It was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2016 and has applied since 25 May 2018. Its purpose is to harmonise data protection rules across the European Union and give individuals stronger control over how their personal data is used (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016). The GDPR is relevant to recruitment because applicants become data subjects when organizations process information from CVs, application forms, online assessments, video interviews, or other digital recruitment tools. In this context, the employer usually acts as the controller, since it decides why and how applicant data are used. If an external provider operates an AI recruitment tool on behalf of the employer, that provider may act as a processor, depending on whether it processes the data according to the employer's instructions or determines purposes and means of processing itself (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). This distinction is important because AI-supported recruitment often involves both the hiring organization and external technology providers.

Regarding automated individual decision-making, Article 22 states that data subjects have the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing, including profiling (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016). This applies when the decision produces legal effects concerning the data subject or similarly significantly affects them. In recruitment, this may become relevant if an AI system automatically rejects an applicant or determines whether the person moves to the next stage without meaningful human involvement. This protection does not apply in every use of AI in recruitment, it is limited to solely automated decisions with serious effects, and the GDPR also provides exceptions, for when the decision is necessary for entering into or performing a contract, authorised by law, or based on explicit consent (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016). Where such exceptions apply, safeguards are still required, including the possibility of human intervention and the right to contest the decision (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016, Art. 22).

Transparency is one of the core principles of the GDPR. Article 5 states that personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly, and transparently in relation to the data subject (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016, Art. 5). For recruitment, this means that applicants should not be left uncertain about what information is being used and why it is needed. When automated decision-making or profiling is involved, Articles 13–15 require meaningful information about the logic involved, as well as the significance and possible consequences of the processing for the individual (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016, Art. 13-15). In AI-supported recruitment, this means that applicants should receive clear and accessible information about the role of automated tools in their application process.

The GDPR data protection notice should therefore not be conflated with an AI-use disclosure, even though the two may overlap. A GDPR notice informs applicants how their personal data are processed, for what purposes, and which rights they have as data subjects (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2016). An AI-use disclosure is more specific: it informs applicants that an AI system is involved in the recruitment process and clarifies the role of that system (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). For example, a privacy notice may state that application data are processed for recruitment purposes, whereas an AI-use disclosure should indicate whether AI is used for CV screening, candidate ranking, interview evaluation, or other recruitment-related tasks. This distinction is important for the present thesis because applicants may respond differently to a general data protection notice, which has become a familiar feature of recruitment since the GDPR was adopted in 2016 and applied from 2018 than to a direct statement that AI will be involved in their evaluation. The latter type of disclosure is comparatively new and is expected to become more visible following the introduction of the EU AI Act in 2024.

The European Parliament, as part of its digital strategy released the EU AI Act, is the Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 and is described by the European Commission as the first comprehensive legal framework on AI that includes transparency requirements for the use and disclosure of AI (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024). It follows a risk-based approach, meaning that AI systems are regulated according to the level of risk they may create. In this framework, AI systems used for recruitment and selection are classified as high-risk when they are used to place targeted job advertisements, analyse or filter applications, or evaluate candidates (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024, Annex III).

High-risk AI systems are subject to stricter obligations concerning transparency, documentation, risk management, and human oversight. Article 13 of the AI Act requires high-risk AI systems to be designed and developed in a way that makes their operation sufficiently transparent, so that deployers can interpret the system's output and use it appropriately. The same article also requires instructions for use that provide information, which is clear, relevant, accessible, and comprehensible to deployers (European

Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024, Art.13). In recruitment, the deployer is usually the employer or recruitment agency using the system. This means that the organization relying on the AI tool should receive enough information to understand the system's intended purpose, its limitations, and the meaning of its outputs before using it in hiring decisions.

For applicants, the more direct transparency obligation appears in Article 26. This provision requires deployers of high-risk AI systems listed in Annex III that make or assist decisions related to natural persons to inform those persons that they are subject to the use of a high-risk AI system (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024, Art.26). Although the EU AI Act entered into force on 1 August 2024, its main obligations will apply progressively. For recruitment, the most relevant date is 2 August 2026, when most obligations for high-risk AI systems under Annex III start to apply. This means that companies using AI systems to analyse, filter, or evaluate applicants will need to prepare their recruitment processes in accordance with the Act's transparency, documentation, and human oversight requirements by that date (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024).

This regulatory context helps explain why AI-use disclosure represents a distinct and timely object of investigation. Explicit statements about AI involvement were unregulated in publicly available recruitment materials, and now the EU AI Act introduces a clearer regulatory basis for informing individuals that high-risk AI systems are used in decisions affecting them, including recruitment and selection. Although the Act entered into force on 1 August 2024, its obligations apply gradually, meaning that applicant-facing AI disclosures are still in an early phase of practical implementation.

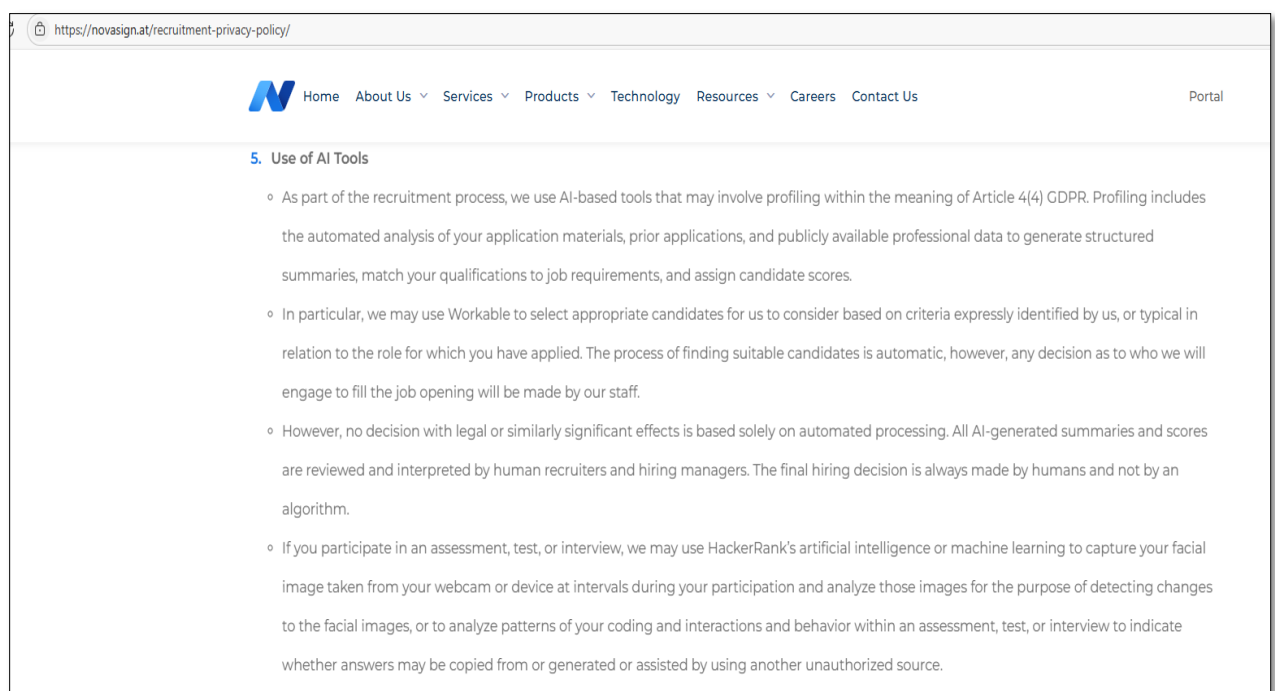
2.6.4.5 Examples of AI Disclosures in Recruitment Practices

AI adoption in organizations is increasing, Statistics Austria reported that the proportion of Austrian enterprises using AI technologies increased from 11% in 2023 to 30% in 2025, ranking among the EU leaders in AI use (Statistics Austria, 2026). However, this broader adoption did not necessarily translate into visible candidate-facing disclosure in recruitment. During the search for examples on career portals, job advertisements, and candidate privacy notices, most companies still communicated general data protection information, while direct statements about whether AI was used in screening, interviews, or candidate evaluation were less common. The following examples are therefore not part of the empirical analysis of this thesis. They are included only as illustrative cases to show how AI involvement is beginning to be communicated in recruitment practice. They also help to clarify the type of disclosure that informed the experimental manipulation used in this study. In this thesis, the disclosure was intentionally kept brief and practical, because applicants in real recruitment settings often encounter short notices rather than detailed technical explanations, and to isolate the disclosure effect from deeper evaluations of the technical parts of the systems.

Novasign GmbH (Vienna, Austria)

Novasign provides one of the clearest examples of a comprehensive AI transparency from an Austrian employer. In its website, on the page of their Career Portal where the job positions are posted and on their recruitment privacy policy, the company informs candidates that AI tools are used to support the evaluation of application materials. The more detailed Recruitment privacy policy includes the description of automated profiling, role matching and the use of technical assessments such as HackerRank AI or machine learning to capture facial images to analyze patterns of interactions and behavior within the assessment, test or interviews to see if the answers given by candidates are copied, generated or assisted by unauthorized sources (Recruitment Privacy Policy - Novasign, 2026). Importantly, the disclosure clarifies that automated evaluations do not replace human judgment, instead, AI serves as a decision-support tool, with recruiters retaining full responsibility for final hiring decisions. The policy also outlines applicants' rights and directs them to a dedicated data protection contract.

FIGURE 1 NOVASIGN RECRUITMENT PRIVACY POLICY WEBSITE



(Recruitment Privacy Policy - Novasign, 2026)

Lenovo (international company hiring in Austria)

Lenovo takes a different approach by incorporating an "AI Processing Notice" directly into some of their job advertisements. These notices inform candidates that audio or video recordings from interviews may be processed by AI-based tools for transcription, summarisation or quality assurance. Lenovo also states that any automated outputs are reviewed by human recruiters and that applicants may opt out or request additional information (Lenovo, 2026). The disclosures are embedded within job ads and offer high visibility at an early stage of the application process, which may support more informed consent and clearer expectations.

FIGURE 2 AI PROCESSING NOTICE BY LENOVO

AI PROCESSING NOTICE

We use AI-based tools to support some of our processes (e.g. online interviews recordings and transcripts) in order to achieve better efficiency, accuracy and for our documentation purposes. AI can make mistakes, but we always make sure that the outputs are manually reviewed by a human. You can always opt-out or contact us in case of any question.

(Lenovo, 2026)

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Conceptual model

The present study develops a stage-sensitive process model to examine how the disclosure of artificial intelligence (AI) use in recruitment influences applicants' anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. AI disclosure is treated as an informational signal, because it provides applicants with a cue about how the recruitment process is organized and how evaluation takes place. This logic is also consistent with research showing that information about selection processes can shape job seekers' pre-process expectations, perceptions, and intentions (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021; Reeve & Schultz, 2004).

The model proposes that AI disclosure may influence job pursuit intention both directly and indirectly through two process-related evaluations: anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. Anticipated procedural justice refers to applicants' expectations that the recruitment procedure will be fair, consistent, and appropriate (Gilliland, 1993; Bauer, et al., 2001; Bell, Ryan, & Wiechmann, 2004). Perceived privacy protection refers to applicants' expectations that their personal information will be handled in a limited, secure, and responsible way (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004; Bauer, et al., 2006). Both constructs are examined as mediators because they reflect how applicants make sense of the recruitment procedure before deciding whether they would continue pursuing the job opportunity. Job pursuit intention refers to applicants' intention to continue pursuing or applying for a job opportunity. This follows recruitment research that distinguishes organizational attractiveness from behavioural intentions toward the organization, including intentions to pursue employment with the organization (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

Because recruitment is a multi-stage process, the model also distinguishes between two early recruitment stages: pre-screening and the first interview. This stage-sensitive structure allows the study to examine whether applicants react differently to AI disclosure depending on where in the recruitment process AI is used. This distinction is important because the pre-screening stage is usually more document-based, while the first interview is more closely associated with personal interaction and the opportunity to present oneself (Verhoeven T., 2016).

Additionally, the study includes AI-related experience variables as exploratory moderators. In the final analysis, AI use frequency was used as the general AI-familiarity moderator, while previous AI recruitment experience was treated as a separate dichotomous moderator. These variables were included to explore whether applicants with more experience using AI, or with previous exposure to AI in recruitment, respond differently to AI disclosure (Bauer, et al., 2006; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021).

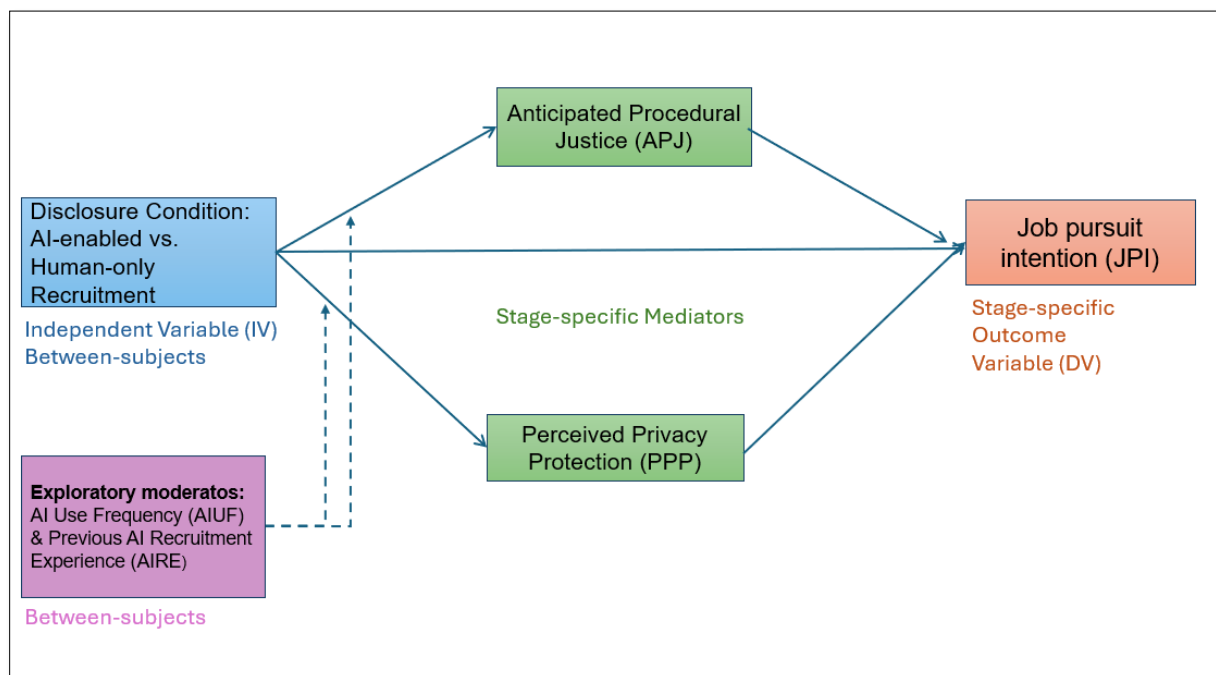
However, these moderation analyses are treated as exploratory rather than as the central explanatory mechanism of the model.

The model consists of:

- **Independent variable (IV), (between-subjects):** AI disclosure, comparing AI-enabled recruitment with human-only recruitment.
- **Mediators (within-subject, stage-specific):** Anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection, measured separately for the pre-screening and first interview stages.
- **Dependent variable (DV):** Job pursuit intention, measured separately for the pre-screening and first interview stages.
- **Contextual factor (within-subject):** Recruitment stage comparing pre-screening and first interview.
- **Exploratory Moderators:** AI Use Frequency (AIUF) and AI Recruitment Experience (AIRE).

The Figure below illustrates the proposed relationships of this study. The model includes a within-subjects contextual factor: The recruitment stage (pre-screening and first interview), so it will be repeated at each recruitment stage.

FIGURE 3 CONCEPTUAL MODEL APPLICANTS' REACTIONS TO AI DISCLOSURES ACROSS RECRUITMENT STAGES



3.1.1 Theoretical Positioning of the Model

The conceptual framework integrates insights from applicant reactions theory, organizational justice theory, and signaling theory to explain how applicants respond to AI disclosure in recruitment.

The model posits that AI disclosure functions as an informational signal that applicants interpret under conditions of uncertainty. In early recruitment stages, where direct experience with the organization is limited, applicants rely on available cues to form expectations about how decisions will be made. Signaling theory explains how such information shapes applicants' initial interpretations of the recruitment process (Spence, 1973; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021).

Applicant reactions theory further suggests that individuals actively evaluate these signals and use them to form judgments about selection procedures, which subsequently guide their behavioral intentions (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Organizational justice theory provides the basis for understanding these evaluations by emphasizing the role of procedural fairness in shaping applicant reactions, because applicants assess whether the recruitment process appears consistent, job-related, and allows adequate opportunity to demonstrate qualifications (Gilliland, 1993; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004).

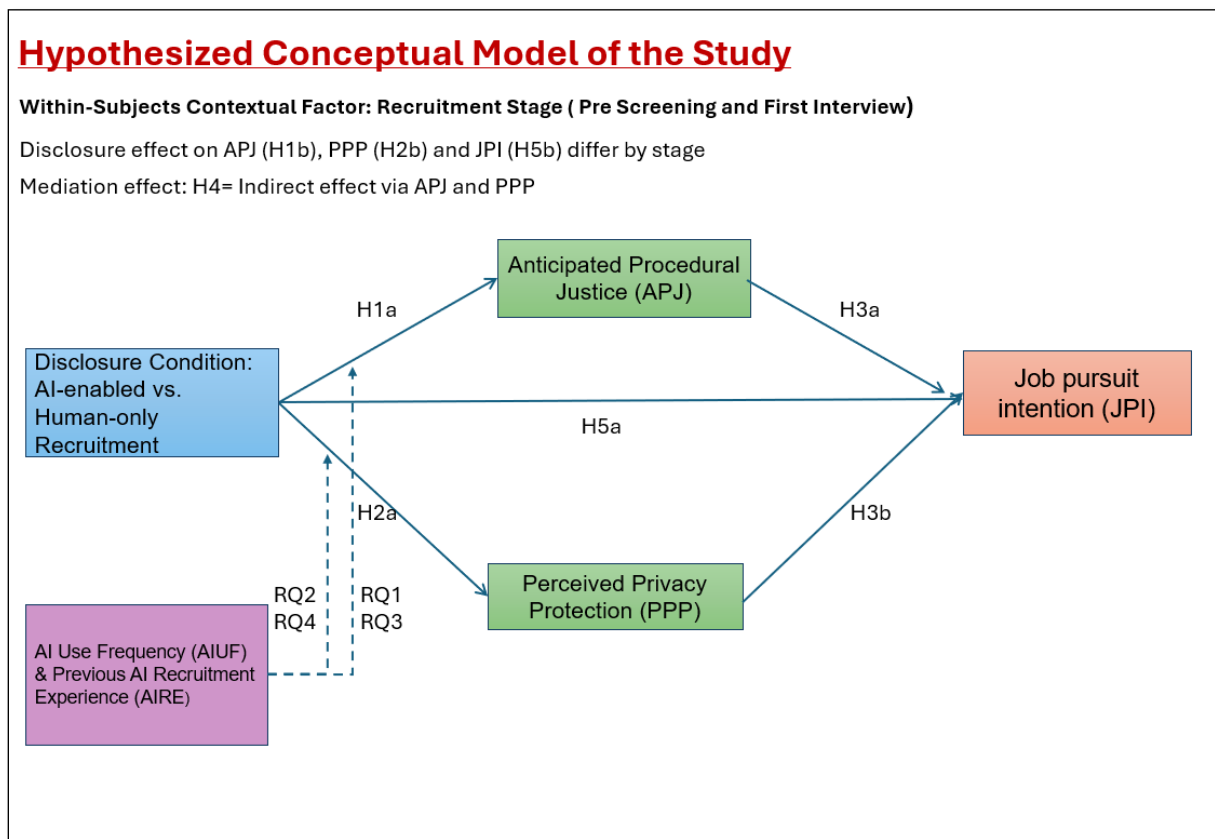
Drawing on fairness heuristic theory, these process-related evaluations serve as cognitive shortcuts that help applicants determine whether they can trust the organization and continue engaging in the hiring process under conditions of uncertainty (Lind, 2001). AI disclosure may also activate concerns regarding how applicant data is collected, processed, and protected, reflecting a distinct evaluative pathway related to privacy considerations (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004; Bauer, et al., 2006). Empirical research on AI in recruitment further suggests that applicants' responses to algorithmic decision-making vary depending on perceived fairness, transparency, and trust, and that these responses are associated with organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021; Zhang & Yench, 2022; Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004).

Integrating these perspectives, the model proposes that AI disclosure provides an informational cue that applicants interpret within an uncertain recruitment context, which shapes their evaluation of procedural fairness and data privacy protection. These evaluations, in turn, influence behavioral intentions such as the willingness to pursue employment with the organization. The model does not assume a universally positive or negative reaction to AI disclosure but instead posits that applicant responses emerge through these evaluation processes and may vary across recruitment stages and individual levels of AI familiarity.

3.1.2 Hypothesized conceptual model of the study

Figure below presents the hypothesized conceptual model of the study. It summarizes the expected relationships between AI disclosure, anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention across the pre-screening and first interview stages. The figure also shows recruitment stage as the within-subject contextual factor and includes AI use frequency and previous AI recruitment experience as exploratory moderators.

FIGURE 4 HYPOTHESIZED CONCEPTUAL MODEL



3.1.3 Recruitment Stage as Contextual Evaluation Point

In this study, recruitment stage is operationalized as a contextual evaluation point at which applicants form expectations about recruitment practices and decide whether they would continue with the process (Reeve & Schultz, 2004; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). Two stages of recruitment are examined. The pre-screening stage is usually based on application documents or other submitted information, with limited direct contact between the applicant and the organization. In contrast, the first interview is more closely associated with interpersonal interaction, two-way communication, and the opportunity to present oneself beyond formal application material (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). Recruitment stage is then treated as a within-subject contextual factor, since participants evaluate both stages. This design enables comparison of stage-specific effects within the same individual and allows for examination of whether AI disclosure operates differently across evaluation contexts.

3.1.4 Mediating Mechanisms

The model proposes that AI disclosure influences job pursuit intention through two process-related evaluations: anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. These constructs are modelled as parallel mediators because they reflect two distinct psychological processes through which applicants may interpret the disclosure of AI use in recruitment.

Anticipated Procedural Justice (APJ) measured applicants' expectations that the recruitment procedure will be fair, consistent, and appropriate before they directly experience the full selection process. In selection contexts, procedural justice includes judgments about job-relatedness, consistency of evaluation, opportunity to demonstrate qualifications, and the possibility of reconsideration (Gilliland, 1993; Bauer, et al., 2001). In the present study, the construct is anticipatory because participants evaluate hypothetical recruitment scenarios before experiencing an actual selection procedure.

Perceived Privacy Protection (PPP) measured applicants' expectations that their personal information will be collected only to the extent necessary and handled in a secure and responsible manner. This construct is informed by privacy research emphasizing data collection, control, and awareness of data use (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004). It is also relevant in AI-supported recruitment, where disclosure of AI use may make applicants more aware that their data could be processed, stored, and analyzed through digital systems (Bauer, et al., 2006; Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022).

Although both reactions may be triggered by the same disclosure cue, they refer to different concerns. Procedural justice is primarily about the legitimacy and fairness of the decision-making procedure, whereas privacy protection is about the safeguarding of personal data and the applicant's sense of control over that data. For example, an applicant may believe that an AI-based screening tool applies the same criteria to all candidates and is therefore procedurally consistent, while still feeling uncertain about how much personal information the system collects or how securely that information is handled. On the other hand, an applicant may trust that their data is protected but still question whether an AI system can fairly assess their suitability for the role. Treating these constructs as parallel mediators therefore allows the model to capture two related but conceptually separate pathways through which AI disclosure may shape applicants' willingness to continue pursuing the job opportunity.

3.1.5 Stage-specific dependent variable: Job pursuit intentions

Job pursuit intention represents the applicant's willingness to continue pursuing the job opportunity. It is a forward-looking behavioural intention and is commonly used in recruitment research to capture whether applicants would remain interested in an organization or continue with the application process (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003).

In this study, job pursuit intention is measured separately after the pre-screening and first interview scenarios. This allows the analysis to examine whether AI disclosure affects continuation intentions differently across recruitment stages and whether these effects are explained by anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection.

For the pre-screening stage job pursuit is understood in this study as submitting the application to the hiring company, and for the first interview is understood as continuing with the application process and participating on the first interview under the declared conditions.

3.2 Hypothesis Development

3.2.1 Effects of AI Disclosure on anticipated procedural justice

In this thesis, procedural justice is understood as applicants' evaluation of whether the decision-making procedure appears fair. In recruitment contexts, applicants evaluate whether selection procedures are job-related, consistently applied, transparent, and provide sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications (Gilliland, 1993). These evaluations are particularly relevant in AI-supported recruitment, where automated data processing and algorithmic evaluation may reduce applicants' expectations of human judgement, individualized consideration, and procedural transparency (Bauer, et al., 2006).

Studies have shown that algorithmic or highly automated selection can be perceived as less fair, less personal, and less able to account for individual circumstances (Acikgoz, Davison, Compagnone, & Laske, 2020; Lee, 2018; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021; Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Lavanchy, Reichert, Narayanan, & Savani, 2023). While some findings indicate that applicant reactions may depend on how AI systems are designed and communicated (Suen, Chen, & Lu, 2019), by focusing on a brief AI-use disclosure in early recruitment, the positive aspects from other studies such as system design and communication, are not expected. Under these conditions, AI disclosure is expected to lower anticipated procedural justice compared with a human-only recruitment process.

H1a: Applicants exposed to AI disclosure will report lower anticipated procedural justice than applicants exposed to a human-only recruitment process.

In addition, the negative effect of AI disclosure is expected to be stronger at the first-interview stage than at the pre-screening stage. This expectation is based on the different meanings applicants attach to these stages. Pre-screening is often understood as a document-based and administrative step in which applications are reviewed and filtered before further contact takes place (Verhoeven T., 2020; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). Because this stage already involves limited interpersonal interaction, AI disclosure may be less disruptive to applicants' expectations of human contact.

In contrast, the first interview is typically associated with interpersonal exchange, two-way communication, and the opportunity to present one's qualifications, motivation, and individual fit beyond the written application (Verhoeven T., 2020; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). When AI is disclosed at this stage, applicants may interpret it as reducing human judgement, social presence, and individualized consideration.

Prior research on automated and AI-supported interviews shows that applicants evaluate AI involvement more negatively when it replaces or reduces human interaction in interview contexts (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). Therefore, AI disclosure is expected to have a

stronger negative effect on anticipated procedural justice in the first-interview stage than in the pre-screening stage.

H1b: The negative effect of AI disclosure on anticipated procedural justice will be stronger at the first-interview stage than at the pre-screening stage.

3.2.2 Effects of AI Disclosure on perceived privacy protection

AI-enabled recruitment involves the processing and analysis of applicant data. When applicants are informed that AI is used in the recruitment process, this disclosure may make data handling more salient because applicants may become more aware that their information could be collected, stored, analysed, or evaluated through digital systems (Cai, Zhang, & Zhang, 2024). Privacy research shows that individuals' privacy evaluations are shaped by concerns about data collection, control over personal information, and awareness of how personal data are used (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004). In selection contexts, privacy concerns have also been shown to influence applicant reactions to digital selection procedures (Bauer, et al., 2006).

Ethical research on AI-enabled recruiting highlights privacy, transparency, and data governance as central concerns when automated systems are used in recruitment and selection (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). Therefore, when AI use is disclosed, applicants may feel less certain about how much personal data is stricter or if the data will be handled securely. For this reason, AI disclosure is expected to reduce perceived privacy protection compared with a human-disclosure condition recruitment process.

H2a: Applicants exposed to AI disclosure will report lower perceived privacy protection than applicants exposed to a human-only recruitment process.

The effect of AI disclosure on perceived privacy protection may also differ across recruitment stages. In the pre-screening stage, applicants may expect the organization to process mainly CVs, application forms, and other submitted documents (Verhoeven T. , 2020; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). In the first-interview stage, however, the evaluation may be perceived as more personal because interviews are associated with direct interaction, self-presentation, and the communication of more individualized information (Verhoeven T. , 2020; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). This distinction may be especially relevant in technology-mediated and AI-supported interviews, where assessment can involve recorded answers, video images, voice data, facial expressions, or other behavioural cues that may be stored and analysed digitally (Suen, Chen, & Lu, 2019; Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Lukacik, Bourdage, & Roulin, 2020).

Prior research indicates that applicants' privacy-related evaluations are shaped by concerns about data collection, control, and awareness of how personal information is used (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004) and that privacy concerns are relevant in technology-mediated selection contexts (Bauer, et al.,

2006). Applicants also appear to react differently to automation across recruitment stages, with AI involvement in interviews generally producing stronger negative reactions than AI involvement in screening (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). But since the present experiment did not specify whether AI would process facial images, video recordings, voice data, or information from third-party platforms, the mere disclosure of AI involvement may still make applicants more aware of potential data-processing risks. Therefore, the present study examines whether the effect of AI disclosure on perceived privacy protection differs between the pre-screening and first-interview stages.

H2b: The effect of AI disclosure on perceived privacy protection differs between the pre-screening stage and the first interview stage.

3.2.3 Effects of Process-Related Perceptions on Job Pursuit Intention

As discussed in the previous section, applicant reactions research shows that perceptions of selection procedures can influence whether applicants remain attracted to an organization and whether they intend to continue with the recruitment process. Fairness perceptions are a central factor in this literature because applicants are more likely to respond positively when they believe that selection procedures are job-related, consistent, and allow them a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications making them more willing to apply (Gilliland, 1993; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Hosain, Bin Amin, Debnath, & Rahaman, 2025).

H3a: Higher anticipated procedural justice is associated with higher job pursuit intention.

Perceived privacy protection is also expected to influence job pursuit intention. Prior research in digitally mediated selection contexts, applicants may be less willing to continue with a recruitment process if they are concerned about how their personal information is collected, stored, or used (Tursunbayeva, Fernandez, Gallardo-Gallardo, & Moschera, 2026). Other studies on online selection shows that privacy concerns affect applicant reactions to technology-mediated recruitment procedures and influences their organizational attraction, intentions toward the organization and their motivation to take the hiring tests (Bauer, et al., 2006). Therefore, when applicants believe that their personal information is handled securely, responsibly, and only to the extent necessary, they are expected to feel more willing in continuing with the recruitment process.

H3b: Higher perceived privacy protection is associated with higher job pursuit intention.

Together, anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection represent two process-related explanations for why AI disclosure may influence job pursuit intention. AI disclosure may reduce job pursuit intention because applicants expect the procedure to be less fair. At the same time, it may reduce job pursuit intention because applicants feel less certain about how their personal information is handled.

These mechanisms are conceptually distinct: anticipated procedural justice concerns the fairness of the decision-making process, whereas perceived privacy protection concerns the safeguarding of applicant data. For this reason, this study examines both mechanisms as parallel mediators.

H4: The relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention is mediated by anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection operating as parallel mediators.

The direct effect of the disclosure and job pursuit intention is also examined as a complementary test to help determine whether AI disclosure is associated with job pursuit intention beyond the proposed mediating mechanisms of anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection.

3.2.4 Effect of AI Disclosure on Job Pursuit Intention

Information provided during the early stages of recruitment can influence the job pursuit intention since job seekers often make decisions before directly experiencing the organization or its selection procedures (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Reeve & Schultz, 2004). As discussed in the preceding sections, disclosure of AI use may contribute to these decisions by shaping applicants' evaluations of the recruitment process and their broader impressions of the organization.

Applicants may associate AI-supported recruitment with innovation, efficiency, speed, and greater standardization, but they may also interpret it as impersonal, opaque, or excessively dependent on automated rather than human judgement (Horodyski, 2023; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). The overall effect of AI disclosure on job pursuit intention may therefore reflect applicants' perceptions of procedural justice and privacy protection, together with other evaluations of the organization and its recruitment approach beyond the proposed measurements.

Previous empirical research indicates that communicating the use of AI in selection can negatively influence applicants' intentions. Wesche and Sonderegger (2021) found that information about AI-based selection in job advertisements reduced job seekers' pre-process expectations, perceptions, and intentions, with stronger negative reactions when AI was involved in the interview stage. Similarly, research on AI-based interview evaluation suggests that applicants may report lower application and pursuit intentions when they are evaluated by AI rather than by a human evaluator (Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2025). Based on these findings, AI disclosure is expected to reduce job pursuit intention compared with a human-only recruitment process.

H5a: Applicants exposed to AI disclosure during the recruitment process will report lower job pursuit intention than applicants exposed to a human-only recruitment process.

The effect of AI disclosure on job pursuit intention may also vary across recruitment stages. Previous research has found that negative reactions to AI-based selection are stronger when AI is used in interviews than when its use is limited to earlier screening stages (McCarthy, et al., 2017; Wesche &

Sonderegger, 2021). The negative effect of AI disclosure on job pursuit intention is therefore expected to be stronger at the first-interview stage than at the pre-screening stage.

H5b: The negative effect of AI disclosure on job pursuit intention will be stronger at the first-interview stage than at the pre-screening stage.

3.2.5 Moderating role of AI use frequency and previous AI recruitment experience

Previous applicant reactions research suggests that evaluations of selection procedures can be influenced by applicants' individual characteristics and prior experiences with comparable procedures (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). In online selection contexts, privacy concerns and computer experience have also been associated with applicants' procedural justice perceptions and subsequent reactions, although the effects of computer experience have not been consistent across samples (Bauer, et al., 2006).

Applicants who use AI tools regularly may experience less uncertainty when AI involvement is disclosed and may therefore respond less negatively than applicants who rarely or never use such technologies. However, frequent use of AI in everyday contexts does not necessarily imply experience with AI being used to evaluate the individual or make consequential decisions. Given the limited evidence concerning whether general AI use changes applicant reactions to AI-supported recruitment, this relationship was examined exploratorily.

Applicants who have previously encountered AI in screening, assessment, or interviewing may have clearer expectations about how such procedures operate. Wesche and Sonderegger (2021) suggest that perceptions of automated selection procedures may change as job seekers gain experience and familiarity with the relevant technology. The study measured whether participants had previously encountered AI-supported recruitment but did not assess the quality of that experience, for which its moderating role was also examined exploratorily.

Accordingly, the study examined whether AI use frequency and previous AI recruitment experience separately moderated the relationships between AI disclosure and the two proposed mediators: anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection.

RQ1: To what extent does AI use frequency influence the relationship between AI disclosure and anticipated procedural justice?

RQ2: To what extent does AI use frequency influence the relationship between AI disclosure and perceived privacy protection?

RQ3: To what extent does previous AI recruitment experience influence the relationship between AI disclosure and anticipated procedural justice?

RQ4: To what extent does previous AI recruitment experience influence the relationship between AI disclosure and perceived privacy protection?

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, scenario-based survey experiment to examine how the disclosure of AI use in recruitment influences applicants' perceptions and behavioural intentions. The study follows a mixed factorial design: the AI disclosure condition is treated as a between-subjects factor, while recruitment stage is treated as a within-subjects factor. This design allows comparisons between participants exposed to different recruitment scenarios, while also examining whether applicants' evaluations vary across early stages of the recruitment process.

The main experimental manipulation concerns the type of recruitment process presented to participants. One group is exposed to a scenario in which AI use is disclosed, while the other group is exposed to a human-only recruitment scenario. After reading the assigned scenario, participants evaluate anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention across different recruitment stages.

A scenario-based experimental approach is suitable for this study because it allows the main informational cue, the disclosure of AI use, to be varied while keeping the broader recruitment context constant. This helps reduce the influence of unrelated factors such as organizational characteristics, job attributes, or recruiter behaviour. At the same time, the scenario format reflects the type of limited information applicants often have in the early stages of recruitment, where job advertisements and process descriptions can act as important cues about the organization and its selection practices (Reeve & Schultz, 2004; Spence, 1973; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). Similar scenario-based experimental designs have been used in previous research to examine how information about AI or automated selection affects job seekers' expectations, perceptions, and intentions (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021; Cai, Zhang, & Zhang, 2024)

The mixed design also offers practical and methodological advantages. Treating recruitment stage as a within-subjects factor allows comparisons across stages within the same participant, which helps account for stable individual differences in response tendencies (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Halkias, 2023). In contrast, treating AI disclosure as a between-subjects factor reduces the risk that participants directly compare the AI-enabled and human-disclosure conditions or become overly aware of the manipulation. Random assignment to the disclosure condition strengthens the design by helping to reduce systematic differences between the experimental groups.

Data was collected in a single survey session, which means the study is cross-sectional in terms of measurement timing. However, it remains experimental in design because the independent variable, AI disclosure condition, was systematically manipulated and participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions. Therefore, the design supports cautious causal interpretation regarding the effect of

AI disclosure on stage-specific applicant evaluations. The relationships among anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention should be interpreted more carefully, because these variables were measured through self-reports within the same survey session.

4.1.1 Declaration of the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically ChatGPT (OpenAI), was used during the preparation of this thesis as a writing and language support tool.

AI was used to assist with improving grammar, academic language, sentence structure, clarity, coherence and organization of the manuscript. It was also used to explain statistical procedures, support handling the software JASP, identify inconsistencies and repetitive wording, improve the presentation of arguments and support proofreading and plagiarism check of the final manuscript. AI assistance was additionally used to prepare the List of Tables and to draft this declaration and the accompanying AI Usage Log See Appendix 1.

The research question, theoretical framework, literature search, source selection, survey design, data collection, statistical analyses, interpretation of findings and final conclusions were independently conducted by the author. All statistical analyses were performed by the author using JASP. Every AI-generated suggestion was critically evaluated, revised and re-worked where appropriate and independently verified before inclusion in the thesis.

The author accepts full responsibility for the accuracy, originality and scientific integrity of the entire thesis. All cited literature was verified using the original sources prior to submission. A detailed record of AI-assisted activities is provided in Appendix 1.

4.1.2 Experimental design

The experiment was implemented using standardized recruitment scenarios embedded in an online questionnaire. Participants were asked to imagine applying for a suitable position at a fictitious organization ("Company A") that matched their qualifications and interests. The organization and position were described only in general terms, without specifying industry, salary, prestige, or employer reputation. This was done to reduce the influence of pre-existing organizational preferences or job-related expectations on participants' responses.

The scenario followed two early stages of a recruitment process: pre-screening and first interview. To ensure a common understanding, pre-screening was described as the stage after application submission in which candidates' documents are reviewed to determine who proceeds to the next stage. The first interview was described as the first formal interview, conducted either by video or in person, in which candidates' skills, experience, and suitability for the position are assessed. Participants were also shown a short overview of the broader recruitment process, including application submission, pre-screening,

first interview, second interview, and final hiring decision. AI-based recruitment tools are defined as machine-based systems that infer from applicant-related inputs (such as CVs, assessments, or interview recordings), and generate outputs such as scores, rankings, recommendations, or decisions that influence hiring outcomes, the description was based on the description used in the EU AI Act (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2024).

Depending on the assigned condition, the scenarios described the recruitment stages either as conducted exclusively by AI-based tools or by human recruiters. In the AI-disclosure condition, participants were informed that the process is conducted exclusively by AI-based tools without human recruiter involvement. In the human-disclosure condition, the same stages were described as conducted exclusively by human recruiters without the use of any AI-based tools. Apart from this information, the scenarios followed the same structure and wording across conditions. The disclosure statements were kept short and neutral. They did not include additional explanations about how the AI tools worked, how accurate they were, whether they were fair, or why the organization used them. This choice was made to avoid framing AI use in either a positive or negative way.

The scenarios were presented in a fixed order, beginning with the pre-screening stage and followed by the first interview stage. This order was selected to reflect the usual sequence of an early application process. After each stage description, participants answered the corresponding measures of anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. This allowed the study to capture applicants' reactions at two points in the same hypothetical application journey while keeping the assigned disclosure condition constant across stages.

4.2 Participants and Sampling

Participants were recruited using a non-probability convenience sampling strategy, supplemented by multiplicity (snowball) sampling. The survey was initially distributed through the researcher's personal, academic, and professional networks, and participants were invited to share the survey with other individuals who met the inclusion criteria. The target group consisted of individuals aged 18 years or older who were willing to participate in the study. and could realistically imagine encountering recruitment processes in which AI-based tools may be used. This criterion was set to target individuals who may realistically encounter contemporary recruitment practices, including AI-based selection systems. This heterogeneous participant group is consistent with applicant-reactions research, which often examines how different applicant profiles evaluate selection procedures and recruitment outcomes (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004).

This sampling approach was appropriate because the study did not aim to estimate population-level prevalence, but to examine differences in applicant reactions across experimentally manipulated recruitment scenarios. Because the sample was not randomly drawn from a defined population, the

generalizability of the findings should be interpreted with caution (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Halkias, 2023).

Participants were eligible to take part in the study if they resided in Vienna, Austria, were at least 18 years old, and provided voluntary informed consent. The only exclusion criterion was failure to answer the manipulation check correctly. This check was included to confirm that participants had understood whether AI was being used or not in the recruitment scenario. Participants who did not correctly identify the presence or absence of AI involvement were therefore excluded from the final analysis.

4.3 Data Collection procedure

Data was collected through an anonymous online questionnaire, each participant completed the survey once during the data collection period from February to May 2026. A self-report questionnaire was used because the study examined applicants' perceptions, attitudes, expectations, and behavioural intentions, which are subjective constructs that can be assessed directly through respondents' self-reports (Yan, 2024). Questionnaires are particularly suitable when the required information must be obtained directly from individual participants, including their preferences, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and factual background information (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The use of a standardised questionnaire also enabled participants' responses to be compared across experimental conditions and recruitment stages. In addition, online questionnaires are practical and economical in terms of researcher time, effort, and cost, particularly when data must be collected from multiple participants within a limited period (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

The use of an online self-report questionnaire involved several limitations. Non-probability online recruitment may have introduced sampling and self-selection bias, while participants' responses may also have been affected by social desirability, recall, and common method bias (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Yan, 2024). These issues were considered when interpreting the findings and are discussed in greater detail in the limitations section.

The questionnaire was distributed through:

- Personal and professional social media channels, including LinkedIn and Instagram
- Local online communities and social media groups targeting residents of Vienna, like Women of Vienna, Vienna English Speakers. SurveyCircle groups and Vienna Running Club.
- Survey exchange platforms, including SurveySwap and SurveyCircle.

4.4 Experiment procedure

The Survey addresses four sections:

1. Demographics and background variables
2. Pre-screening scenario and corresponding measures
3. First interview scenario and corresponding measures

4. General AI use and previous experience with AI-enabled recruitment

To see the Data Matrix, and the detailed measurement of all variables, please see Appendix 2.

4.4.1 Participation consent and ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. Ethical approval for the study was obtained in the form of an official approval memo prior to data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before they could proceed with the questionnaire.

At the beginning of the survey, participants received information about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their rights as respondents. They were informed that the study involved minimal risk and that no directly identifying personal data, such as names, contact details, or other identifying information, would be collected. Responses were collected through QuestionPro using a University of Vienna student account.

To ensure informed consent, participants were explicitly asked whether they agreed to participate in the study. Only participants who provided affirmative consent were able to continue. Participants were also informed that they could discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Because responses were collected anonymously and could not be linked back to individual respondents, submitted responses could not be withdrawn after completion. All data were stored securely in encrypted online files accessible only to the researcher.

4.4.2 Demographics

After providing informed consent, participants were asked about their current place of residence. Only individuals living in Vienna, Austria, were eligible to continue the survey, all others were screened out.

The first block of questions captured demographic and background information, including age, gender, employment status, and level of education. These variables were measured using nominal and ordinal response formats.

4.4.3 Recruitment stage

Participants evaluated two stages of an early recruitment process within the same survey session. The stages were presented sequentially, beginning with pre-screening and followed by the first interview. Each stage included a standardized description explaining its role in the hiring process.

4.4.4 AI disclosure condition

AI disclosure was manipulated between subjects. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, and the condition remain the same for both stages:

- AI-disclosure condition: the scenario stated that Company A conducted the relevant recruitment stage exclusively through AI-based tools without human recruiter involvement.
- Human-disclosure condition: the scenario states that Company A conducted the relevant recruitment stage exclusively through human recruiters without the use of AI-based tools.

4.4.5 AI-related background variables

Participants were also asked about their self-described perception of familiarity with AI technologies, frequency of AI use, and previous experience with AI-based recruitment.

4.5 Measures

All perceptual items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Items belonging to the same construct were averaged to form composite scores for anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention, after internal consistency had been assessed.

4.5.1 Anticipated Procedural Justice (APJ)

Anticipated procedural justice was measured using items developed for the present study based on Gilliland's (1993) procedural justice framework and informed by applicant reactions research on selection fairness (Bauer, et al., 2001; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). The construct was measured as anticipated procedural justice because participants evaluated hypothetical recruitment scenarios before experiencing an actual selection procedure. The same items were presented after each recruitment stage and were used to form stage-specific APJ scores.

1. **Job relatedness:** Refers to "The extent to which a test either appears to measure content relevant to the job situation or appears to be valid" (Gilliland, 1993, p. 703). The items were:
 1. Predictive relationship: *"My performance in this recruitment process would be related to my performance in the job."*
 2. Indicator of performance: *"Doing well in this recruitment process would indicate that a person is likely to perform well in the job."*
 3. Appropriateness of assessment: *"This recruitment process would assess qualities that are important for success in the job."*
2. **Opportunity to perform:** Refers to the extent to which applicants perceive that the selection process provides them with adequate opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities (Gilliland, 1993). The items were:
 1. Sufficiency to show skills: *"This recruitment process would give me sufficient opportunity to demonstrate my skills."*
 2. Adequacy of self- presentation: *"I would be able to adequately present my qualifications in this recruitment process."*

3. Absence of restriction: *"The recruitment process would not limit my ability to show what I can do."*
3. **Consistency of administration:** Consistency refers to ensuring that decision procedures are consistent across people and over time (Gilliland, 1993). The items were:
 1. Procedural uniformity: *"This recruitment process would be administered in the same way to all applicants."*
 2. Standardized evaluation criteria: *"All applicants would be evaluated using the same criteria in this recruitment process."*
 3. Lack of differential treatment: *"No applicant would receive preferential or disadvantageous treatment in this recruitment process."*
4. **Reconsideration opportunity:** Reconsideration opportunity refers to the extent to which applicants perceive that they can challenge, appeal, or request a review of decisions within the selection process (Gilliland, 1993). The items were:
 1. Appeal Mechanism: *"This recruitment process would allow applicants to appeal the selection decision"*
 2. Ability to question decisions: *"There would be a way to raise concerns about how the decision was made."*
 3. Request reviews: *"I would have the opportunity to request a review of the selection decision."*

Dimensions of Gilliland's (1993) framework related to explanations and interpersonal treatment were not included in the present measurement approach because they were less closely aligned with the specific point of evaluation examined in this study. Aspects such as feedback, honesty, interpersonal treatment, sympathetic communication, and the propriety of questions asked during the selection process were not assessed directly. This is because participants evaluated an initial disclosure scenario and did not complete an actual application, interact with recruiters, receive feedback, or experience interviewer behaviour. Therefore, the measure focused on procedural justice dimensions that could be meaningfully evaluated based on the information provided in the scenario.

4.5.2 Perceived Privacy Protection (PPP)

Perceived privacy protection was measured with three items developed for the present study. The items were designed to capture applicants' subjective perception that their personal information would be collected and handled in a limited, secure, and responsible manner within the recruitment process described in the scenario. This construct does not assess objective data protection quality, technical security, or legal compliance.

The development of the items was conceptually informed by prior information privacy research. Malhotra, Kim, and Agarwal's (2004) Internet Users' Information Privacy Concerns framework

highlights the relevance of data collection, control, and awareness for understanding how individuals evaluate the handling of personal information. Applicant reactions research also shows that privacy-related perceptions are relevant in digitally mediated selection procedures (Bauer, et al., 2006). However, because this study focuses on positively framed, scenario-specific perceptions of privacy protection rather than general privacy concerns, the items were adapted conceptually rather than taken directly from the IUIPC scale. This distinction is important because participants evaluated brief recruitment descriptions, not detailed privacy notices, technical systems, or legal data-processing terms. The PPP scale included the following items:

- Limited collection of personal information: *“Only necessary personal information would be collected in this recruitment process.”*
- Secure data handling: *“I believe that my personal information would be securely protected in this recruitment process.”*
- Comfort with information sharing: *“I would feel comfortable sharing my personal information in this recruitment process.”*

4.5.3 Job Pursuit Intention (JPI)

It refers to applicants’ willingness to initiate or continue engagement with the organization’s recruitment process. The construct reflects a forward-looking behavioural intention and captures the extent to which applicants would apply for, continue with, or pursue employment with the organization based on the information provided in the recruitment scenario. Consistent with applicant reactions and recruitment research, job pursuit intention was measured as applicants’ stated likelihood of pursuing employment with the organization (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). The items were adapted to the recruitment stage where necessary, so that they reflected either willingness to apply or willingness to continue to the next step of the process. The JPI scale included the following items:

- Behavioral continuation: *“I would submit an application to this organization.” Or “I would continue to the next step in this recruitment process.”*
- Active pursuit: *“I would pursue employment with this organization.”*
- Effort willingness: *“I would make an effort to move forward in this recruitment process.”*

4.5.4 AI-related background variables

Participants were also asked about their general familiarity with AI technologies, their frequency of AI tool use, and their previous experience with AI-based recruitment. These variables were included to describe participants’ prior exposure to AI and to examine whether AI-related experience was associated with applicants’ reactions to the recruitment scenarios. Although general AI familiarity and AI use frequency were initially considered as indicators of general AI-related experience, they were not retained

as a composite measure. Therefore, AI use frequency was used as a single-item indicator of general AI exposure, while previous AI recruitment experience was analysed separately as a dichotomous variable.

- General AI Familiarity (AIF): *How familiar are you with Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technologies (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, chatbots, Alexa, DeepL).?*
- Frequency of AI use (AIUF): *How often do you use AI Tools?*
- Recruitment-specific AI experience (AIRE): *Have you previously encountered AI-based tools in a recruitment or hiring process (e.g., automated CV screening, video interview analysis)?*

4.6 Data Screening and preparation

Before conducting the statistical analyses, the dataset was screened to ensure that only valid and usable responses were included. Responses were checked for completeness and for participants' correct understanding of the recruitment scenarios. Participants who failed the stage-specific attention or comprehension checks were excluded before the calculation of scale scores and before the main analyses were conducted.

After invalid responses were removed, the dataset was prepared for analysis by checking the coding of the experimental condition, recruitment stage, demographic variables, and scale items. AI disclosure condition was treated as a between-subjects variable, while recruitment stage was treated as a within-subjects variable. The main perceptual constructs were calculated as composite scores by averaging the corresponding items for anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. Where applicable, composite scores were calculated separately for the pre-screening and first-interview stages.

Demographic variables were re-coded where necessary to allow their use in robustness checks and control analyses. Employment status, gender, education, and age were prepared as categorical control variables. AI-related background variables were also inspected. General AI familiarity, AI use frequency, and previous AI recruitment experience were not combined into one overall scale because they captured different aspects of AI-related experience. Therefore, AI use frequency was retained as an indicator of general AI exposure, while previous AI recruitment experience was treated separately as a dichotomous variable.

4.7 Data Analysis strategy

Data were analysed using JASP. The analyses were conducted in several stages: descriptive statistics, reliability analyses, assumption checks, hypothesis testing, mediation and moderation analyses, and robustness checks.

First, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarise the final sample and the main study variables. Frequencies and percentages were reported for categorical variables, including gender, education,

employment status, and previous experience with AI-enabled recruitment. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the composite scores of anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention at the pre-screening and first interview stages. AI use frequency was also summarised according to its coding.

Second, the internal consistency of the multi-item measures was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Separate reliability analyses were conducted for anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention at each recruitment stage. Values of .70 or higher were treated as indicating acceptable internal consistency. Item statistics were also reviewed to identify whether any item substantially reduced the reliability of a scale. Composite scores were then calculated by averaging the corresponding items.

Before the main analyses, the distributions of the composite variables and possible extreme values were inspected. Homogeneity of variance between the AI disclosure and human-only groups was assessed using Levene's test. Where this assumption was not met, the violation was reported and considered when interpreting the corresponding ANOVA result. Because the within-subjects factor contained only two levels, pre-screening and first interview, the assumption of sphericity did not apply. The composite scores, which were based on multiple Likert-scale items, were treated as continuous variables.

To examine the effects of AI disclosure, separate mixed-design repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted for anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. AI disclosure condition was entered as the between-subjects factor, and recruitment stage was entered as the within-subjects factor. Each analysis estimated the main effect of AI disclosure, the main effect of recruitment stage, and the interaction between AI disclosure and recruitment stage. The interaction was used to assess whether the difference between the AI disclosure and human-only conditions varied between the two recruitment stages.

Pearson correlation analyses were then conducted separately for the pre-screening and first interview stages. These analyses examined the associations among anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention.

Parallel mediation models were estimated separately for the two recruitment stages. In each model, AI disclosure was entered as the predictor, anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were entered simultaneously as mediators, and job pursuit intention was entered as the outcome. The models estimated the indirect effects of AI disclosure on job pursuit intention through each mediator, together with the remaining direct effect of AI disclosure. Confidence intervals for the indirect effects were calculated using 5,000 bootstrap samples because the sampling distribution of an indirect effect may not be normally distributed.

Separate moderation analyses examined whether AI use frequency and previous AI recruitment experience were associated with differences in the relationships between AI disclosure and the two proposed mediators. The interaction between AI disclosure and each moderator was entered into the relevant regression model. The moderators were examined separately, and anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were analysed as separate outcomes.

Finally, robustness checks were conducted by re-estimating the parallel mediation models separately for the pre-screening and first interview stages while including age, gender, employment status, and education as control variables. These analyses examined whether the estimated paths and indirect effects changed materially after the demographic variables were included.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS & ANALYSIS

5.1 Data preparation and sample description

The raw dataset contained 268 recorded responses. Of these, 124 were complete, corresponding to a completion rate of 46.27%. Before conducting the statistical analyses, the data were screened for completeness and for participants' correct understanding of the recruitment scenarios. In total, 11 responses were excluded from the dataset because they failed the check. At the pre-screening stage, two participants from the AI-enabled recruitment condition and seven participants from the human-disclosure condition were excluded. At the first-interview stage, two additional participants from the human-disclosure condition were excluded. After these exclusions, the final valid sample consisted of 113 participants.

The experimental condition was coded as a dichotomous between-subjects variable. Participants in the human-disclosure condition were coded as 0, while participants in the AI-enabled recruitment condition were coded as 1. Recruitment stage was treated as a within-subjects factor, as all participants evaluated both the pre-screening and first-interview stages.

Employment status was re-coded into a dichotomous variable for the analysis. Participants who indicated full-time employment, part-time employment, or self-employment were classified as employed. Participants who indicated that they were students, unemployed, retired, or otherwise not currently working were classified as not employed. In cases where participants selected both student status and an employment category, they were classified as employed because the variable was intended to capture whether the participant was currently working.

Gender was re-coded for the purpose of control analyses. Men were coded as 0 and women were coded as 1. Participants who selected "prefer not to say" were treated as missing in analyses including gender as a control variable, because the number of responses in this category was too small to create a separate analytical group. Education level was re-coded into a dichotomous variable for exploratory control analyses. Participants with vocational training or a bachelor's degree were coded as 0, while participants with a master's or doctoral degree were coded as 1. Age was also re-coded into a dichotomous variable. Participants aged 18 to 34 were coded as 0, while participants aged 35 or older were coded as 1. This categorization was used to reduce complexity in the statistical models

After the recoding process, composite scale scores were calculated for the main study variables. Anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention were computed by averaging the corresponding items for each construct. Stage-specific composite scores were created separately for the pre-screening and first-interview stages. Higher scores indicated higher anticipated procedural justice, higher perceived privacy protection, and stronger job pursuit intention.

The reliability analysis of the AI-related background items the indicated that the items did not function sufficiently well as a single composite scale, so they were not aggregated. AI use frequency was retained as a separate indicator of general AI exposure, while previous AI recruitment experience was analysed separately as a dichotomous variable.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics and correlations

5.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The demographic characteristics of the final sample are presented in Table 1. The final sample was composed mainly of participants between 18 and 34 years old, with a slightly higher proportion of women than men. Most participants were employed, and the sample included a high proportion of participants with bachelor's or master's-level education.

The distribution across experimental conditions was relatively balanced. In total, 52 participants were assigned to the human-disclosure condition (46%), while 61 participants were assigned to the AI-disclosure condition (54%). Regarding previous AI recruitment experience, 68 participants reported previous experience with AI-enabled recruitment tools (60.2%), while 45 participants reported no previous experience (39.8%).

TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FINAL SAMPLE

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Male	48	42.5
	Female	62	54.9
	Prefer not to say	3	2.7
<i>Age group</i>	18–24	31	27.4
	25–34	52	46.0
	35–44	21	18.6
	45–54	4	3.5
	55–64	3	2.7
	65–74	2	1.8
<i>Employment</i>	Employed	75	66.4
	Not employed	38	33.6
<i>Education</i>	High school graduate	6	5.3
	Technical/vocational training	5	4.4
	Bachelor's degree	49	43.4
	Master's degree	46	40.7
	Doctoral degree	7	6.2
<i>Disclosure condition</i>	Human disclosure	52	46.0
	AI disclosure	61	54.0
<i>Experience with AI-enabled recruiting</i>	Yes	68	60.2
	No	45	39.8

Descriptive statistics for the main study variables are presented in Table 2. Across both recruitment stages, participants in the human-disclosure condition reported higher mean scores for anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention than participants in the AI-disclosure condition. This pattern was observed in both the pre-screening and first-interview stages.

In the pre-screening stage, participants in the human disclosure condition reported higher mean scores for anticipated procedural justice ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.56$), perceived privacy protection ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.68$), and job pursuit intention ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.69$). Participants in the AI disclosure condition reported lower mean scores for anticipated procedural justice ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.76$), perceived privacy protection ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 0.89$), and job pursuit intention ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.07$). A similar descriptive pattern was observed for the first-interview stage. Participants in the human disclosure condition reported higher mean scores for anticipated procedural justice ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.62$), perceived privacy protection ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.85$), and job pursuit intention ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.60$). Participants in the AI disclosure condition reported lower mean scores for anticipated procedural justice ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.86$), perceived privacy protection ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.96$), and job pursuit intention ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.17$).

The standard deviations further suggest that responses in the AI disclosure condition were generally more dispersed than responses in the human disclosure condition, particularly for job pursuit intention in pre-screening and first interview. This indicates that participants' reactions to AI disclosure were more varied, whereas responses to the human disclosure condition were more consistently positive.

Skewness and kurtosis values were inspected to assess whether the main study variables showed severe deviations from normality. Across the stage-specific composite variables, skewness values ranged from -0.77 to 0.31, and kurtosis values ranged from -1.04 to 1.16. These values were within commonly accepted ranges for social science research and did not indicate substantial deviations from normality. Therefore, the distributions of the main study variables were considered acceptable for the planned parametric analyses.

These descriptive results suggest that participants evaluated the human disclosure condition more positively than the AI disclosure condition across both recruitment stages. However, these descriptive patterns were interpreted only as preliminary indications and were tested formally through inferential analyses

TABLE 2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS BY DISCLOSURE CONDITION AND RECRUITMENT STAGE

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Human- Mean</i>	<i>Human- SD</i>	<i>AI- Mean</i>	<i>AI- SD</i>
<i>APJ pre-screening</i>	3.61	0.56	3.04	0.76
<i>PPP pre-screening</i>	3.82	0.68	2.94	0.89
<i>JPI pre-screening</i>	3.97	0.69	3.09	1.07
<i>APJ first interview</i>	3.66	0.62	2.88	0.86
<i>PPP first interview</i>	3.77	0.85	2.88	0.96
<i>JPI first interview</i>	4.02	0.60	2.78	1.17

5.2.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the associations among the main study variables before hypothesis testing, see Table 3 for selected correlations of the main variables. The correlation matrix included the stage-specific composite scores for anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention, together with disclosure condition.

Disclosure condition was significantly and negatively correlated with anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention at both recruitment stages. This indicates that participants in the AI disclosure condition reported lower evaluations of the recruitment process than participants in the human disclosure condition. The negative associations were observed for anticipated procedural justice at the pre-screening stage, $r = -.391$, $p < .001$, and first-interview stage, $r = -.461$, $p < .001$. Similar negative correlations were found for perceived privacy protection at the pre-screening stage, $r = -.484$, $p < .001$, and first-interview stage, $r = -.441$, $p < .001$. Disclosure condition was also negatively associated with job pursuit intention at the pre-screening stage, $r = -.436$, $p < .001$, and first-interview stage, $r = -.548$, $p < .001$.

The main study variables were positively related to one another. Anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were strongly and positively correlated at both the pre-screening stage, $r = .623$, $p < .001$, and the first-interview stage, $r = .687$, $p < .001$. Job pursuit intention was also strongly and positively associated with anticipated procedural justice at the pre-screening stage, $r = .698$, $p < .001$, and at the first-interview stage, $r = .716$, $p < .001$. Similarly, job pursuit intention was positively correlated with perceived privacy protection at the pre-screening stage, $r = .650$, $p < .001$, and at the first-interview stage, $r = .699$, $p < .001$. These results indicate that participants who perceived the recruitment process as more procedurally just and more privacy-protective also reported stronger job pursuit intentions.

TABLE 3 SELECTED PEARSON CORRELATIONS AMONG MAIN STUDY VARIABLES

<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Pre-screening r</i>	<i>First interview r</i>
<i>Disclosure condition – Anticipated procedural justice</i>	-.391***	-.461***
<i>Disclosure condition – Perceived privacy protection</i>	-.484***	-.441***
<i>Disclosure condition – Job pursuit intention</i>	-.436***	-.548***
<i>Anticipated procedural justice – Perceived privacy protection</i>	.623***	.687***
<i>Anticipated procedural justice – Job pursuit intention</i>	.698***	.716***
<i>Perceived privacy protection – Job pursuit intention</i>	.650***	.699***

Note. $N = 113$. Pearson's r is reported. Disclosure condition was coded as 0 = human disclosure and 1 = AI disclosure; therefore, negative correlations indicate lower scores in the AI disclosure condition. *** $p < .001$.

5.2.3 Reliability Analysis

Before testing the hypotheses, the internal consistency of the multi-item scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, see Table for 4 for the measures. Reliability analyses were conducted separately for each construct and recruitment stage, including anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention at the pre-screening and first-interview stages. Cronbach's alpha values of .70 or higher were considered acceptable for internal consistency. In addition to the overall alpha values, item-rest correlations and "alpha if item dropped" values were inspected to assess whether any individual item substantially weakened the reliability of the scale.

The anticipated procedural justice scale showed good internal consistency at the pre-screening stage, $\alpha = .886$, 95% CI [.850, .921], and excellent internal consistency at the first-interview stage, $\alpha = .921$, 95% CI [.895, .947]. Removing individual items would have increased Cronbach's alpha only marginally, to a maximum of .892 at the pre-screening stage and .927 at the first-interview stage. The items associated with these small increases assessed the consistency and standardisation of the selection procedure. These aspects may be evaluated differently from other dimensions of procedural justice in AI-enabled selection. As the items represented a theoretically relevant component of the construct and their removal produced only negligible improvements in reliability, they were retained.

The perceived privacy protection scale also demonstrated acceptable to good reliability. At the pre-screening stage, the scale showed acceptable internal consistency, $\alpha = .791$, 95% CI [.704, .877]. At the first-interview stage, reliability was good, $\alpha = .867$, 95% CI [.810, .925]. Although removing one item from the pre-screening scale would have slightly increased the alpha value, the item-rest correlation remained acceptable, and the item was theoretically relevant to the construct. Therefore, all perceived privacy protection items were retained.

The job pursuit intention scale showed excellent internal consistency at both recruitment stages. Reliability was excellent at the pre-screening stage, $\alpha = .954$, 95% CI [.935, .974], and at the first-interview stage, $\alpha = .945$, 95% CI [.917, .973]. Item-rest correlations were high across all items, indicating that the items contributed strongly to the overall scale. Therefore, all job pursuit intention items were retained.

The two proposed indicators of general AI-related experience, self-perceived AI familiarity and AI use frequency, were also examined to determine whether they could be combined into a composite score. The two-item measure showed low internal consistency, $\alpha = .386$, 95% CI [.041, .730], and the inter-item association was weak. This indicated that the two variables did not form a sufficiently coherent scale. They were therefore not combined into a composite score. AI use frequency was retained as a separate single-item variable for the exploratory moderation analyses, while previous AI recruitment experience was examined separately as a binary moderator.

Overall, the reliability analyses indicated that the multi-item measures of anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention demonstrated acceptable to excellent internal consistency. Composite mean scores were therefore calculated for these constructs and used in the subsequent analyses.

TABLE 4 INTERNAL CONSISTENCY RELIABILITY OF STUDY MEASURES BY RECRUITMENT STAGE

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Stage</i>	<i>Number of items</i>	<i>Cronba ch's α</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
<i>Anticipated procedural justice</i>	Pre-screening	12	.886	[.850, .921]
<i>Anticipated procedural justice</i>	First interview	12	.921	[.895, .947]
<i>Perceived privacy protection</i>	Pre-screening	3	.791	[.704, .877]
<i>Perceived privacy protection</i>	First interview	3	.867	[.810, .925]
<i>Job pursuit intention</i>	Pre-screening	3	.954	[.935, .974]
<i>Job pursuit intention</i>	First interview	3	.945	[.917, .973]
<i>Proposed general AI experience composite*</i>	General	2	.386	[.041, .730]

5.3 Hypothesis testing

5.3.1 Effect of AI Disclosure on Anticipated Procedural Justice (H1a/H1b)

A mixed-design repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine anticipated procedural justice. This analysis was appropriate because the study included one between-subjects factor and one within-subjects factor. Disclosure condition was the between-subjects factor because each participant was assigned to either the human-disclosure condition or the AI-disclosure condition. Recruitment stage was the within-subjects factor because the same participants evaluated both the pre-screening and first interview stages. Anticipated procedural justice was measured as a composite score and treated as a continuous dependent variable. The mixed-design ANOVA allowed the effects of both factors to be examined within a single analysis. It assessed whether anticipated procedural justice differed between the two disclosure conditions, whether ratings differed between the two recruitment stages, and whether the difference between the disclosure conditions varied across the two stages.

The main effect of disclosure condition was significant, $F(1, 111) = 28.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .202$. Participants in the human-disclosure condition reported higher anticipated procedural justice ($M = 3.637$) than participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 2.958$). This finding supports H1a and indicates that AI disclosure was associated with lower anticipated procedural justice across the two recruitment stages.

The main effect of recruitment stage was not significant, $F(1,111) = 1.657$, $p = .201$, $\eta_p^2 = .015$. When averaged across disclosure conditions, anticipated procedural justice did not differ significantly

between the pre-screening and first-interview stages. However, this main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between disclosure condition and recruitment stage.

The interaction between disclosure condition and recruitment stage was significant $F(1, 111) = 5.477, p = .021, \eta_p^2 = .047$. This indicates that the effect of disclosure condition on anticipated procedural justice differed between the two recruitment stages. Simple main-effects analyses showed a significant effect of disclosure condition at both the pre-screening stage, $F(1,111) = 20.06, p < .001$, and the first-interview stage, $F(1,111) = 30.01, p < .001$.

At the pre-screening stage, participants in the human-disclosure condition reported higher anticipated procedural justice ($M = 3.613, SD = .560$) than participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 3.041, SD = .763$). The mean difference between conditions was .572. At the first-interview stage, participants in the human-disclosure condition again reported higher anticipated procedural justice ($M = 3.662, SD = .622$) than participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 2.875, SD = .861$). The mean difference increased to .787. Therefore, the negative effect of AI disclosure was stronger at the first-interview stage, supporting H1b.

Levene's tests were significant at both the pre-screening stage, $F(1,111) = 5.294, p = .023$, and the first-interview stage, $F(1,111) = 4.853, p = .030$, indicating that the homogeneity-of-variance assumption was violated. The standard deviations were higher in the AI-disclosure condition than in the human-disclosure condition at both stages, suggesting greater variability in participants' reactions to AI disclosure. Inspection of the Q–Q plots indicated that the distributions of anticipated procedural justice scores were approximately normal within each disclosure condition and recruitment stage. Some minor deviations were visible in the tails, particularly in the AI-disclosure condition at the first-interview stage, but there was no evidence of severe non-normality or clear extreme outliers. No observations were therefore excluded based on these diagnostic checks. Given the relatively similar group sizes, the consistent direction of the mean differences, and the significant simple effects at both recruitment stages, the findings remained interpretable. However, the significant Levene tests indicate that the results involving comparisons between the disclosure conditions should be interpreted with some caution

As a robustness check, the analysis was repeated as a mixed ANCOVA including age, employment status, education, and gender as control variables. Because participants with missing or excluded values on the control variables were omitted through listwise deletion, the adjusted analysis was based on 110 complete cases. The main effect of disclosure condition remained significant, $F(1,104) = 24.98, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .194$. The interaction between disclosure condition and recruitment stage also remained significant, $F(1,104) = 5.737, p = .018, \eta_p^2 = .052$. Support for H1a and H1b was therefore robust to the inclusion of demographic controls.

Age did not show a significant overall association with anticipated procedural justice, $F(1,104) < .001$, $p = .987$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$. However, the interaction between recruitment stage and age was significant, $F(1,104) = 7.414$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .067$, indicating that the change in anticipated procedural justice between the pre-screening and first-interview stages differed between the age groups. Because age was included only as a control variable and the interaction did not alter the main findings concerning disclosure condition, it was not interpreted as part of the primary hypothesis testing.

5.3.2 Effect of AI Disclosure on Perceived Privacy Protection (H2a/H2b)

Similarly as the previous analysis, the mixed repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of disclosure condition and recruitment stage on perceived privacy protection, the method was selected to test this hypothesis because the study included one between-subjects factor and one within-subjects factor. Disclosure condition was included as the between-subjects factor, with two levels: human disclosure and AI disclosure. Recruitment stage was included as the within-subjects factor, with two levels: pre-screening and first interview.

The main effect of disclosure condition was significant, $F(1,111) = 34.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .237$. Participants in the human-disclosure condition reported higher perceived privacy protection ($M = 3.793$) than participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 2.908$). This finding supports H2a and indicates that AI disclosure was associated with lower perceived privacy protection across the two recruitment stages.

The main effect of recruitment stage was not significant, $F(1,111) = 0.724$, $p = .397$, $\eta_p^2 = .006$. When averaged across disclosure conditions, perceived privacy protection did not differ significantly between the pre-screening and first-interview stages.

The interaction between disclosure condition and recruitment stage was not significant, $F(1,111) = 0.010$, $p = .922$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$. This indicates that the effect of disclosure condition on perceived privacy protection did not differ significantly between the two recruitment stages. At the pre-screening stage, participants in the human-disclosure condition reported higher perceived privacy protection ($M = 3.815$, $SD = .680$) than participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 2.936$, $SD = .890$). The same descriptive pattern was observed at the first-interview stage, where participants in the human-disclosure condition again reported higher perceived privacy protection ($M = 3.771$, $SD = .845$) than participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 2.880$, $SD = .963$). However, because the interaction was not significant, there was no evidence that the negative effect of AI disclosure was stronger at the first-interview stage. H2b was therefore not supported.

Levene's test was significant at the pre-screening stage, $p = .049$, indicating that the homogeneity-of-variance assumption was violated for this comparison. The standard deviation was higher in the AI-

disclosure condition than in the human-disclosure condition, suggesting greater variability in participants' perceptions of privacy protection following AI disclosure. At the first-interview stage, Levene's test was not significant, $p = .164$, indicating that the homogeneity-of-variance assumption was met. The pre-screening result should therefore be interpreted with some caution. Nevertheless, the significant overall effect of disclosure condition and the consistent descriptive pattern across both stages support the conclusion that perceived privacy protection was lower in the AI-disclosure condition. Inspection of the Q–Q plots indicated that perceived privacy protection scores were approximately normally distributed within the disclosure conditions at both recruitment stages. The plots showed some step-like patterns and minor tail deviations, which were expected given that the composite scores were based on three Likert-scale items. One comparatively low observation was visible in the human-disclosure condition at the first-interview stage, but there was no evidence of severe non-normality or multiple extreme outliers. No observations were therefore excluded on the basis of the normality assessment.

As a robustness check, the analysis was repeated as a mixed ANCOVA including age, employment status, education, and gender as control variables. Because participants with missing or excluded values on the control variables were omitted through listwise deletion, the adjusted analysis was based on 110 complete cases. The main effect of disclosure condition remained significant, $F(1,104) = 28.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .213$. Participants in the AI-disclosure condition continued to report lower perceived privacy protection than participants in the human-disclosure condition after the demographic control variables were included. The interaction between disclosure condition and recruitment stage remained nonsignificant, $F(1,104) = 0.025$, $p = .875$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$. The pattern of support for H2a and non-support for H2b therefore remained unchanged after the inclusion of demographic controls.

None of the control variables showed a significant main effect on perceived privacy protection, and none of their interactions with recruitment stage were significant. The inclusion of the control variables therefore did not alter the interpretation of the main findings.

5.3.3 Effect of Anticipated Procedural Justice and Perceived Privacy Protection on Job Pursuit Intention (H3a/H3b)

H3a proposed that higher anticipated procedural justice would be positively associated with job pursuit intention. H3b proposed that higher perceived privacy protection would be positively associated with job pursuit intention. H3a and H3b were evaluated through the outcome equations of the parallel mediation models. These equations constituted multiple regression analyses in which job pursuit intention was regressed simultaneously on anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and disclosure condition. Multiple regression was used because the parallel mediation model included two mediators that predicted job pursuit intention simultaneously. Consequently, each b -path coefficient represented the unique association of one mediator with job pursuit intention after accounting for the

other mediator and disclosure condition. Separate regression analyses were not conducted because these relationships were already estimated within the mediation models.

At the pre-screening stage, anticipated procedural justice was significantly and positively associated with job pursuit intention, $b = 0.638$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.401, 0.927]. This indicates that participants who anticipated the recruitment process to be more procedurally just also reported stronger intention to pursue the job. Perceived privacy protection was also significantly and positively associated with job pursuit intention at the pre-screening stage, $b = 0.346$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.091, 0.557]. Thus, participants who expected stronger protection of their personal information also reported greater willingness to pursue the job, after accounting for anticipated procedural justice and disclosure condition.

The same pattern was found at the first-interview stage. Anticipated procedural justice was significantly and positively associated with job pursuit intention, $b = 0.501$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.198, 0.832]. Perceived privacy protection was also significantly and positively associated with job pursuit intention, $b = 0.381$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.164, 0.603]. The confidence intervals for all four paths excluded zero, supporting the statistical significance of the relationships.

Overall, these findings support H3a and H3b. At both recruitment stages, participants reported stronger job pursuit intentions when they perceived the recruitment process as more procedurally just and expected greater protection of their personal information. The significant coefficients for both mediators indicate that anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection each explained unique variation in job pursuit intention within the parallel mediation models.

5.3.4 Parallel Mediation of the Relationship Between AI Disclosure and Job Pursuit Intention (H4)

Parallel mediation analyses were conducted to examine whether the relationship between disclosure condition and job pursuit intention operated indirectly through anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. Separate models were estimated for the pre-screening and first interview stages because the mediators and outcome were measured separately at each stage.

In each model, disclosure condition was entered as the predictor, anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were entered simultaneously as parallel mediators, and job pursuit intention was entered as the outcome. The mediators were described as parallel because both were examined within the same model, without specifying that either mediator influenced the other.

The model estimated the association between disclosure condition and each mediator, referred to as the a-paths, and the unique association between each mediator and job pursuit intention after accounting for the other mediator and disclosure condition, referred to as the b-paths. The specific indirect effect

through each mediator was calculated by multiplying its corresponding a-path and b-path coefficients. The model also estimated the remaining direct effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention after both mediators were included (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Disclosure condition was dummy-coded as 0 = human-disclosure condition and 1 = AI-disclosure condition. Negative coefficients from disclosure condition therefore indicate lower scores in the AI-disclosure condition than in the human-disclosure condition

Percentile bootstrap confidence intervals were calculated using 5,000 resamples. An indirect effect was treated as statistically significant when its 95% bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero.

Pre-screening stage

At the pre-screening stage, disclosure condition was significantly associated with both mediators. Participants in the AI-disclosure condition reported lower anticipated procedural justice, $b = -0.572$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-0.818, -0.322]$, and lower perceived privacy protection, $b = -0.879$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-1.171, -0.591]$, than participants in the human-disclosure condition. As reported in the previous section, anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were both positively associated with job pursuit intention when entered simultaneously in the model.

The total effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention was significant, $b = -0.879$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-1.205, -0.546]$. This indicates that participants in the AI-disclosure condition reported lower job pursuit intention than participants in the human-disclosure condition before the mediators were included. After anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were entered into the model, the remaining direct effect of disclosure condition was not significant, $b = -0.210$, $p = .166$, 95% CI $[-0.454, 0.036]$. This pattern indicates that the relationship between disclosure condition and job pursuit intention at the pre-screening stage was largely accounted for by the two mediators.

The indirect effect through anticipated procedural justice was significant, $b = -0.365$, 95% bootstrap CI $[-0.636, -0.172]$. The indirect effect through perceived privacy protection was also significant, $b = -0.304$, 95% bootstrap CI $[-0.547, -0.076]$. The total indirect effect through both mediators was significant, $b = -0.670$, 95% bootstrap CI $[-0.938, -0.415]$. These findings support H4 at the pre-screening stage. The results indicate that AI disclosure was indirectly associated with lower job pursuit intention through lower anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection.

The model explained 50.9% of the variance in job pursuit intention, $R^2 = .509$. The mediator equations explained 15.3% of the variance in anticipated procedural justice, $R^2 = .153$, and 23.4% of the variance in perceived privacy protection, $R^2 = .234$. See Table 5 for the mediation results on pre-screening:

TABLE 5 PARALLEL MEDIATION RESULTS FOR THE PRE-SCREENING STAGE

<i>Effect</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
<i>Disclosure → APJ</i>	-0.572	< .001	[-0.818, -0.322]
<i>Disclosure → PPP</i>	-0.879	< .001	[-1.171, -0.591]
<i>APJ → JPI</i>	0.638	< .001	[0.401, 0.927]
<i>PPP → JPI</i>	0.346	< .001	[0.091, 0.557]
<i>Direct effect: Disclosure → JPI</i>	-0.210	.166	[-0.454, 0.036]
<i>Indirect effect via APJ</i>	-0.365	< .001	[-0.636, -0.172]
<i>Indirect effect via PPP</i>	-0.304	< .001	[-0.547, -0.076]
<i>Total indirect effect</i>	-0.670	< .001	[-0.938, -0.415]
<i>Total effect</i>	-0.879	< .001	[-1.205, -0.546]

As a robustness check, the pre-screening parallel mediation model was repeated with age, gender, employment status, and education included as control variables. Because participants with missing or excluded values on the control variables were omitted through listwise deletion, the controlled model was based on $N = 110$. The control variables were included as predictors of the mediators and job pursuit intention.

The pattern of results remained substantively unchanged. Disclosure condition continued to be significantly associated with anticipated procedural justice, $b = -0.545$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.780, -0.298], and perceived privacy protection, $b = -0.846$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-1.139, -0.531]. Anticipated procedural justice, $b = 0.662$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.417, 0.960], and perceived privacy protection, $b = 0.326$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.088, 0.546], also remained positively associated with job pursuit intention.

The indirect effect through anticipated procedural justice remained significant, $b = -0.361$, 95% bootstrap CI [-0.622, -0.162], as also did the indirect effect through the perceived privacy protection, $b = -0.276$, 95% bootstrap CI [-0.509, -0.070]. The total indirect effect also remained significant, $b = -0.637$, 95% bootstrap CI [-0.906, -0.382]. The remaining direct effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention was not significant after the mediators and control variables were included, $b = -0.167$, $p = .278$, 95% CI [-0.440, 0.089]. The pre-screening mediation findings were therefore robust to the inclusion of demographic controls.

First-interview stage

A second parallel mediation model was estimated for the first-interview stage. Disclosure condition was significantly associated with both mediators. Participants in the AI-disclosure condition reported lower anticipated procedural justice, $b = -0.786$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-1.053, -0.507], and lower perceived privacy protection, $b = -0.891$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-1.217, -0.564], than participants in the human-

disclosure condition. As in the pre-screening model, anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were both positively associated with job pursuit intention when entered simultaneously in the model.

The total effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention was significant, $b = -1.235$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-1.566, -0.898]$. This indicates that participants in the AI-disclosure condition reported lower job pursuit intention than participants in the human-disclosure condition before the mediators were included. In contrast to the pre-screening stage, the remaining direct effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention was significant after anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were entered into the model, $b = -0.502$, $p = .002$, 95% CI $[-0.799, -0.219]$. Thus, the two mediators accounted for part, but not all, of the relationship between disclosure condition and job pursuit intention at the first-interview stage.

The indirect effect through anticipated procedural justice was significant, $b = -0.394$, 95% bootstrap CI $[-0.680, -0.151]$. The indirect effect through perceived privacy protection was also significant, $b = -0.339$, 95% bootstrap CI $[-0.604, -0.131]$. The total indirect effect through both mediators was significant, $b = -0.733$, 95% bootstrap CI $[-1.026, -0.473]$. These findings support H4 at the first-interview stage and indicate that AI disclosure was indirectly associated with lower job pursuit intention through lower anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. The significant remaining direct effect further suggests that variables beyond these two mediators may contribute to the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention at the first-interview stage.

The model explained 57.9% of the variance in job pursuit intention, $R^2 = .579$. The mediator equations explained 21.3% of the variance in anticipated procedural justice, $R^2 = .213$, and 19.5% of the variance in perceived privacy protection, $R^2 = .195$. See table 6 for the mediation results on first interview:

TABLE 6 PARALLEL MEDIATION RESULTS FOR THE FIRST INTERVIEW STAGE

<i>Effect</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
<i>Disclosure → APJ</i>	-0.786	< .001	[-1.053, -0.507]
<i>Disclosure → PPP</i>	-0.891	< .001	[-1.217, -0.564]
<i>APJ → JPI</i>	0.501	< .001	[0.198, 0.832]
<i>PPP → JPI</i>	0.381	< .001	[0.164, 0.603]
<i>Direct effect: Disclosure → JPI</i>	-0.502	.002	[-0.799, -0.219]
<i>Indirect effect via APJ</i>	-0.394	< .001	[-0.680, -0.151]
<i>Indirect effect via PPP</i>	-0.339	< .001	[-0.604, -0.131]
<i>Total indirect effect</i>	-0.733	< .001	[-1.026, -0.473]
<i>Total effect</i>	-1.235	< .001	[-1.566, -0.898]

As a robustness check, the first-interview parallel mediation model was repeated including age, gender, employment status, and education as control variables. The pattern of results remained substantively unchanged. Disclosure condition continued to significantly predict anticipated procedural justice, $b = -0.769$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-1.049, -0.490]$, and perceived privacy protection, $b = -0.826$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-1.173, -0.451]$. Anticipated procedural justice, $b = 0.487$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[0.176, 0.831]$, and perceived privacy protection, $b = 0.380$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[0.164, 0.601]$, both remained significant positive predictors of job pursuit intention.

The indirect effect through anticipated procedural justice remained significant, $b = -0.375$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-0.672, -0.133]$, as did the indirect effect through perceived privacy protection, $b = -0.314$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-0.587, -0.109]$. The total indirect effect also remained significant, $b = -0.689$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-0.980, -0.416]$. The direct effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention also remained significant after including the mediators and control variables, $b = -0.487$, $p = .002$, 95% CI $[-0.804, -0.195]$. Thus, the first-interview mediation results were robust to the inclusion of demographic controls.

Overall, the results showed that AI disclosure was indirectly associated with lower job pursuit intention through lower anticipated procedural justice and lower perceived privacy protection. At the pre-screening stage, the direct effect of disclosure condition was no longer statistically significant after the mediators were included. This pattern suggests that the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention was largely accounted for by anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. At the first-interview stage, both specific indirect effects were statistically significant, while the direct effect of disclosure condition remained significant after the mediators were included. This pattern was consistent with partial mediation, indicating that anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection accounted for part, but not all, of the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention. The controlled mediation analyses produced broadly similar indirect-effect patterns after age, gender, employment status, and education were included, supporting the robustness of the main findings.

5.3.5 Effect of AI Disclosure on Job Pursuit Intention (H5a/H5b)

A mixed repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine whether disclosure condition influenced job pursuit intention and whether this effect differed between the pre-screening and first-interview stages. Disclosure condition was included as the between-subjects factor, with two levels: human-disclosure condition and AI-disclosure condition. Recruitment stage was included as the within-subjects factor, with two levels: pre-screening and first interview.

The main effect of disclosure condition was significant, $F(1,111) = 41.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .274$. Participants in the human-disclosure condition reported higher job pursuit intention ($M = 3.993$) than

participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 2.936$). This finding indicates that AI disclosure resulted in lower job pursuit intention across the two recruitment stages and supports H5a.

The main effect of recruitment stage was also significant, $F(1, 111) = 4.275$, $p = .041$, $\eta^2 = .037$. Across disclosure conditions, job pursuit intention was slightly higher at the pre-screening stage ($M = 3.531$) than at the first-interview stage ($M = 3.398$). However, this stage effect was not the main focus of H5 and should be interpreted together with the interaction effect, because the change between stages differed by disclosure condition.

The interaction between recruitment stage and disclosure condition was significant, $F(1, 111) = 7.574$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .064$. This indicates that the effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention differed between the pre-screening and first-interview stages. Simple main effects showed that disclosure condition had a significant effect on job pursuit intention at both stages. At the pre-screening stage, participants in the human-disclosure condition reported higher job pursuit intention ($M = 3.971$, $SD = 0.688$) than participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 3.092$, $SD = 1.068$), $F(1, 111) = 26.02$, $p < .001$. At the first-interview stage, the difference between conditions was larger: participants in the human-disclosure condition again reported higher job pursuit intention ($M = 4.015$, $SD = 0.598$) than participants in the AI-disclosure condition ($M = 2.780$, $SD = 1.167$), $F(1, 111) = 47.57$, $p < .001$. Therefore, H5b was supported.

Levene's tests were significant at both the pre-screening and first-interview stages, $p < .001$, indicating that the homogeneity-of-variance assumption was violated for both comparisons. The standard deviations were substantially higher in the AI-disclosure condition than in the human-disclosure condition at both stages, indicating greater variability in participants' job pursuit intentions following AI disclosure. Inspection of the Q–Q plots nevertheless suggested that the distributions were approximately normal within the disclosure conditions. The plots showed step-like patterns, which were expected because job pursuit intention was based on three Likert-scale items, together with some mild deviations in the tails. The largest departure was a comparatively low observation in the human-disclosure condition at the pre-screening stage, but there was no evidence of severe non-normality or multiple extreme observations. The findings should therefore be interpreted with some caution because of the unequal variances, rather than because of substantial violations of normality. Nevertheless, the similar group sizes, the consistent direction of the mean differences, and the significant simple effects at both stages indicate that job pursuit intention was lower in the AI-disclosure condition. The significant interaction further indicates that this difference was larger at the first-interview stage.

As a separate robustness check concerning demographic controls, the analysis was repeated as a mixed ANCOVA including age, employment status, education, and gender as control variables. The main effect of disclosure condition remained significant, $F(1, 104) = 34.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .248$. Participants

in the AI-disclosure condition continued to report lower job pursuit intention than participants in the human-disclosure condition after accounting for the control variables. The interaction between disclosure condition and recruitment stage also remained significant, $F(1, 104) = 7.353$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .066$. The adjusted marginal means showed that the difference between the human disclosure and AI disclosure conditions remained larger at the first-interview stage than at the pre-screening stage. Thus, the support for H5a and H5b was robust to the inclusion of demographic controls.

In the controlled model, the main effect of recruitment stage was no longer significant, $F(1, 104) = 0.967$, $p = .328$. This does not change the interpretation of H5a or H5b, because the hypotheses focused on the effect of disclosure condition and on whether this effect differed by stage. Both of these effects remained significant after the inclusion of the control variables. None of the control variables showed a significant main effect on job pursuit intention at the .05 level, and none of the interactions between recruitment stage and the control variables were significant.

5.3.6 Moderation by AI Use Frequency and previous AI Recruitment Experience (RQ1-RQ4)

RQ1 examined to what extent AI use frequency influenced the relationship between AI disclosure and anticipated procedural justice. RQ2 examined to what extent AI use frequency influenced the relationship between AI disclosure and perceived privacy protection. RQ3 examined to what extent previous AI recruitment experience influenced the relationship between AI disclosure and anticipated procedural justice. RQ4 examined to what extent previous AI recruitment experience influenced the relationship between AI disclosure and perceived privacy protection.

AI use frequency was included as the general AI-related moderator. The original AI use item ranged from 1 = daily use to 7 = never. For the analysis, the item was reverse-coded so that higher values indicated more frequent AI use. This decision was made because AI familiarity and AI use did not form a reliable composite measure, and AI use frequency was considered to reflect more meaningfully the real indication of AI exposure. Previous AI recruitment experience was included as a dichotomous moderator.

The moderation analyses were estimated separately for the pre-screening and first-interview stages. The analyses examined the interaction between disclosure condition and each moderator in predicting anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. In other words, they tested whether the effect of disclosure condition on the two mediators differed depending on participants' AI use frequency or previous experience with AI-enabled recruitment. Unstandardised coefficients are reported.

Pre-screening stage

At the pre-screening stage, the interaction between disclosure condition and AI use frequency was not significant for anticipated procedural justice, $b = 0.0004$, $p = .996$, 95% CI $[-0.203, 0.208]$. The

confidence interval included zero, indicating that there was no evidence that the effect of disclosure condition on anticipated procedural justice differed according to participants' frequency of AI use. RQ1 therefore produced no evidence of moderation at the pre-screening stage.

The interaction between disclosure condition and AI use frequency was also not significant for perceived privacy protection, $b = 0.019$, $p = .872$, 95% CI $[-0.232, 0.271]$. Thus, there was no evidence that the effect of disclosure condition on perceived privacy protection differed according to AI use frequency. RQ2 produced no evidence of moderation at the pre-screening stage.

Previous AI recruitment experience did not significantly moderate the relationship between disclosure condition and anticipated procedural justice, $b = -0.020$, $p = .937$, 95% CI $[-0.497, 0.468]$. The confidence interval included zero, indicating no evidence that the effect of disclosure condition differed between participants with and without previous AI recruitment experience. RQ3 therefore produced no evidence of moderation at the pre-screening stage.

Similarly, the interaction between disclosure condition and previous AI recruitment experience was not significant for perceived privacy protection, $b = 0.174$, $p = .570$, 95% CI $[-0.396, 0.760]$. RQ4 therefore produced no evidence that previous AI recruitment experience moderated the effect of disclosure condition on perceived privacy protection at the pre-screening stage.

First-interview stage

The same general pattern was observed at the first-interview stage. The interaction between disclosure condition and AI use frequency was not significant for anticipated procedural justice, $b = 0.035$, $p = .755$, 95% CI $[-0.140, 0.254]$, or perceived privacy protection, $b = -0.026$, $p = .846$, 95% CI $[-0.305, 0.268]$. Therefore, RQ1 and RQ2 produced no evidence that the effect of disclosure condition on anticipated procedural justice or perceived privacy protection differed according to AI use frequency at the first-interview stage.

Previous AI recruitment experience also did not significantly moderate the relationship between disclosure condition and anticipated procedural justice, $b = 0.211$, $p = .468$, 95% CI $[-0.326, 0.743]$. The interaction between disclosure condition and previous AI recruitment experience was also not significant for perceived privacy protection, $b = 0.123$, $p = .726$, 95% CI $[-0.510, 0.774]$. Thus, RQ3 and RQ4 produced no evidence that the effect of disclosure condition on either mediator differed according to previous AI recruitment experience at the first-interview stage.

Overall moderation findings

Overall, none of the eight interaction terms was statistically significant, and all confidence intervals included zero. The analyses therefore provided no evidence that AI use frequency or previous AI recruitment experience moderated the associations between disclosure condition and anticipated

procedural justice or perceived privacy protection. The negative associations between AI disclosure and the two mediators did not vary significantly according to how frequently participants used AI tools or whether they had previous experience with AI-enabled recruitment. Accordingly, the analyses addressing RQ1–RQ4 did not provide evidence of moderation.

5.3.7 Robustness Checks with Control Variables

To examine whether the main findings remained stable after accounting for demographic differences, additional analyses were conducted including age, employment status, education, and gender as control variables. Gender was included as a binary control variable. Participants who selected "prefer not to say," as well as any participants with missing or excluded values on the control variables, were omitted through listwise deletion. The robustness analyses were therefore based on $N = 110$ complete cases.

The repeated-measures analyses for anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention were repeated as mixed ANCOVAs. As reported in the preceding sections, the main effect of disclosure condition remained significant for all three outcomes after the demographic control variables were included. The interaction between disclosure condition and recruitment stage also remained significant for anticipated procedural justice and job pursuit intention, while it remained nonsignificant for perceived privacy protection. The pattern of support for H1a, H1b, H2a, H5a, and H5b, together with the non-support for H2b, therefore remained unchanged after adjustment for the demographic controls.

Most effects involving the control variables were nonsignificant. However, age showed a significant interaction with recruitment stage in the analysis of anticipated procedural justice. This indicates that the difference in anticipated procedural justice between the pre-screening and first-interview stages varied according to age. The interaction did not alter the significant effects of disclosure condition that were central to H1a and H1b.

The parallel mediation models were also repeated with age, employment status, education, and gender included as predictors of the mediators and job pursuit intention. At both the pre-screening and first-interview stages, the specific indirect effects through anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection remained significant. The pattern of the remaining direct effects also remained unchanged: the direct effect of disclosure condition was nonsignificant at the pre-screening stage and significant at the first-interview stage. The findings supporting H4 were therefore stable after the demographic control variables were included.

Overall, the robustness analyses showed that the main disclosure-related findings remained substantively unchanged after adjusting for age, employment status, education, and gender. Although

age was related to changes in anticipated procedural justice across recruitment stages, the inclusion of the demographic controls did not alter the interpretation of the principal hypothesis tests.

5.3.8 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Overall, the findings show that AI disclosure was associated with lower applicant perceptions and intentions. Participants in the AI-disclosure condition reported lower anticipated procedural justice, lower perceived privacy protection, and lower job pursuit intention than participants in the human-disclosure condition. The effect of AI disclosure also differed between recruitment stages for anticipated procedural justice and job pursuit intention, with stronger negative effects at the first-interview stage. However, this stage-dependent difference was not found for perceived privacy protection.

The mediation analyses showed significant indirect effects of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention through anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection at both recruitment stages. AI disclosure was therefore indirectly associated with lower job pursuit intention through lower anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. At the pre-screening stage, the remaining direct effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention was nonsignificant after the mediators were included, indicating that the relationship was largely accounted for by the two mediators. At the first-interview stage, both indirect effects were significant, but a significant direct effect remained. This pattern was consistent with partial mediation and suggests that additional mechanisms may contribute to the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention at this stage.

The exploratory moderation analyses provided no evidence that AI use frequency or previous AI recruitment experience moderated the relationship between disclosure condition and anticipated procedural justice or perceived privacy protection. None of the interaction terms was statistically significant, and their confidence intervals included zero. The analyses therefore did not indicate that the effects of disclosure condition differed according to participants' AI use frequency or previous AI recruitment experience.

Finally, the main disclosure-related findings remained substantively unchanged after age, employment status, education, and gender were included as control variables. The robustness analyses therefore supported the stability of the principal hypothesis-testing results after adjustment for the demographic controls. A complete summary of the hypothesis and research-question results is provided in Appendix 3. In summary, H1a, H1b, H2a, H3a, H3b, H4, H5a, and H5b were supported, whereas H2b was not supported. RQ1–RQ4 produced no evidence that AI use frequency or previous AI recruitment experience moderated the relationships between disclosure condition and either anticipated procedural justice or perceived privacy protection.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The main goal of this study was to examine how the disclosure of AI use in early recruitment shapes applicants' perceptions of anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. The study also explored whether anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection help explain the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention, and whether applicants' AI use frequency or previous experience with AI-based recruitment changes how they react to such disclosure. The analyses consistently showed the same direction of effects. Participants who were informed that AI would be involved expected the recruitment process to be less procedurally just, had less confidence that their personal information would be protected, and reported lower job pursuit intention than those who evaluated a human-only process.

The findings also fit well with the broader applicant reactions literature, which shows that candidates do not judge selection procedures only by their technical quality or expected accuracy. Instead, they also pay attention to whether the process feels fair, transparent, respectful, and appropriate for the recruitment context (Gilliland, 1993; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Bauer, et al., 2006). From a signaling theory perspective, applicants often have only limited information about an organization and therefore use available cues to form impressions about how they may be treated during the hiring process (Spence, 1973; Connelly, Certo, Reutzel, DesJardine, & Zhou, 2025). In the present scenarios, AI disclosure did not appear to function as a neutral technical detail. Instead, it functioned as an informational cue associated with less favourable evaluations of the selection process, although the specific meaning participants attached to this cue was not measured. The mention of AI lowered participants' anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection and reduced their reported willingness to pursue the job opportunity.

AI disclosure had a significant negative effect on anticipated procedural justice at both recruitment stages. Participants in the AI condition were less confident that the procedure would treat them fairly than participants in the human-disclosure condition. One possible interpretation is that applicants associate AI-based selection with less individual consideration, although this explanation was not directly measured in the present study. Previous research suggests that applicants may expect automated procedures to provide fewer opportunities to draw attention to individual or non-standard qualifications that are not easily captured by standardized assessments (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021).

The interaction between disclosure condition and recruitment stage adds an important qualification. Although AI disclosure reduced anticipated procedural justice at both stages, the effect was stronger at the first interview. This suggests that applicants may not react to AI involvement in the same way across the whole candidate journey, since the meaning of a selection procedure can change depending on the stage at which it appears (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Verhoeven T. , 2016). One possible explanation is that AI is perceived as more compatible with pre-screening because this stage is relatively standardized

and document based. The first interview, on the other hand, is usually associated with personal interaction, mutual evaluation, and the opportunity to communicate motivation, personality, and individual fit beyond the written application. These expectations are closely related to procedural justice dimensions such as opportunity to perform and the perceived appropriateness of the selection method (Gilliland, 1993; Bauer, et al., 2006). The stronger effect at the interview stage may reflect concerns about reduced human judgement and interpersonal interaction, although these concerns were not measured separately in the present study. This interpretation is similar to prior research showing that AI-supported or highly automated interviews tend to trigger more negative applicant reactions than AI use in earlier screening stages (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021).

AI disclosure also had a significant negative effect on perceived privacy protection. Participants who were informed that AI would be used expected their personal information to be less protected than participants in the human-disclosure condition. This finding is consistent with privacy research showing that people's reactions to data-related practices are shaped by how much information is collected, how much control they feel they have over their data, and how aware they are of how their information is used (Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004). It also fits with applicant reactions research in online selection, where privacy concerns have been shown to influence how candidates evaluate technology-mediated recruitment procedures (Bauer, et al., 2006). In recruitment, this is especially relevant because applicants are often required to share personal, educational, and professional information before they know exactly how it will be evaluated. Previous privacy research suggests that AI involvement may create uncertainty about data access, processing, storage, and possible secondary uses, although these specific concerns were not measured in the present study. The results therefore show that a neutral AI disclosure can reduce confidence in privacy protection when no concrete misuse of data is described.

Unlike anticipated procedural justice, the effect of AI disclosure on perceived privacy protection did not differ significantly between the pre-screening and first-interview stages. The non-significant interaction indicates that the effect of AI disclosure on perceived privacy protection did not differ statistically between the two stages in this sample. Applicants begin providing personal information from the moment they submit an application, and uncertainty about how AI processes that information may arise regardless of whether it is used during screening or interviewing (Bauer, et al., 2006; Malhotra, Kim, & Agarwal, 2004). This interpretation is also consistent with ethical discussions on AI-enabled recruitment, which identify privacy, transparency, and data governance as concerns that apply across recruitment practices rather than only to one specific selection step (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022).

One possible interpretation of the different interaction patterns is that fairness and privacy-related evaluations may not respond to recruitment stage in the same way. Expectations of human contact and individualized treatment become especially strong during an interview which may explain the larger

stage-specific effect on procedural justice. Privacy protection may be relevant throughout the candidate journey, but this interpretation was not directly tested

The results further showed that both anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were positively associated with job pursuit intention at both recruitment stages. Participants were more willing to pursue the job opportunity when they expected the recruitment process to be fair and when they believed that their personal information would be handled responsibly. Other studies also show that fairness perceptions are linked to organizational attractiveness, recommendation intentions, and willingness to continue in a selection process (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Bauer, et al., 2006). The results also show that privacy-related evaluations deserve greater attention in research on AI-enabled recruitment. In this study, both anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection were positively associated with job pursuit intention. The findings therefore support including privacy-related evaluations in models of applicant reactions to AI-supported recruitment.

The mediation analyses represent one of the central findings of this study. At both recruitment stages, significant indirect effects were identified through anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection. AI disclosure was indirectly associated with lower job pursuit intention through lower anticipated procedural justice and lower perceived privacy protection.

At the pre-screening stage, the direct effect of AI disclosure on job pursuit intention was no longer statistically significant after both mediators were included in the model. This pattern suggests that the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention was largely accounted for by anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection, although the possible role of other unmeasured mechanisms cannot be excluded. The findings are therefore consistent with fairness- and privacy-related evaluations playing an important role in the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention at this stage.

At the first-interview stage, both specific indirect effects were statistically significant, while the direct effect of AI disclosure on job pursuit intention also remained significant after the mediators were included. This pattern suggests that anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection accounted for part, but not all, of the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention at the interview stage.

The remaining direct effect at the first-interview stage suggests that other variables may also be relevant. Previous research identifies social presence, perceived control, opportunity to perform, human interaction, and broader organizational impressions as possible influences on reactions to automated interviews (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). These factors were not measured in the present study and should therefore be considered directions for future research and not as explanations established by the current findings.

The exploratory moderation analyses did not provide evidence that AI use frequency or previous AI recruitment experience changed the relationship between AI disclosure and the two mediators. The analyses provided no evidence that the relationships between AI disclosure and anticipated procedural justice or perceived privacy protection differed according to AI use frequency or previous AI recruitment experience. This result indicates that no moderating effect of AI use frequency was detected in this sample; it does not establish that familiarity is irrelevant to applicants' acceptance of AI recruitment. One possible interpretation is that experience with voluntarily used AI tools does not necessarily transfer to acceptance of AI as an evaluator in a high-stakes employment context. However, this distinction was not measured directly. Previous AI recruitment experience also did not significantly moderate the effects in this sample, although the broad experience measure does not establish whether the quality or type of prior experience might matter.

Finally, the robustness checks showed that the main findings remained stable after controlling for age, employment status, education, and gender. The effects of AI disclosure on anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention remained significant, and the mediation results were also robust after including the demographic controls. This makes it less likely that the observed effects were attributable to the measured demographic differences, although the influence of unmeasured characteristics cannot be excluded.

The study contributes to research on applicant reactions and AI-enabled recruitment by showing that, within a scenario-based experiment, AI disclosure reduced anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. This is consistent with applicant reactions research showing that candidates' perceptions of selection procedures are meaningfully linked to attitudes, intentions, and behavioral outcomes (McCarthy, et al., 2017), as well as with research showing that information about AI use in selection can reduce job seekers' pre-process expectations and intentions, particularly when AI is used in interview stages (Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). The results should not be interpreted as showing that transparency of AI use itself is harmful, since the study compared a brief AI disclosure with a human-only description and did not test different forms of transparency. Although disclosure is important from an ethical and regulatory perspective, future research should test whether explanations about the role of AI, human oversight, and privacy safeguards can improve applicant reactions. In particular, the stronger negative effects observed at the interview stage indicate that AI disclosure at interpersonal stages warrants additional attention, although the effectiveness of communication strategies and safeguards remains to be tested

CHAPTER 7 LIMITATIONS

Several limitations need to be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. One limitation concerns the use of a scenario-based survey experiment. This design allowed the effect of AI disclosure to be examined under controlled conditions, but participants did not enter a real recruitment process or interact with an actual AI system. They evaluated written scenarios and reported their expected perceptions and intentions. The findings therefore reflect anticipated reactions to the disclosure of AI use rather than reactions formed through direct experience, so results can be different depending on which specific recruitment technology is being tested. In practice, applicants' responses may also depend on the design of the system, the information requested, the feedback provided, the perceived accuracy of the assessment, and the degree of human involvement.

The hypothetical setting also limits conclusions about actual applicant behaviour. Participants who reported lower job pursuit intention might still apply for a position if they urgently needed employment or considered the job or hiring company particularly attractive. Although employment status was included in the robustness analyses, the distinction between employed and unemployed participants does not account for other factors such as if someone is actively searching for work, dissatisfied with their current position, under financial pressure, or willing to tolerate an undesirable recruitment procedure. Future studies could measure job-search urgency, perceived employability, availability of alternatives, and actual application or withdrawal behaviour.

The study also focused only on two early recruitment stages. This focus fits the purpose of the thesis because early impressions can influence whether applicants continue with a job opportunity. At the same time, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire recruitment process. Other stages, such as assessment centres or final interviews may elicit different reactions. Applicants may also change their views after receiving more information about the process or interacting with recruiters. Additionally, because the recruitment stages were presented in their natural chronological order, with pre-screening preceding the first interview, recruitment stage was also linked to presentation order. Consequently, stage differences cannot be completely separated from possible order, learning, or consistency effects.

Another limitation concerns the way AI disclosure was presented. The disclosure was intentionally brief and neutral so that the study could isolate the effect of being informed that AI would be involved. However, real organizations may explain AI use in considerably more detail. They may specify whether the system performs administrative tasks, evaluates candidates, supports a recruiter, or contributes directly to selection decisions. They may also describe the level of human oversight and the safeguards used to protect applicant data. The findings should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that every form of AI transparency produces negative reactions. The study examined the effect of a basic disclosure and did not compare different communication approaches or test whether additional explanations would improve applicant reactions.

The study measured perceived privacy protection rather than privacy concern. Higher scores represented greater confidence that personal information would be handled responsibly, whereas privacy concern would capture negative expectations like worry, discomfort, or perceived risk. These constructs are related but are not necessarily direct opposites. An applicant may believe that formal safeguards exist while still feeling uncomfortable about the use of personal data. Future research could include both constructs to examine whether confidence in data protection and concern about data use make separate contributions to job pursuit intention.

The measurement of AI-related experience also had limitations. AI use frequency captured general use of AI tools rather than knowledge of AI-based recruitment or automated decision-making. Someone who frequently uses tools like ChatGPT, DeepL, recommendation systems, or other AI applications may still have little understanding of how AI is used to evaluate job candidates. Previous AI recruitment experience was measured as a yes-or-no variable and therefore did not capture the type, quality, recency, or outcome of the experience. AI use frequency was also measured with a single item, which limited measurement precision and did not distinguish between different types or purposes of AI use. Previous AI recruitment experience was measured with a single yes-or-no item that captured only whether participants reported prior exposure to AI-enabled recruitment. It did not establish which recruitment stage was involved, what role AI played, whether participants understood how the system had been used, or whether the experience had been positive or negative. These broad measures may have limited the ability to identify moderation effects. In addition, interaction effects are generally more difficult to detect than main effects, and the sample may not have provided sufficient power to identify small differences between participant groups. The non-significant moderation results should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that AI familiarity or previous recruitment experience can never influence applicant reactions.

The online recruitment approach may have produced self-selection and coverage bias because participants were recruited mainly through online networks and survey-sharing platforms. This approach may have overrepresented individuals who are more active online or more interested in and familiar with AI-related topics. Social desirability bias may also have influenced how participants expressed their views regarding fairness, privacy, and AI use, although the anonymous questionnaire format was intended to reduce this risk.

The study relied on self-reported perceptions and intentions collected within one survey. Participants' answers may have been influenced by broader attitudes toward AI, technology, privacy, or recruitment rather than only by the scenario they evaluated. Since anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention were measured in the same survey, common method bias cannot be completely excluded. The experimental manipulation supports conclusions about the effect of the disclosure condition on the measured outcomes, but the mediation results should be interpreted more

cautiously. The significant indirect effects are consistent with the proposed process, but they do not provide definitive proof that changes in fairness and privacy perceptions caused the differences in job pursuit intention. Longitudinal or field-based research could measure expectations, experiences, and actual behaviour at separate points in time.

Another limitation is that the study did not include an actual selection outcome. Participants evaluated the process before knowing whether they would be accepted, rejected, or invited to continue. This was suitable for studying early expectations, but in real selection procedures the outcome may strongly influence how applicants evaluate the process. For example, rejected applicants may judge the same AI-based process more negatively than applicants who receive a positive outcome. Therefore, the findings do not show how AI disclosure would affect reactions after a real decision has been made.

The sample was restricted to people living in Vienna. This created a relatively consistent institutional and labour-market context, but it limits the generalizability of the findings. Attitudes toward AI, expectations of recruitment procedures, privacy norms, labour-market conditions, and knowledge of data-protection requirements may differ across regions and countries. The sample may also reflect the characteristics of an urban and internationally diverse population that is not representative of all job seekers. Replication in other national, cultural, and labour-market contexts would help establish whether the observed effects are consistent across different applicant populations.

The sample size and data structure should also be considered. The final sample of 113 participants allowed the planned main analyses to be conducted, but some subgroup and moderation analyses may have had limited statistical power. Several demographic variables also had to be re-coded into broader categories so that they could be included in the robustness analyses. Gender was simplified into a binary control variable, and participants who selected “prefer not to say” were excluded from that analysis. These decisions reduced the available sample and limited the representation of demographic diversity. Although the main findings remained stable after the controls were included, the analyses cannot rule out the influence of other unmeasured personal or situational characteristics.

An additional statistical limitation concerns unequal variances between the disclosure conditions. Levene's tests were significant for anticipated procedural justice at both recruitment stages, perceived privacy protection at the pre-screening stage, and job pursuit intention at both stages. Although inspection of the Q–Q plots did not indicate severe departures from normality and the condition sizes were relatively similar, the unequal variances mean that the corresponding ANOVA and simple-effects results should be interpreted with caution. Repeating the analyses as ANCOVAs with demographic control variables did not correct this assumption violation, because including covariates does not itself address unequal variances. Robust or heteroscedasticity-consistent alternatives were not conducted, so it cannot be established whether all findings would remain unchanged under those methods.

Finally, the model focused on anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. Other potentially relevant factors, including trust in the organization, trust in the technology, social presence, organizational attractiveness, perceived human contact, opportunity to perform, and perceived AI competence, were not measured. The study also did not directly assess the specific meanings or concerns that participants attached to AI disclosure. Explanations involving reduced human interaction, standardized evaluation, limited individual consideration, or uncertainty about particular data practices are therefore interpretations based on previous research rather than causes demonstrated by the present study. This is especially relevant at the first-interview stage, where anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection did not statistically account for the entire relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention. The remaining direct effect indicates that additional variables may be relevant, but the present findings cannot identify which mechanisms produced it.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

This thesis examined how AI disclosure in early recruitment affects applicants' anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. Participants who were informed that AI would be involved reported lower scores on all three outcomes than participants in the human-disclosure condition. The findings therefore show that a brief disclosure of AI involvement can influence applicants' early expectations and intentions before they directly experience the selection procedure.

The results also show that the stage of recruitment matters. AI disclosure had a stronger negative effect on anticipated procedural justice and job pursuit intention at the first-interview stage than at the pre-screening stage. In contrast, perceived privacy protection was lower in the AI-disclosure condition across both stages, but this effect did not significantly differ between pre-screening and first interview. One possible interpretation is that privacy-related evaluations are relevant across recruitment stages, although the study did not directly measure why the effect remained similar at pre-screening and the first interview.

The mediation analyses provided further insight into the statistical relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention. Significant indirect effects were found through anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection at both recruitment stages. At pre-screening, the direct effect of AI disclosure was no longer statistically significant after the mediators were included, suggesting that the relationship was largely accounted for by these two evaluations. At the first-interview stage, the direct effect remained significant, indicating a pattern of partial mediation. Anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection therefore accounted for part, but not all, of the relationship at the interview stage. Additional variables may be relevant, but the present study cannot determine which mechanisms produced the remaining effect.

The exploratory moderation analyses did not find statistically significant evidence that AI use frequency or previous AI recruitment experience changed the effects of AI disclosure on anticipated procedural justice or perceived privacy protection. This means that moderation was not detected using the present sample and measures; it does not establish that familiarity or previous experience can never influence applicant reactions. One possible interpretation is that experience with voluntarily used AI tools does not necessarily translate into greater acceptance of AI as an evaluator in an employment context, although this distinction was not directly measured.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the relevance of applicant reactions theory and provide a possible application of signalling theory to AI-enabled recruitment. Applicants use available information about selection procedures when forming expectations about an organization and the recruitment process (Spence, 1973; Gilliland, 1993; Connelly, Certo, Reutzel, DesJardine, & Zhou, 2025; Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012). In the present study, AI disclosure was associated with less

favourable fairness and privacy-related evaluations and lower job pursuit intention. However, the study did not directly measure the specific signals or meanings that participants attached to the disclosure. Interpretations involving reduced human involvement, uncertainty about data handling, or limited individual consideration should therefore be treated as theoretically plausible explanations rather than as mechanisms demonstrated by the findings.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that organizations should pay attention to how AI use is introduced at different recruitment stages. A brief disclosure without additional explanation was associated with less favourable applicant reactions, particularly at the first-interview stage. The study did not test whether more detailed communication would improve these reactions. Nevertheless, future organizational practice and research could examine whether explaining the role of the system, the degree of human oversight, the review of decisions, and the protection of applicant data helps applicants evaluate the process more accurately.

Future research could build on these findings by examining how different forms of communication influence applicants' attitudes toward AI recruitment. For example, future studies could compare a simple AI disclosure with disclosures that emphasize human oversight, fairness safeguards, validated system quality, data protection, or opportunities for candidates to demonstrate individual strengths. This could help clarify whether reactions differ depending on the amount and type of information provided about how AI is used. Other models like the elaboration likelihood model could be useful here, because it could help better understand the processing routes of the AI disclosures on applicants (Cacioppo & Petty, 1986). Signalling theory could also be used further to examine which messages help organizations reduce negative assumptions and make applicants more receptive to AI-based technologies (Spence, 1973). In addition, the technology acceptance model could help examine the role of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in applicants' acceptance of AI-based recruitment tools (Davis, 1989). Longitudinal and field-based studies could also examine how applicant perceptions change before, during, and after direct experience with AI-enabled recruitment technologies.

Future research could also include additional explanatory variables. The partial mediation pattern at the first-interview stage indicates that anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection did not account for the entire relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention. Previous research points to social presence, opportunity to perform, and interview-related concerns in automated interview contexts (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Wesche & Sonderegger, 2021). Other recruitment research highlights organizational attractiveness and job pursuit-related evaluations (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005), while technology acceptance research suggests perceived usefulness and ease of use as relevant factors (Davis, 1989; Laurim, Arpaci, Prommegger, & Kremer, 2021; Benabou & Touhami, 2025). Since these factors were not measured in

the present study, they should be examined as possible explanations in future research rather than treated as established causes of the observed interview-stage effect.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates that disclosing the involvement of AI can shape applicants' early evaluations of a recruitment process. The findings do not suggest that organizations should avoid AI altogether or that all forms of AI disclosure will produce the same response. Rather, the study isolates the effect of disclosing AI use at specific recruitment stages and shows that, under the conditions examined, AI disclosure was associated with lower anticipated procedural justice, lower perceived privacy protection, and lower job pursuit intention. These findings highlight the importance of considering both the stage at which AI is introduced and the way its role is communicated to applicants. Future research should examine whether clearer explanations of human oversight, data protection, system quality, and opportunities for individual consideration can reduce uncertainty and support more favourable applicant reactions. It should also explore how different combinations of automated and human-led recruitment practices influence applicants' experiences and willingness to continue with the selection process.

CHAPTER 9: BIBLIOGRAPHY & APPENDIX

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9.2 Appendices

Appendix 1: AI usage log

AI Tool: OpenAI ChatGPT (GPT-5 series).

Purpose of Use: Generative AI was used as writing support for editing, proofreading, and academic discussion tool throughout the preparation of this thesis. AI assistance was limited to supporting the writing process and improving the presentation of the research. All scientific decisions, literature selection, methodological choices, statistical analyses, interpretation of findings, and final conclusions remained the sole responsibility of the author.

Record of AI-Assisted Activities

Thesis Stage	AI-assisted activity	Author responsibility
Research design	Discussing alternative research designs, refinement of writing hypotheses.	Final research design, hypotheses and conceptual model developed and approved by the author and supervisor.
Literature review	Improving paragraph structure, identifying repetitive ideas, improving transitions, suggesting clearer academic wording.	Literature search, source selection, interpretation of articles and all citations independently conducted and verified by the author
Methodology	Improving written descriptions of research design, measures, sampling procedure, and statistical methods.	Survey design, methodological decisions and data collection performed solely by the author
Statistical analysis	Explaining statistical procedures in JASP.	All analyses were independently conducted by the author using JASP. AI did not analyze the dataset or any generate statistical results
Results	Assisting with the wording of statistical findings, improving clarity and consistency of reporting, checking alignment between reported results and hypotheses.	Numerical values, tables, interpretations and conclusions verified by the author using the original statistical outputs
Discussion	Assisting with organization of arguments, relating findings to previous literature, improving academic writing style.	Final interpretation of findings and conclusions developed and verified by the author

Conclusion	Improving structure and language while maintaining consistency with the reported findings	Final conclusions written and approved by the author
Editing and proofreading	Grammar correction, language refinement, sentence restructuring, consistency checks, identification of repetitions, improvement of readability, APA writing support	Writing and final editing made by the author
AI transparency disclosure	Drafting the AI Declaration and this AI Usage Log	Final content reviewed and approved by the author

Limitations of AI Use:

Artificial Intelligence was not used to:

- generate or fabricate research data;
- perform statistical analyses;
- create references that were included without verification;
- conduct the literature search;
- replace critical evaluation of scientific sources;
- make methodological decisions;
- formulate research findings independently.

Every citation included in the thesis was verified against the original publication before being incorporated into the final manuscript.

Author Responsibility

The author critically reviewed all AI-generated suggestions before incorporating them into the thesis. AI-generated text was revised and changed where necessary to ensure accuracy, consistency, originality and alignment with the author's intended meaning.

The author accepts full responsibility for the scientific content, interpretations, analyses, conclusions and academic integrity of this thesis.

Appendix 2: Data Matrix

Variable Name	Measurement level	Variable label	Coding/ values
VIE	Nominal, binary	Current residence in Vienna, Austria	0=No; 1=Yes
GEN	Nominal	Gender of respondent	1=Male; 2=Female; 3=Non-Binary 4=Prefer not to say; 5=Self-describe as:_____
AGE	Ordinal	Age of respondent	1= 18 to 24 2= 25 to 34 3= 35 to 44 4= 45 to 54 5= 55 to 64 6= 65 to 74 7 = 75 or older
EMST	Nominal	Employment Status	1= Employed Fully Time 2= Employed Part-Time 3=Unemployed 4= Student 5=Self Employed 6=Other
EDU	Ordinal	Educational Level	1= No schooling completed, 2= High school graduate , 3= Technical or vocational training, 4= Bachelor's degree , 5= Master's degree, 6=Doctorate Degree
AIUF	Ordinal	AI Use	1= Daily 2= Several times per week 3= Once per week 4= 2-3 times per month 5 = Once per month 6 = Less than once per month 7 =I never use them
AIRE	Nominal, binary	AI recruitment experience	0= No ; 1 = Yes
APJ_Pre-screening & APJ_Fist interview	Ordinal, Likert-type items	Anticipated Procedural Justice	1 = Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5 = Strongly agree
PPP_Pre-screening & PPP_First Interview	Ordinal, Likert-type items	Perceived Privacy Protection	1 = Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5 = Strongly agree
JPI_Pre-screening JPI_First Interview	Ordinal, Likert-type items	Job Pursuit Intentions	1 = Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5 = Strongly agree

Appendix 3 : Full hypothesis table

Hypothesis / RQ	Effect tested	Analysis used	Decision
H1a	Main effect of disclosure condition on anticipated procedural justice	Mixed-design ANOVA	Supported
H1b	Disclosure condition $\times$ recruitment stage interaction for anticipated procedural justice	Mixed-design ANOVA	Supported
H2a	Main effect of disclosure condition on perceived privacy protection	Mixed-design ANOVA	Supported
H2b	Disclosure condition $\times$ recruitment stage interaction for perceived privacy protection	Mixed-design ANOVA	Not supported
H3a	Positive association between anticipated procedural justice and job pursuit intention	Outcome equations of the stage-specific parallel mediation models	Supported
H3b	Positive association between perceived privacy protection and job pursuit intention	Outcome equations of the stage-specific parallel mediation models	Supported
H4	Indirect effects of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention through anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection	Stage-specific parallel mediation models with 5,000 bootstrap resamples	Supported
H5a	Main effect of disclosure condition on job pursuit intention	Mixed-design ANOVA	Supported
H5b	Disclosure condition $\times$ recruitment stage interaction for job pursuit intention	Mixed-design ANOVA	Supported

RQ1	AI use frequency $\times$ disclosure condition interaction for anticipated procedural justice	Stage-specific exploratory moderation analyses	No evidence of moderation
RQ2	AI use frequency $\times$ disclosure condition interaction for perceived privacy protection	Stage-specific exploratory moderation analyses	No evidence of moderation
RQ3	Previous AI recruitment experience $\times$ disclosure condition interaction for anticipated procedural justice	Stage-specific exploratory moderation analyses	No evidence of moderation
RQ4	Previous AI recruitment experience $\times$ disclosure condition interaction for perceived privacy protection	Stage-specific exploratory moderation analyses	No evidence of moderation

Note. The moderation effects were examined separately at the pre-screening and first-interview stages. Consequently, RQ1–RQ4 involved eight interaction terms in total.

Appendix 4: English Abstract

The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment is transforming how organizations evaluate job applicants. While AI seems to offer many potential benefits in terms of efficiency and consistency, its use may also influence how applicants perceive recruitment processes and organizations. This study examines how the disclosure of AI use during recruitment affects anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention. It also investigates whether these relationships differ between the pre-screening and first-interview stages of recruitment and explores if the general AI use and previous AI recruitment experience moderate applicants' reactions.

A scenario-based online experiment was conducted with 113 participants using a mixed factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to either an AI-enabled or a human-disclosure condition and evaluated both a pre-screening and a first-interview scenario. Data was analyzed using mixed repeated-measures analyses of variance and parallel mediation analyses with bootstrapping. Additional robustness checks were conducted by controlling for demographic characteristics.

The findings showed that AI disclosure significantly reduced anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, and job pursuit intention compared with human-only recruitment. The negative effect of AI disclosure on anticipated procedural justice and job pursuit intention was stronger at the first-interview stage, whereas perceived privacy protection did not differ across recruitment stages. Parallel mediation analyses showed that anticipated procedural justice and perceived privacy protection jointly mediated the relationship between AI disclosure and job pursuit intention. At the pre-screening stage, the direct effect of AI disclosure on job pursuit intention was no longer significant after including the mediators, suggesting mediation within the tested model. At the first-interview stage, the mediation was partial, indicating that additional factors may influence applicants' intentions at later stages of the recruitment process. Exploratory moderation analyses found no evidence that either frequency of general AI use or previous AI recruitment experience altered these relationships.

The study contributes to the literature on applicant reactions and AI-enabled recruitment by isolating the effect of AI disclosure and examining applicants' perceptions of fairness, privacy protection, and willingness to pursue employment opportunities. The study highlights the importance of considering when and how AI is introduced throughout the recruitment process and suggests that organizations should complement AI disclosure with clear communication regarding fairness, human oversight, and data protection.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, AI-enabled recruitment, applicant's reactions to selection procedures, anticipated procedural justice, perceived privacy protection, job pursuit intention.

Appendix 5: German Abstract

Der zunehmende Einsatz von Künstlicher Intelligenz (KI) im Recruiting verändert die Art und Weise, wie Unternehmen Bewerberinnen und Bewerber beurteilen. Obwohl der Einsatz von KI zahlreiche potenzielle Vorteile hinsichtlich Effizienz und Konsistenz bietet, kann er zugleich beeinflussen, wie Bewerbende den Rekrutierungsprozess und das Unternehmen wahrnehmen. Diese Studie untersucht, wie sich die Offenlegung des Einsatzes von KI im Recruiting auf die erwartete prozedurale Fairness, den wahrgenommenen Schutz personenbezogener Daten sowie die Bewerbungsabsicht auswirkt. Darüber hinaus wird analysiert, ob sich diese Zusammenhänge zwischen der Vorauswahl (Pre-Screening) und dem ersten Vorstellungsgespräch unterscheiden und ob die allgemeine Nutzung von KI sowie frühere Erfahrungen mit KI-gestütztem Recruiting die Reaktionen der Bewerbenden moderieren.

Zur Beantwortung dieser Fragestellungen wurde ein Szenario basiertes Online-Experiment mit 113 Teilnehmenden in einem gemischten faktoriellen Design durchgeführt. Die Teilnehmenden wurden zufällig entweder einer KI-gestützten oder einer ausschließlich menschlichen Recruiting-Bedingung zugewiesen und bewerteten sowohl ein Pre-Screening- als auch ein Erstinterview-Szenario. Die Daten wurden mittels gemischter Varianzanalysen mit Messwiederholung sowie paralleler Mediationsanalysen unter Verwendung von Bootstrapping ausgewertet. Ergänzend wurden Robustheitsanalysen unter Kontrolle demografischer Merkmale durchgeführt.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Offenlegung des KI-Einsatzes die erwartete prozedurale Fairness, den wahrgenommenen Schutz personenbezogener Daten sowie die Bewerbungsabsicht im Vergleich zu einem ausschließlich von Menschen durchgeführten Recruiting signifikant verringerte. Der negative Einfluss der KI-Offenlegung auf die erwartete prozedurale Fairness und die Bewerbungsabsicht war während des ersten Vorstellungsgesprächs stärker ausgeprägt als in der Phase der Vorauswahl, während sich beim wahrgenommenen Datenschutz keine Unterschiede zwischen den beiden Rekrutierungsphasen zeigten. Die Mediationsanalysen zeigten zudem, dass die erwartete prozedurale Fairness und der wahrgenommene Schutz personenbezogener Daten den Zusammenhang zwischen der Offenlegung des KI-Einsatzes und der Bewerbungsabsicht gemeinsam vermittelten. Im Pre-Screening war der direkte Effekt der KI-Offenlegung nach Einbezug der Mediatoren nicht mehr signifikant, was darauf hindeutet, dass der Zusammenhang im getesteten Modell weitgehend durch diese beiden Bewertungen erklärt wurde. Im ersten Vorstellungsgespräch zeigte sich hingegen eine partielle Mediation, was darauf schließen lässt, dass in späteren Phasen des Rekrutierungsprozesses weitere Einflussfaktoren die Bewerbungsabsicht mitbestimmen können. Die explorativen Moderationsanalysen ergaben keine Hinweise darauf, dass die Häufigkeit der allgemeinen KI-Nutzung oder frühere Erfahrungen mit KI-gestütztem Recruiting einen moderierenden Einfluss auf diese Zusammenhänge hatten.

Die Ergebnisse leisten einen Beitrag zur Forschung zu Bewerberreaktionen sowie zum KI-gestützten Recruiting, indem sie den Einfluss der Offenlegung des KI-Einsatzes auf Fairnesswahrnehmungen, den wahrgenommenen Datenschutz und die Bewerbungsabsicht untersuchen. Die Studie verdeutlicht, dass Unternehmen nicht nur entscheiden sollten, ob sie den Einsatz von KI offenlegen, sondern auch, wann und auf welche Weise dies im Verlauf des Rekrutierungsprozesses geschieht. Die Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass eine transparente Kommunikation durch Informationen zu Fairness, menschlicher Aufsicht und Datenschutz ergänzt werden sollte.

Schlüsselwörter: Künstliche Intelligenz, KI-gestütztes Recruiting, Bewerberreaktionen, erwartete prozedurale Fairness, wahrgenommener Schutz personenbezogener Daten, Bewerbungsabsicht.