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When Identity Meets Technology: The Psychological Roots of AI Acceptance in the Recruitment Process

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When Identity Meets Technology: The Psychological Roots of AI Acceptance in the Recruitment Process

How Self-Verification and Body-Related Shame jointly influence Job Applicants' Acceptance of AI

By Valentina Di Stefano

ABSTRACT

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into recruitment and selection processes is reshaping how organizations identify, assess, and hire talents. While AI driven tools promise to enhance efficiency, standardization, and objectivity in candidate evaluation and recruitment, its acceptance among job applicants remains limited. This resistance raises interesting questions regarding the psychological mechanisms that influence job applicants' attitudes toward AI evaluation agents and the extent to which individual differences shape these reactions.

Grounded in self-verification theory, the present study examines how the type of evaluation agent (AI versus human) affects applicants' job acceptance intentions through the mediating role of perceived self-verification and the moderating effect of body-related shame. Data collected from an experimental sample reveal that job applicants perceive AI evaluation agents as less capable of recognizing and validating their authentic selves compared to human hiring managers, resulting in reduced job acceptance intentions. This effect is particularly pronounced among individuals with low body-related shame, who tend to value interpersonal recognition and self-verification. Conversely, applicants with high body-related shame, who are less motivated to seek verification of their physical appearance, report similar levels of self-verification across both evaluation conditions.

Overall, the study deepens the understanding of the psychological mechanisms shaping job applicants' reactions to AI in hiring contexts. It highlights the pivotal role of self-verification as a mediator linking evaluation type and job acceptance intentions, while also proving the moderating effect of body-related shame. The results offer meaningful insights for organizations aiming to develop AI-driven recruitment systems that are not only efficient and equitable but also sensitive to candidates' psychological needs. Designing AI tools that preserve authenticity and foster a sense of human connection may enhance job applicants' acceptance of technology in hiring processes.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence, self-verification, body-related shame, job acceptance intentions

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the inclusion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the hiring practices represents a crucial phenomenon that is gaining momentum in most organizations seeking to streamline their decision-making processes (Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023). Indeed, artificial intelligence mechanisms were created to emulate human cognitive processes and behaviors (Strelkova, 2017). For this reason, AI is often able to help and replace humans in several decision-making processes; in particular, such tools can be applied to perform tasks typically related to the activities of a company's human resources department.

Focusing on Recruitment and Selection area, the increasing war for talent is justified by the development of the AI-enabled tools which usually lead companies to speed up their hiring procedure, reducing time and costs related to this activity (Black & van Esch, 2021). Being more specific, the automation of such practices implies the creation of productivity gains and operational efficiencies for the enterprise (Prikshat et al., 2023). For instance, one of the best examples of technical progress consists of asynchronous video interviews which can provide a high degree of flexibility in term of time and place constraints. Moreover, it is possible to implement in this context the usage of AI mechanisms, as the recorded video interviews can be evaluated by a human hiring manager or by an AI agent.
Furthermore, the adoption of AI within the selection process could benefit not only the organization as has been already mentioned, but also the candidates themselves, thanks to the higher level of accuracy it can produce (McDonald et al., 2017).

The benefits listed above have prompted several large companies to include artificial intelligence mechanisms within their business operations. Among them, it is possible to mention Microsoft and Google, which currently collect and use data on HR practices in order to gain greater insights into their employees, with the ultimate goal of predicting the potential performance of new job applicants (Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2023; Davenport et al., 2010). Therefore, this circumstance is contributing to spread deep discussions within academic and corporate environments. Indeed, in the recent years, AI is becoming a subject of special interest, warranting a more extensive analysis (Malik et al., 2020).

However, previous research suggests that job applicants may show a certain degree of scepticism toward AI usage in hiring procedures (McIntyre, 2019). For this reason, it is of paramount relevance for the employers to investigate thoroughly the explanatory mechanisms of applicants' reluctance toward such a technology. Indeed, firms' final purpose consists of more effectively implementing the AI enabled tools within their corporate context, by increasing fundamental hiring outcomes such as the candidates' job acceptance intention, which in turn illustrates whether firms end up addressing their staffing requirements (Harold et al., 2016). Indeed, it is crucial for organizations to understand the extent to which a potential future employee might accept a job offer, considering his perceptions regarding the evaluation agent of their video interview.

However, nowadays, the reasons supporting a higher willingness to accept the job is lacking specific attention from researchers (Mirowska, 2020). Hence, with the purpose of reducing the gap present in the current literature, this study aims at identifying a potential mechanism that could explain applicants' reluctance toward an AI evaluation agent (McIntyre, 2019).

Specifically, previous studies on this topic suggest that self-verification, defined as individuals' desire to find circumstances and interlocutors who can confirm their own self-conception (Swann, 1983), is a crucial variable in the organizational settings (Cable & Kay, 2012; Swann et al., 2003). However, to the best of the current knowledge, previous theoretical research on job applicants' reaction to AI usage has overlooked this valuable factor. In this context, it is possible to state that during a job interview selection process, job applicants may perceive a lower degree of self-verification when assessed by an AI enable tool (vs a human hiring manager), since technology is less conductive to the development of such feeling. In other words, AI cannot always predict human intentions, neither recognize the authentic essence of individuals (Riedl, 2019). Furthermore, self-verification has been shown to enhance positive outcomes in business environments since it contributes to diminish frictions and misunderstandings among employees in the workplace (Swann et al., 2004) and to foster team creativity and optimal individual performances, producing a positive psychological comfort (Polzer et al,

2002, Schafer et al., 1996). Therefore, it is possible to predict that self-verification could affect applicants' job acceptance intentions, thus, mediating the relationship between the different type of evaluation agent and applicants' job offer acceptance intentions.

Moreover, previous inquiries assert that individual differences may play a key role in influencing job applicants' responses in hiring practices (Powell et al., 2015; Campos-Velazques & Gonzales, 2020), so that they can moderate such hiring outcomes by affecting candidates' perceptions (e.g. perceived self-verification) throughout the recruitment and selection process. In this regard, previous experimental studies suggest that an algorithm's capacity to assess an individual's distinctive characteristics is a necessary component of a fruitful human–AI interaction (e.g. Longoni et al., 2019). For this reason, the present study focusses on understanding whether individual differences related to the applicant's identity can strengthen or weaken candidates' attitudes and behaviours during the hiring procedure. Being more specific, it is possible to assume that a unique personal trait of an individual could lie in his varying perceptions of body-related shame. The latter consists of a sense of embarrassment created by a perceived social prejudice on the personal body shape and appearance (Higgins et al., 2015; Leary, 2007). Indeed, according to Weingarden et al., body-related embarrassment have been shown to influence people's reactions in a range of interpersonal and professional contexts. For instance, people will be more likely to experience depressive symptoms, functional impairment that will cause them to ask for many more days off from work (Weingarden et al., 2016). However, to the best of the current knowledge, body-related shame has never been studied in the context of job applicants' reactions to AI usage in hiring practices. As a result, this topic can be expanded to investigate the interaction between people and non-human agent.

Therefore, it is possible to predict that applicants who score low in body-related shame, will perceive the AI evaluation agent as less suitable in recognizing their physical appearance (especially when applicants have a positive opinion about it) and in self-verifying in general their own person. Hence, low body-related shame applicants will perceive a reduced level of self-verification which in turn will be translated in a lower job acceptance intention. On the other hand, as applicants 'scoring high on body-related shame should have no interest neither intention to seek verification of their personal physical appearance (toward which they have a negative opinion), it is expected that they will perceive similar levels of self-verification during a job video interview with both types of evaluation agents.

With the final aim of testing the above mentioned hypothesises, it has been carried out an experimental study where specific scenarios have been developed. Indeed, applicants were told to imagine performing a job video interview, being evaluated

by an AI agent or a human hiring manager. Elaborating further, it is necessary to explain what it is meant by the locution "*asynchronous video interviews*", indeed, these tools generally involve candidates recording videos of themselves responding to pre-planned questions which will be subsequently assessed (Mirowska & Mesnet, 2021).

The present research shows three main contributions to the existing literature.

At first, previous scientific inquiries explored how organizational procedures rather than job seekers' opinions, shape the approach to the AI-based selection process. On the contrary, this study aims at enlarging the current evidence on applicants' perceptions. As a consequence, by examining self-verification as a driver of job acceptance, this work contributes to the body of knowledge already available, providing fresh theoretical perspectives on how job seekers' attitudes towards AI-enabled recruitment tools may influence their attraction toward the company and their job acceptance intention (Budhwar et al., 2022). With this purpose, it was used a particular study design capable of increasing the validity of the findings, bringing new insights to the small body of research on how individuals and groups react to asynchronous video interviews (Roulin et al., 2023).

Second, while previous research focused mainly on the role of specific explanatory mechanism such as trust and fairness toward technology (Lee, 2018), the present study considers self-verification as one of the most relevant antecedents of job acceptance intention.

Third, although in this context, the tendency in the literature is to investigate the role of individual differences insisting on personal extroversion traits assimilated as moderators of the entire conceptual model (Kaya et al., 2024), with the present study, it has shed light on the role of body-related shame in shaping applicants' perceptions and job acceptance intention when evaluated by an AI agent during a hiring procedure.

In other words, considering that still many candidates look with suspicion at the AI assessment agent (McIntyre, 2019), it was necessary to identify the potential barriers and limitations encountered by job applicants in the usage of these tools with the ultimate goal of enabling companies to maximize the benefits produced by AI while limiting its negative impacts.

Finally, by exploring the role of job applicants' perceptions and individual differences simultaneously (Klotz et al., 2013; McCarthy et al., 2017), the present research improves hiring organizations' knowledge about the factors which shape job applicants' acceptance of AI, offering valid and actionable insights for

companies that are interested in relying on AI evaluation agents in their hiring procedures.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS BUILDING

2.1 The role of Self-verification

A growing trend in recruitment and selection process is the adoption of AI-based solutions to assess job applicants (Mirowska & Mesnet, 2021). Indeed, according to recent studies, the number of companies that are adopting such AI tools in recruiting will double in the next few years (Oracle, 2019). In this context, asynchronous video interviews are even more used since their effectiveness is strengthen by the AI evaluation agents. Being more specific, in those circumstances, candidates realize videos of themselves responding to pre-planned interview questions (Roulin et al., 2022). Then, assessing facial expressions and eye contact, AI agents examine candidates' spoken and nonverbal cues (Leicht-Deobald et al., 2019). Therefore, considering the rapid spread of AI in the organizational setting, managers must comprehend the psychological factors behind applicants' reactions to AI evaluation agents versus human hiring manager. Notably, employers want to increase candidates' willingness to accept a job offer (Harold et al., 2016). Hence, it is important for managers to identify the drivers that can foster applicants' job acceptance intentions.

Past studies suggest that perceived self-verification could be conceived as an important factor in organizational settings (Leary, 2007; Tatcher & Greer, 2008). Specifically, it refers to the strong desire of individuals "*to create a social reality that verifies and confirms their self-conceptions*" (Swann, 1983, pp.33). Being more specific, to self-verify their self-conceptions, individuals seek verification from the society around them so that multiple interlocutors can mutually confirm their existing self-view (Swann, 1990). In this sense, one's self-concept works as a lens through which the individual interfaces with the world, managing situations, circumstances, and relationships according to the attitudes and behaviours he deems most suitable (Swann et al., 2003). This means that certain people do not hide from the judgment of others, but they authentically represent themselves for who they truly are, showing their body shape, cultures, habits, and occupations, while acting in line with them (Brooks et al., 2009). In organizational settings, where social interactions and human relationships between individuals are crucial to achieve common goals, employees' self-verification allows for a decline of mutual misunderstandings (Cable & Kay, 2012), thereby enhancing work related outcomes (Polzer et al., 2002). Furthermore, in group- tasks, self-verification has been shown to increase team members' commitment, willingness to cooperate and

group belonging, consequently the performance of the whole group (Swann et al., 2003).

In sum, considering that self-verification generates positive outcomes for both the individuals and the organizations in which it is embedded; there is a need for managers to use this perception to their advantage in such a way as to provide benefits for the enterprise. With this in mind, research is currently making strides in determining under which circumstances self-verification is most intensely perceived. According to Wiesenfeld et al., individuals who score high in self-esteem perceive a greater degree of self-verification under procedurally fair treatment events (Wiensenfeld et al., 2007). On the other side, Grant et al. discovered that customized job titles foster a higher employees' confirmation of their self-concept (Grant et al., 2014).

Therefore, although the literature in management is shedding light on the importance of self-verification in determining people's responses in organizational settings (Cable & Kay, 2012), previous research aiming at examining job applicants' responses to selection procedures has overlooked this variable. This gap has been filled by studying the role that self-verification plays in explaining job applicants' responses (i.e., job acceptance intention) to AI (vs human) evaluation agents' adoption in assessing video job interviews.

At first, it was simple to believe that when evaluated by AI technology, it would be difficult for job applicants to develop a relationship based on common sense and shared knowledge (Everitt et al., 2017), especially considering that intelligent systems are often conceived as black boxes, since their actions lack transparency. Furthermore, compared to humans, AI agents do not always provide personalized experiences, operating sometimes in a standardized manner (Longoni et al., 2019; Haslam, 2006). Hence, it is clear that "*the more committed one is to an evaluator, the more verification is sought*" (Chen et al., 2006, pp. 2). This statement reinforces the idea that the more an individual cares about the social relationship to be established with the counterpart, the more he seeks to perceive self-verification.

As previously mentioned, self-verification has been demonstrated to positively influence specific outcomes such as employees' interpersonal congruence (London, 2003) and individual job performance (Kim et al., 2019). Thereby, it seems possible to predict that self-verification could also affect job applicants' intentions, and thus, mediate the relationship between the different types of evaluation agents and applicants' willingness to accept the job offer. More in depth, AI evaluation agents should not be able to recognize the authentic essence of job applicants (Riedl, 2019). Consequently, it is possible to assume that job applicants will perceive a lower self-verification when evaluated by an artificial

intelligence algorithm as compared to a human evaluation agent (e.g., a hiring manager) in a job interview selection context.

Therefore, formally:

- H1: *Job applicants will perceive a lower self-verification with an AI (vs human) evaluation agent, which in turn will decrease job acceptance intentions.*

2.2. The role of Body-related Shame

Over time, organizational psychology studies are heading in addressing even more topics related to the impact of feelings and perceptions in the work environment (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000). Indeed, it is possible to state that there is a relationship between personality traits, workers' feelings, and their behaviours and outcomes within the professional landscape (Xing et al., 2021). Notably, any organizational context is a favourable place to shape workers' identity (Burton & Vu, 2021). Indeed, it is often the judgments and evaluations of others that assist individuals in confirming their self-view and self-concept.

Therefore, it is possible to state that according to earlier research, individual differences and feelings may influence job applicants' behavioural intentions toward specific hiring procedures by affecting their perceptions (Klotz et al., 2013; McCarthy et al., 2017). Indeed, such perceptions related to personal differences could affect selection outcomes (such as job acceptance intention) by making applicants more likely to be perceived authentic (i.e., perceived self-verification) by the evaluation agent.

In this context, one such individual difference could be the feeling of body-related shame. Indeed, the latter deserves specific attention, since it is often under-studied in the literature, despite the strong repercussions it can cause on individuals' behaviour.

In general, the term shame refers to "*a painful emotion that arises when an employee evaluates a threat to the self when he or she has fallen short of an important standard*" (Daniels & Robinson, 2019, pp. 2450). In other words, this perception takes hold in the human soul when there is a failure related to the inability to live up to a standard imposed by oneself or by the society. Thus, such a feeling of inadequacy generates strong self-criticism, and it produces a disproportionate sense of inferiority (Keltner, 1996). Moreover, it is often closely linked to feelings of guilt and embarrassment as individuals think they do not fit certain acceptance criteria

which are object of public scrutiny. Therefore, violating such social conventions means eliciting negative evaluation from interlocutors (Leary, 2007).

Notably, delving into the analysis of body-related shame, it's fundamental to specify that people tend to create cognitive reference models in their mind that, if not respected, generate prejudice, discontent, and dissatisfaction. As a result, individuals experience a feeling of shame related to their appearance. Being more precise, this mechanism is prevalent in women belonging to Western culture (Higgins et al., 2015) since they fall victim to the pressure of social media. Indeed, the latter set increasingly utopic and unattainable standards of beauty for the majority of the female audience[1].

Furthermore, body-related shame perception plays a key role in different contexts. For instance, previous studies demonstrate that overweight employees are considered to be less successful in the work environment, thus experiencing a high level of discrimination (Flint et al., 2016). Moreover, body-related shame has been shown to influence people's reactions to human-technology interactions. For instance, it has been studied that customized forms of communication based on homophily may have negative consequences during consumer-Artificial Intelligence interactions, especially when the messages are directed to stigmatized individuals (Mende et al., 2024). In addition, technology and more specifically social media, very often influence the perceptions of users, especially those who do not have a good relationship with their body shape (Gioia et al., 2020). However, despite the above discussed evidence that body-related shame can produce different people' responses in organizational settings (Levay, 2014), past research focusing on understanding job applicants' behaviours within the selection processes has overlooked this crucial factor. Filling the gap, the present work aims at exploring the role of body-related shame in influencing applicants' self-verification perceptions when assessed by an AI (vs human) evaluation agent during the video interview selection procedure.

Grounded on the evidence that people scoring low in body-related shame are comfortable with their body shapes since they are sure to be considered attractive by others (Gilbert, 2002), it is possible to assume that they will perceive greater self-verification during an interaction with a specific agent. On the contrary, candidates who score high in body-related shame believe that they are positioned in a vulnerable and undesirable social rank, which can prompt them to avoid social contexts and mutual confrontation with other individuals (Duarte et al., 2015).

[1] Based on this evidence, the present study conducted its analysis based on an all-female audience of women from the U.S.

This means that lower feelings of self-verification of these individuals can be expected.

Furthermore, it could be interesting to analyse whether such perceptions change when different types of evaluation agents are involved within the interaction. For instance, it is possible to predict that candidates with low body-related shame will sense less self-verification when assessed by an AI evaluation agent (vs a human hiring manager) which will have a detrimental effect on their job acceptance intentions. On the other hand, due to their low self-confidence, high body-related shame applicants will not perceive significant differential rate of self-verification toward the two different types of evaluation agent.

Hence, formally it is possible to assume that:

- H2: *Job applicants scoring low on body-related shame will perceive lower self-verification with an AI (vs human) evaluation agent, which in turn will lead to lower job acceptance intentions.*

2.3. The present Research

Given the assumption explained in the previous sections of the study, it is possible to assert that, overall, the employment of an AI evaluation agent (as opposed to a human hiring manager) in asynchronous video interviews should lower candidates' willingness to accept a job offer by diminishing their perceived level of self-verification. Furthermore, it possible to hypothesize that the detrimental impact of employing AI depends on the applicants' body-related shame level.

With this purpose in mind, the researchers conduct some experimental studies using simulated job interviews to test the above-mentioned predictions.

According to what has been said, the hypotheses already mentioned in the previous paragraphs are listed below:

- H1: *Job applicants will perceive a lower self-verification with AI (vs human) evaluation agent, which in turn will decrease job acceptance intentions.*
- H2*: Job applicants scoring low on body-related shame will perceive lower self-verification with an AI (vs human) evaluation agent, which in turn will lead to lower job acceptance intentions.*

The graph below briefly summarizes the conceptual model whose significance and validity will be tested, detailing the relationships between the different variables.

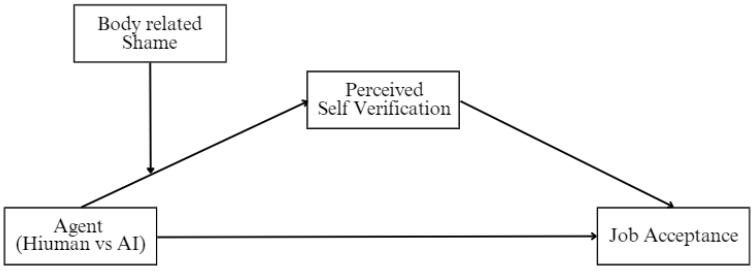

Table 4: Conceptual Model

3. STUDY DESIGN

3.1. Sample and Participants

The data for the present study were collected through an online survey, which was prepared to analyse an evaluation process. Notably, the survey was spread among respondents using Prolific which allowed the researchers to reach the American female population more easily. It was guaranteed the participants' anonymity, obtaining 200 individual responses. Every participant has provided informed consent to take part in the study.

It was decided to select a sample of women since it appears from the existing literature that they are more sensitive to their own outward appearance (Pliner et al., 1990).

Being more precise, the sample was selected based on 2 simple criteria. It was required that the respondents be female American nationals and native English speakers. The latter element was required simply to benefit people in the fruition of the questionnaire to avoid possible misunderstanding of the text.

Describing the participants demographically, it appears clear that the sample is on average 43 years old, with a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 77.

3.2. Study Procedure

Participants had to imagine that they were looking for a new job position that suited their tastes and aspirations. Moreover, they had to envision to complete an online video interview that would be evaluated by the company[2].

Thereafter, the selected sample was randomly subjected to only one of the following two scenarios representing different experimental conditions.

In the first case, the agent who would evaluate and analyse the video interview would be a human hiring manager with extensive experience in the present field.

In the second case, the job interview would have been analysed by the company's artificial intelligence algorithms, equally well trained over the years.

With the purpose of understanding whether the respondents understood well the scenario in which they were placed, a question was included at the end of the questionnaire to function as a manipulation check.

In this context, the objective of the study is to analyse the perceptions of candidates following the selection process; thus, investigating possible preferences for a certain type of agent and searching for factors that could explain this preference and/or elements that may strengthen or weaken it. In detail, the research is intended to understand whether the physical characteristics of the candidate and one's own perception in relation to them may be a moderator of the whole framework.

Furthermore, the questionnaire was submitted for evaluation by an experienced researcher prior to its publication, in order to avoid and eliminate ambiguous and vague variables and subsequent misinterpretation by respondents.

3.3. Measures

The questionnaire was divided into several blocks, each of which was customized according to the reference scenario and thus the specific assessment agent.

Within each block were included the scales useful for assessing the different variables, all measured based on a 7-point Likert type scale, where 1 was assigned to "Strongly disagree" and 7 to "Strongly agree." A 7-point Likert type scale was

[2] See Appendix A below.

chosen in order to avoid and reduce the likelihood that respondents would select the neutral option, giving little added value to the study.

The first block included a mirror related to the informed consent and the participants' identification, since candidates were asked to insert their Prolific ID. On the other side, the second section was dedicated to the description of the specific scenario assigned to each respondent.

Moreover, in the following blocks of the survey where it was displayed the heartbeat of the analysis, it has been decided to test the moderator using a 6 items scale to measure candidates 'shame about their appearance. This construct represents the body-related shame subscale taken from the WEB-SG Scale. Being more specific, an example item for such a construct is as follows: "*When I am in a situation where others can see my body, I feel ashamed*". (Forbes & Donovan, 2019). Being more specific, the Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.921, thus very reliable, which means that the items within the scale are highly intercorrelated.

Furthermore, the third section involved the analysis of the mediators which should explain the direct effect of the independent variable on the job acceptance which consists of the dependent variable. As specified in more detail in the preceding paragraphs, it was hypothesized that the respondent's perceived self-verification could be an important element in the analysis of the framework. Indeed, it was decided to use a 3-items scale repurposed from Amarnani et al., 2022 to study this variable. To better understand this construct which has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.868, it is important to mention an example of item: "*The hiring manager/AI agent would see me in the same way I see myself*".

Lastly, the fourth construct explored in the questionnaire was related to the dependent variable which is Job acceptance. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.947 and it was taken from Highhouse et al., 2003. It consists of 4 items such as: "*I would accept a job offer from this organization*".

Once obtained all the data needed, it was possible to proceed in the analysis through the usage of a deductive approach that consist of the hypothesis's tests used to verify whether the data can confirm the existed theory.

4. Findings

Different types of analysis have been conducted in order to test the hypothesis above mentioned.

Job Acceptance. During the selection process, compared to a human hiring manager, an AI evaluation agent decrease applicants' job acceptance. Hence, the values of the ANOVA confirm this statement: (M_{human} = 5.01, SD_{human} = 1.17 vs. M_{AI} = 4.36, SD_{AI} = 1.61, F (1, 200) = 10.83, p = 0.001)[3].

Perceived self-verification. Moreover, it was found that compared to a human hiring manager, an AI evaluation agent reduced perceived self-verification. Therefore, it is reported what emerges from the one-way ANOVA: (M_{human} =4.52, SD_{human} = 1.23 vs. M_{AI} =3.42, SD_{AI} = 1.59, F (1, 200) = 28.67, p < .001)[4]. As a result, it seems clear that in the event that AI served as the evaluative agent, the mean for perceived self-verification would be significatively lower than in the alternative scenario.

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	P Value	F
Job Acceptance	Human	101	5.01	1.17	.001	10.83
	AI	101	4.36	1.61		
Self Verification	Human	101	4.52	1.23	<.001	28.67
	AI	101	3.42	1.59		

Table 5: ANOVA

Moderated Mediation. To examine the moderating role of body-related shame on the effect of the evaluation agent (human = 0; AI = 1) on job acceptance intentions, it was used a moderated mediation analysis (PROCESS model 7; Hayes, 2017). Hence, the results prove what has been hypothesized. It means that the evaluation agent and body-related shame had a significant interaction effect on perceived self-verification (b = 0.31 t = 2.90, p = 0.0041). Indeed, these figures show the effect of the simple moderation. Being more precise, when assessed by an AI agent as opposed to a human hiring manager, respondents with low body-related shame felt less self-verification. However, there were no notable group differences among individuals with high body shame scores. In other words, this means that in the case where candidates are assessed by an AI evaluation agent, participants who perceive greater body shame do not experience particularly different self-verification than in the circumstance where they are assessed by a human hiring manager. Notably, those who have fewer problems and embarrassment about their bodies are able to feel lower self-verification when

[3] See Table 5
[4] See Table 5

assessed by an AI evaluation agent, rather than a hiring manager. It is possible to better investigate such a result looking at the figure below[5]. Being more specific, that evidence was confirmed by the Johnson-Neyman analysis for significant regions. The latter showed that the cut-off value for body-related shame was equal to 5.2764.

Additionally, a significant moderated mediation on job acceptance intentions was revealed by the study (b =0.20, 95% CI = +0.05; +0,36). So, it is possible to assert that low values of body-related shame reinforced the positive effect that self-verification has on job acceptance when the evaluation agent was a human hiring manager. Being more specific, the mediator explains this effect (b =-0.68, 95% CI = -0.99; -0.41). This means that as self-verification increases, job acceptance will also grow.

Moreover, employing an AI evaluation agent reduced applicants' perceived self-verification (b = -2.20, SE = 0.43, t = -5.07, p = 0.0000) which in turn lowered job acceptance intentions (b = 0.6408, SE = 0.06, t = 10.34, p = 0.00). Indeed, those results were corroborated by the Johnson Neyman analysis which prove that applicants who scored above 3.66 in body-related shame perceived similar level of self-verification in both cases, when evaluated by an AI or a human evaluation agent. On the other side, participants who were below the previous mentioned threshold showed that the indirect effect was more negative as body-related shame declined (b = 0.66; LCI = -0.95; UCI = -0.40 for 50th percentile of body-related shame scores; b = -1.07; LCI = -1.52; UCI = -0.66 for 16th percentile of body-related shame scores).

Therefore, the present research shows that applicants experiencing low body-related shame perceived the AI evaluation agent as less capable of verifying who they really are (e.g. Body shape), as compared to a human hiring manager, which in turn reduces their willingness to accept the job offer. By doing so, the present study validates the suggested theoretical model by confirming the previously hypothesized relationships.

In a nutshell, the following table summarize what has been already stated.

[5] See Table 6

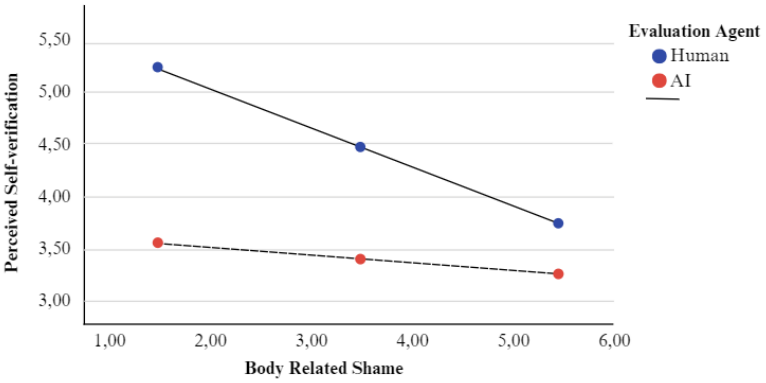

Table 6: Interactive effect of Type of Evaluation Agents and Body related Shame on Participant Perceived Self Verification

5. GENERAL DISCUSSION

As has been previously stated, AI enabled tools are reshaping the world of Recruitment and Selection process, bringing benefits in terms of time and cost saved (Black & van Esch, 2021). However, it turns out that not all applicants are in favour of accepting this type of agent in hiring procedures. Indeed, some individuals show a high degree of reluctance in accepting the automation of job interviews (Stone et al., 2024). Therefore, by introducing asynchronous video interview scenarios, the present study undertakes to analyse the reasons and conditions that make applicants decrease their intention to accept a job offer when their video interview is assessed by an AI (vs. Human) evaluation agent.

First, the main objective of the research is to understand whether applicants perceived self-verification, a fundamental element in social relationships (Cable & Kay, 2012), can influence the outcome of selection processes by determining greater intentions to accept the job offer. It has been verified, as already stated in the existing literature, that the use of AI decreases the job acceptance by negatively impacting job applicants' perceived self-verification.

Second, it has been hypothesized that some specific individual traits may determine consequences on people's perception and need to be understood and known for who they really are (perceived self-verification) (Brooks et al., 2009).

Among the aforementioned individual differences, the impact of body-related shame was chosen to be analysed as a moderator of the relationships among the

studied variables. In detail, it appears clear that applicants who scores low in body-related shame perceive a higher level of self-verification which in turn will lead to greater job acceptance intention. On the other side, job applicants who feel ashamed of their appearance showed a lower difference in their self-verification perceptions regardless of the type of evaluation agent.

In this way, it will be possible to contribute to the literature currently available in the hiring field by bringing new insights capable of positively influencing corporate business effectiveness.

6. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the knowledge developed so far, this study aims to extend the research on the use of Artificial Intelligence mechanisms in hiring practices. Indeed, until now, the existing literature has focused on possible methods and strategies used by companies to digitize the recruitment and selection process (Black & Van Esch, 2020). However, it is also necessary to analyse the perceptions and feelings that pervade the job applicants when they interact with an AI enabled tool. Indeed, such mood stages could generate different attitudes and behaviours, impacting the final outcome of the hiring procedure (Budhwar et al., 2022).

In detail, another contribution of the study is related to the fact that it fits within the currently scarce literature on asynchronous video interviews (Roulin et al., 2022). Indeed, this is a new methodology, currently used by firms to streamline their hiring processes. However, it usually arouses particular reluctance among job seekers.

Moreover, going beyond the previously studied explanatory mechanisms that identified trust as the main mediator of job acceptance intention (Lee, 2018), a new antecedent has been introduced, with the aim to exalts the importance individuals place on being perceived as more authentic (referred to perceived self-verification). Indeed, applicants who experience greater self-verification are more likely to accept the job offer. However, the presence of an AI (vs. human) evaluation agent implies a decrease in self-verification and thus a consequent decline in job acceptance intention.

Furthermore, analysing this study in more detail, it is possible to mention another crucial contribution it provided. Indeed, it has been explored more in depth, the idea that individual differences (such as body-related shame) may explain applicants' perceptions and behaviours during the hiring procedure (Klotz et al., 2013). Indeed, it is clear that body-related shame influences the relationships among the aforementioned variables. This means that the negative effect of using

artificial intelligence in the selection process is conditioned by people's feelings of discomfort and inappropriateness about their bodies. In detail, in a context dominated by an AI (vs. human) evaluation agent, a reduced degree of body-related shame involves a lower perceived self-verification which will subsequently produce a negative effect on the final outcome of the selection process, resulting in a lower job acceptance intention.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

As explained in the previous paragraphs, nowadays the use of AI within recruitment and selection processes has resulted in the advent of Digital recruiting 3.0 (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2018). Hence, it is possible to assert that already in many business environments, traditional recruiting systems have been replaced by innovative methods capable of reducing recruitment time and selection personnel's costs (Black & van Esch, 2021).

Therefore, it is crucial for companies and responsible managers to analyse the circumstances under which it makes sense to adopt such new technological processes with the ultimate purpose of generating business benefits. Indeed, the present research moves from the actionable goal of producing and offering to firms interesting insights on how to segment job applicants' pool based on their perceptions, preferences and individual differences. As a result, it would be useful to tailor hiring processes to the characteristics of each applicant segment, so as to ensure a more efficient and productive selection process. In this context, companies could distinguish the entire applicant pool based on their perceptions of body-related shame (Higgins et al., 2015). In this way, people's individual differences could be managed in a consistent way. It means that the firm should adapt its communication style, the chosen evaluation agent to the various applicants' needs, trying in any case to make the assessment process as fair and equitable as possible. Indeed, this concept moves from the assumption that companies should make an effort to seek out the human resource that is best suited to their business environment in terms of technical and soft skills in order not to negatively impact corporate business (Mathews & Redman, 2001).

In addition, it would be appropriate for firms to spread awareness and greater knowledge with respect to the benefits of introducing AI mechanisms. Indeed, the belief that they can reduce stereotypes and biases of human recruiters could improve job seekers' perceptions of AI evaluation agents (Bendick & Nunes, 2012).

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

All the limitations that characterize the present study can provide avenues for further analysis and future contributions.

To this end, the role of the AI evaluation agent could be further investigated with additional studies. Indeed, in the present work, the tool used to assess the asynchronous video interview is not described in detail, nor precisely defined in its characteristics which can vary from tool to tool, leading to a different impact on the feelings and intentions perceived by job applicants.

In addition, it would be interesting to investigate how the use of Artificial Intelligence might affect different stages of the selection process, such as CV screening which is an activity where technology should be useful in making a repetitive and time-consuming task more efficient (Huang & Rust, 2020).

Furthermore, although the existing literature specifies that women are more influenced by perceptions related to their body shape (Higgins et al., 2015), it might be interesting to extend the present study to a male audience as well. Indeed, it would be interesting to assess the impact that body-related shame may have on this wider audience, analysing whether the results obtained in the present study are confirmed or rejected. Indeed, the male population as well often perceive feelings of shame related to their appearance, especially in relation with their stature and height (Duarte & Ferreira, 2022).

In addition, the results obtained from such a study could be discarded if a more specific landscape is chosen for the same analysis. By this, it is meant the possibility of specifying the type of work for which the candidate decides to apply. Such an element in fact could represent an opportunity to obtain more insights that could be shared with companies.

The same reasoning can be applied to the variables analysed. To be more precise, additional mediators capable of explaining the direct effect between the dependent and independent variable could be involved. For instance, the researchers propose to analyse the perceived self-efficacy, in turn explained by Perceived appreciation. Similarly, based on the literature that individual characteristics of applicants can influence their preferences and perceptions during the selection process (Klotz et al., 2013), it is suggested that additional moderators belonging to the sphere of individual characteristics be evaluated.

Therefore, these insights represent unique and interesting opportunities to further the present study, with the goal of keeping on contributing to the existing literature in this area.

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APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix A – Experimental Design

INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for participating in our study!

- Your personal information will remain confidential and that the team will make every effort to ensure that you cannot be identified.
- The data will be stored anonymously and used for future research.

Do you understand and consent to participate in our study?

- Yes
- No

PROLIFIC ID

What is your Prolific ID?

Please note that this response should auto-fill with the correct ID.

INSTRUCTIONS

CONDITION 1

Imagine that you are seeking a new job. While you are surfing on the web, you see that a company has a job opening for a position which fit your degree well. As part of the organization selection process, you are requested to complete an **online video**

interview. Then, you will evaluate how you feel about it. Please look at the information below:

CONDITION 2

Imagine that you are seeking a new job. While you are surfing on the web, you see that a company has a job opening for a position which fit your degree well. As part of the organization selection process, you are requested to complete an **online video interview**. Then, you will evaluate how you feel about it. Please look at the information below:

MODERATOR:

Body-related Shame:

1. When I am in a situation where others can see my body (e.g., pool, changing room), I feel ashamed.
2. The appearance of my body is embarrassing for me in front of others.
3. When I think of the possibility that others can see my naked body, I would rather hide somewhere.
4. I am ashamed of myself when others get to know how much I really weigh.
5. I avoid exerting myself physically in front of others since I feel embarrassed.
6. Since the size of my clothes is embarrassing for me, I would rather avoid shopping for new clothes.

MEDIATOR:

Perceived self-verification:

Considering the hiring manager/AI agent assessing your video interview, how would you feel?

1. The hiring manager/AI agent would see me in the same way I see myself.

2. I feel that the hiring manager/AI agent would understand what kind of person I am.
3. The hiring manager/AI agent would treat me the way I deserve to be treated.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Job Acceptance:

1. I would accept a job offer from this organization.
2. I would make this organization one of my first choices as an employer.
3. I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this organization.
4. I would recommend this organization to a friend looking for a job.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Manipulation Check:

Based on what you read, your job interview will be evaluated by:

1. A hiring Manager
2. Artificial Intelligence
3. None of the above

Age:

What is your age?

5.2 B - Measurement scales

Scales *Appendix*

Construct/variable	Source	Scale
1. Self-verification (adapted)	Amarnani, R. K., Restubog, S. L. D., Shao, R., Cheng, D. C., & Bordia, P. (2022). A self-verification perspective on customer mistreatment and customer-directed organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 43(5), 912–931.	Considering the hiring manager/AI agent assessing your video interview, how would you feel? (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree") Q1: *The hiring manager/AI agent would see me in the same way I see myself.* Q2: *I feel that the hiring manager/AI agent would understand what kind of person I am.* Q3: *The hiring manager/AI agent would treat me the way I deserve to be treated.*
2. Job acceptance intentions (adapted)	Highhouse, S., Lievens, F., & Sinar, E. F. (2003). Measuring Attraction to *Organizations. Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 63(6), 986-1001.	Please rate the following items:(1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree") *Q1: I would accept a job offer from this organization.* *Q2: I would make this organization one of my first choices as an employer.* *Q3: I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this organization.* *Q4: I would recommend this organization to a friend looking for a job.*
3. Body-related Shame	Forbes, Y., & Donovan, C. (2019). The role of internalised weight stigma and self-compassion in the psychological well-being of overweight and obese women. *Australian Psychologist*, 54(6), 471-482.	Please rate the following items about you: (1 = "strongly disagree", 7 = "strongly agree") *Q1: When I am in a situation where others can see my body (e.g., pool, changing room), I feel ashamed.* *Q2: The appearance of my body is embarrassing for me in front of others.* *Q3: When I think of the possibility that others can see my naked body, I would rather hide somewhere.* *Q4: I am ashamed of myself when others get to know how much I really weigh.* *Q5: I avoid exerting myself physically in front of others since I feel embarrassed.* *Q6: Since the size of my clothes is embarrassing for me, I would rather avoid shopping for new clothes.*