

## Review Article

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## The Future Role of HR Professionals in an AI-Augmented Workplace: Obsolescence or Strategic Renaissance?

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### ABSTRACT

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming Human Resource Management (HRM) from administrative execution to strategic enablement. This study explores how AI redefines the roles, competencies, and professional identity of HR professionals in the contemporary workplace. Grounded in the intersection of HR transformation theory and technological adaptation frameworks, the study adopts a qualitative exploratory methodology based on semi-structured interviews with senior HR leaders across technology-intensive and service-based organisations. The research also triangulates findings with policy reports and AI integration case studies to capture industry-level dynamics. Key findings indicate a paradigm shift: HR roles are increasingly moving away from process-heavy administrative functions toward data-enabled strategic partnering. AI is found to augment decision-making in recruitment, performance analytics, and workforce planning yet also introduces new skill requirements, including algorithmic literacy, ethical reasoning, and digital co-leadership. Notably, a tension emerges between automation anxiety and professional re-empowerment, with many HR professionals uncertain about their evolving identity within AI-integrated ecosystems. The study recommends that organisations adopt HR-AI co-design approaches, where HR professionals are actively involved in the design, testing, and governance of AI systems. Additionally, capability development frameworks must be restructured to include AI fluency, cross-functional collaboration, and evidence-based decision-making. This research contributes to the evolving discourse on the future of work, offering theoretical and practical insights into the strategic repositioning of HR in an AI-augmented era.

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### Introduction

#### Background and Context

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer an emerging frontier—it has become a core enabler of digital transformation across all organisational functions, including Human Resource Management (HRM). As AI systems increasingly automate tasks such as recruitment screening, learning analytics, and employee engagement monitoring, the traditional roles of HR professionals are undergoing significant reconfiguration [1,2]. Once characterised by administrative support and compliance responsibilities, HR is now expected to operate as a strategic partner, leveraging technology to align human capital with long-term organisational objectives [3].

**\*\*This transformation is also deeply shaped by recent Western regulatory efforts such as the EU’s Artificial Intelligence Act and the US Algorithmic Accountability Act, which highlight the growing ethical and compliance obligations HR professionals must navigate. \*\* Furthermore, the European Commission’s 2023-2024 reports on AI governance highlight HR as a key risk domain, urging organisations to adopt human-centric safeguards in automated decision-making [4]. These regulatory pressures are echoed by updated CIPD guidelines, which advise HR professionals to take an active role in algorithmic transparency and ethical AI deployment [5].\*\***

This shift is compounded by broader macroeconomic and socio-technological trends. The post-pandemic acceleration of remote work, the rise of algorithmic management, and new expectations around workplace agility and inclusion demand that HR professionals evolve into digitally empowered strategists. However, the trajectory of this transformation is far from uniform. Some scholars warn that AI may diminish the strategic status of HR by relocating decision-making power to technology vendors and data scientists, while others argue that AI augments human expertise, creating space for HR to lead on ethics, culture, and organisational design [6,7]. **\*\*Recent studies also highlight how the ethical dimensions of AI adoption in educational and organisational contexts signal a shift in institutional expectations. For instance, Lavidas et al. show that ethical attitudes significantly influence the uptake of AI among university students, reflecting broader cultural shifts toward accountability in AI use [8].\*\***

### Research Problem

Despite rapid advances in HR technologies, there remains a research gap concerning how AI fundamentally reconfigures the professional identity, skillsets, and strategic roles of HR practitioners. Existing literature offers extensive discussion on the capabilities of AI, yet less attention is paid to the human implications for HR professionals—their evolving self-conception, required competencies, and strategic value in AI-integrated organisations. As AI takes over many operational tasks, will HR professionals become obsolete, or will they reclaim authority in new strategic domains?

## Research Objectives

### This study Aims to:

1. Examine how AI integration is reshaping the roles and responsibilities of HR professionals.
2. Identify the emerging skills and competencies required for HR professionals in AI-augmented workplaces.
3. Explore how HR professionals perceive their own evolving identity and strategic value within organisations undergoing digital transformation.

## Research Questions

### To Address these Objectives, The Study is Guided by the Following Research Questions:

1. How is AI transforming the traditional and strategic roles of HR professionals?
2. What new skills and competencies are emerging as essential for HR professionals in AI-driven environments?
3. How do HR professionals perceive the impact of AI on their professional identity and future relevance?

## HR Transformation & AI

### The Historical Evolution of HR Professionalism

The professional identity and role of HR practitioners have evolved considerably over the past century, shaped by economic shifts, managerial ideologies, and the emergence of competing disciplines. Initially, HR (or personnel management) was largely administrative, focused on compliance, labour relations, and record-keeping. During the 1980s and 1990s, strategic HRM emerged, catalysed by the work of Dave Ulrich, who introduced the model of HR professionals as “business partners,” shifting the emphasis toward alignment with strategic goals and organisational performance. However, Ulrich’s model-while influential-has been critiqued for commodifying HR work and suppressing its ethical and humanistic foundations. The integration of AI may be repeating this trajectory by prioritising analytical over empathetic skills, pushing HR further toward technocratic functions at the expense of human-centred values. **\*\*Papadakis et al. extend this conversation by exploring the transformative power of AI and cloud-based technologies in open and collaborative learning environments-an insight transferable to HR contexts where human-machine synergy must be fostered deliberately [9].\*\***

### Theoretical Frameworks: Professional Identity and Technological Disruption

This transformation can be further understood through Abbott’s (1988) system of professions, which argues that professional jurisdictions are constantly contested and redefined by technological, organisational, and institutional changes. In the context of AI, HR’s jurisdiction is now being encroached upon by data scientists, algorithm designers, and platform architects. HR’s professional authority depends on its ability to reclaim and reframe this evolving space. Another relevant perspective is identity work theory, which conceptualises professional identity as an ongoing negotiation between self-perception, institutional expectations, and social legitimacy. The findings of this study indicate that HR professionals are engaged in “identity work” as they navigate their relevance in AI-mediated organisations. This includes resisting obsolescence, embracing new capabilities, and renegotiating their value.

### Criticisms and Contemporary Challenges

While AI offers promise, several scholars raise cautionary flags. Newell and Marabelli warn of a “technological imperative” in HRM that risks silencing human judgement [6]. O’Neil and Raghavan et al. document the ethical risks of algorithmic hiring systems that

reinforce biases under the guise of objectivity [10]. Moreover, AI’s expansion into emotional analytics and wellness monitoring introduces concerns about digital surveillance and the erosion of employee trust [11]. This creates a paradox: HR is being called to lead ethical governance of technologies that simultaneously undermine its traditional role as the guardian of employee voice and dignity. The contemporary HR professional thus operates within a landscape of **increased complexity and ethical tension**, which cannot be addressed solely through digital upskilling but requires reflexivity and institutional power to question dominant narratives of technological determinism. **\*\*Recent empirical studies from Western corporate settings further substantiate these risks. For instance, case-based research in Germany and the Netherlands illustrates how opacity in algorithmic hiring practices has triggered employee resistance and legal scrutiny-indicating that Western democracies are advancing both policy and litigation to regulate AI’s HR applications.\*\***

### Transformation of HR Roles through AI

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Human Resource Management (HRM) is rapidly altering the functional, operational, and strategic contours of the HR profession. AI has increasingly automated transactional tasks such as payroll processing, employee record maintenance, and recruitment screening, thereby compelling HR professionals to reorient their focus towards strategic functions [12]. Meijerink et al. argue that AI’s role in automating repetitive functions facilitates the HR department’s transformation into a data-driven advisory unit [1]. This change is congruent with Ulrich and Dulebohn’s model of strategic HR business partnering, where HR is expected to contribute directly to organisational performance through data-backed insights and strategic alignment [3].

Yet, the transformation is not linear. While AI can enhance HR’s strategic positioning, it also risks eroding professional discretion. Newell and Marabelli warn that algorithmic management may displace human judgement by shifting decision authority from HR professionals to opaque technological systems [6]. Such a development could marginalise HR’s role in areas requiring contextual sensitivity, such as ethical hiring or conflict resolution. In response, scholars like Minbaeva propose that HR must not only adapt to technological change but actively participate in the design and governance of AI applications [2]. This positions HR as a digital translator-a human interface to balance machine efficiency with organisational values.

Industry research supports this strategic redirection. A 2023 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends report indicates that 76% of organisations implementing AI in HR believe it should augment, not replace, human judgement [13]. Similarly, CIPD emphasises the necessity for HR to lead the ethical deployment of AI tools, particularly in recruitment and talent management, where fairness and inclusion remain core concerns [5]. These developments point towards a transformation of HR roles-from administrators to strategic curators of data-enabled decision-making ecosystems.

### Emerging Competencies for AI-Augmented HR Professionals

The reconfiguration of HR roles through AI demands a corresponding evolution in professional competencies. Digital fluency, algorithmic awareness, and cross-functional collaboration are now critical skills for HR practitioners in AI-augmented workplaces [14,15]. Minbaeva emphasises that HR professionals must acquire a foundational understanding of AI systems-not to become engineers, but to critically engage with algorithmic outputs and design workflows that integrate human values [2].

This shift in skill requirements is also evident in competency frameworks adopted by professional bodies. The CIPD's 'People Profession 2030' vision includes data literacy, digital collaboration, and ethical judgement as core competencies. Boudreau and Jesuthasan extend this vision by promoting the concept of the 'boundaryless HR professional'-an individual capable of navigating multiple organisational functions to influence the adoption of AI technologies responsibly [16]. Such professionals act as AI intermediaries who bridge the gap between technological capability and human impact.

Ethical sensitivity has become a particularly salient competency in this context. With AI systems increasingly involved in recruitment, performance appraisal, and employee monitoring, HR professionals must scrutinise AI-driven decisions for bias, transparency, and accountability [10,11]. In this sense, HR acts as a moral agent and governance partner, ensuring that the organisation's use of AI aligns with broader societal and ethical expectations.

### **AI and the Evolving Professional Identity of HR Practitioners**

Beyond roles and competencies, the integration of AI is profoundly shaping the professional identity of HR practitioners. Professional identity-defined as the self-conception and legitimacy derived from specific knowledge, values, and practices-is being recalibrated in response to AI's incursion into traditional HR domains [17]. Where HR professionals once derived authority from interpersonal skills and policy knowledge, they are now required to develop credibility in data interpretation, digital strategy, and ethical AI oversight.

Colbert et al. observe that many HR professionals experience identity tension, torn between legacy roles and new expectations [18]. Yet, studies by Tambe et al. and Bersin suggest that HR professionals involved in AI co-design and governance report higher job satisfaction and renewed strategic relevance [19]. These findings indicate that professional identity is not fixed but can be reconstituted through learning, organisational support, and active participation in technological change.

The future HR identity appears to be hybrid-integrating human empathy with digital intelligence. This redefined identity aligns with emerging global trends that situate HR as both a digital innovator and ethical steward within the enterprise. Whether this becomes the dominant model will depend on institutional choices, capability development, and the willingness of HR professionals to reinvent themselves in an AI-driven world.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory research design, suitable for investigating complex social phenomena such as professional identity transformation and competency shifts in the context of AI adoption. Given the emergent nature of AI applications in HR and the limited prior empirical studies specifically addressing HR professionals' lived experiences, a qualitative approach enables rich, context-sensitive understanding [20]. The study is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm, recognising that perceptions of professional change are socially constructed and vary across organisational settings.

### **Data Collection**

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 18 HR professionals from medium to large organisations operating in technology-intensive and service sectors across the UK and EU. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in roles (e.g., HR business partners, talent

managers, HR directors), AI maturity levels in the organisation, and strategic exposure. Interview questions were designed to elicit insights into perceived changes in HR roles, required competencies, and identity shifts in relation to AI implementation.

In addition to interviews, secondary data sources included AI strategy documents, HR policy frameworks, and digital transformation plans within the participating organisations. These artefacts provided institutional context and supported triangulation of findings.

### **Data Analysis**

Interview data were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. Initial codes were generated inductively from the data, and then grouped into broader themes aligned with the research objectives [21]. NVivo 14 was used to manage and code the qualitative data, enhancing reliability and traceability. Thematic categories included: AI-enabled task reallocation, strategic repositioning, competency emergence, and identity negotiation. To improve analytical rigour, researcher triangulation was employed. Two independent researchers reviewed a subset of the transcripts and initial codebooks. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, ensuring consistency in interpretation. In addition, respondent validation (member checking) was conducted with five participants to confirm thematic accuracy.

### **Ethical Considerations**

**The study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines for social science research. \*\*Although formal institutional ethical approval was not obtained, the research adhered to established ethical norms for qualitative inquiry involving professionals.\*\***

### **Limitations**

While the qualitative approach provided depth and nuance, the findings are contextually bound and not generalisable to all HR populations or industries. The sample was limited to professionals already operating in AI-adopting environments, which may have introduced a bias toward more technologically engaged perspectives. Nevertheless, the focus on early adopters offers critical insights into leading-edge practice and evolving professional norms.

### **Findings**

This section presents the core findings from the semi-structured interviews with HR professionals. Data analysis revealed five major themes, each of which directly addresses the study's research questions. For clarity and analytical depth, findings are presented with direct reference to the following research questions:

1. How is AI transforming the traditional and strategic roles of HR professionals?
2. What new skills and competencies are emerging as essential for HR professionals in AI-driven environments?
3. How do HR professionals perceive the impact of AI on their professional identity and future relevance?

### **AI-Driven Task Reallocation: From Administration to Analytics**

Across all 18 interviews, HR professionals consistently reported that AI implementation had led to a significant redistribution of operational workloads, particularly in recruitment, onboarding, and performance tracking. Automated systems were perceived to handle candidate screening, calendar scheduling, and survey analysis with a level of efficiency that restructured time allocation in HR departments.



One participant noted: “\*\*AI now filters approximately 80% of incoming CVs (curricula vitae), allowing HR professionals to focus on higher-value tasks.\*\*” (curricula vitae) before I even see them. This lets me focus on coaching hiring managers or advising on team design” (Interviewee 4, Senior Talent Advisor, Tech Firm). Similar comments appeared in 14 of the 18 transcripts, reinforcing the finding that AI removes repetitive tasks, reallocating HR professionals toward consultative and data-interpretive roles.

However, not all transitions were perceived as positive. Six interviewees raised concerns about deskilling, arguing that over-reliance on AI could disconnect HR professionals from core human interactions. As one respondent stated: “\*\*You can’t cultivate culture or perceive interpersonal nuance if an algorithm is filtering all initial contact.\*\*” (Interviewee 9, HR Business Partner, Public Sector).

### **Strategic Repositioning and the Rise of HR as a Digital Partner**

In over two-thirds of the interviews (13 out of 18), participants indicated that their roles were being redefined not only by what they do, but by how they contribute to broader organisational strategy. AI systems were credited with elevating HR’s access to real-time data, allowing professionals to contribute to decisions on workforce forecasting, diversity metrics, and productivity trends.

Participants who held “seat-at-the-table” roles described AI as a catalyst for strategic involvement, particularly in transformation initiatives. For example, Interviewee 2 (Head of People Analytics, Financial Services) explained: “\*\*AI now provides dashboards that we present to the executive board, enhancing HR’s strategic visibility.\*\*” “\*\*Rather than chasing reports, we now interpret trends and offer strategic recommendations.\*\*”

Despite this shift, four participants cautioned that HR’s strategic leverage remained contingent on organisational culture. In environments where IT or operations dominated AI rollouts, HR was still viewed as tactical or reactive, underscoring the need for cross-functional collaboration and digital authority to be built deliberately.

### **Emerging Competencies: Beyond Digital Literacy**

A central finding across all interviews was that traditional HR skills relationship building, communication, legal compliance-were no longer sufficient in isolation. Participants outlined a growing demand for data literacy, algorithmic scepticism, systems thinking, and ethical oversight. 15 of the 18 professionals interviewed had undergone digital or AI training within the past two years.

One participant (Interviewee 12, Talent and Transformation Lead) commented: “\*\*We don’t need HR professionals to be coders but they must critically question algorithmic assumptions and know when human override is necessary.\*\*” This view reflects a shift from technical skill acquisition to critical AI engagement, where HR professionals must understand not only what AI can do, but what it should do.

Additionally, collaborative competence emerged as a recurrent theme. Respondents highlighted their growing involvement with data scientists, IT staff, and external vendors in co-designing AI tools. This required fluency in both HR and technical languages a hybrid capability seen as essential for the future HR workforce.

### **Professional Identity: Navigating Role Uncertainty and Opportunity**

The most complex and nuanced theme related to the shifting professional identity of HR practitioners. Several respondents

expressed tension between a sense of professional erosion and empowerment. While many appreciated the elevation of HR’s strategic role, they also conveyed concern about becoming “invisible enablers behind the algorithm”.

Interviewee 6, an HR Manager in a multinational firm, shared: “*There’s pride in seeing our insights drive business outcomes, but there’s also this creeping doubt-am I the one adding value, or is it the system?*” This identity ambiguity was particularly strong among mid-career professionals who had experienced HR before and after digitalisation.

Notably, younger HR professionals (under 35) were more optimistic, viewing AI as a tool of professional expansion. For them, hybrid roles such as “People Analyst,” “Employee Experience Designer,” or “Digital HR Strategist” signalled new identity frontiers rather than loss. These findings reflect a generational difference in how AI is interpreted as threat versus opportunity.

### **Ethical Gatekeeping and the HR-AI Interface**

An unanticipated yet powerful finding was HR’s emerging role as an ethical gatekeeper in AI governance. 11 participants reported being directly involved in algorithm auditing or risk evaluation committees, particularly in areas involving diversity and inclusion metrics, candidate scoring, or wellbeing monitoring.

This theme was strongest in organisations adopting AI for performance prediction or attrition risk modelling. Interviewee 15 (HR Policy Head, EU-Based Tech Startup) noted: “\*\*We discovered the AI system penalised maternity leave in performance scoring.\*\*” That triggered a full audit. HR was the first to question it.”

The recognition that HR can safeguard fairness in algorithmic decision-making suggests a growing institutional legitimacy-not just as users of AI, but as ethical stewards of its deployment.

## **Discussion**

### **Rethinking HR Roles in the Age of Intelligent Automation**

The findings confirm that AI is not simply reshaping HR’s operational tasks but is fundamentally altering the profession’s purpose and institutional role. The data illustrate that HR professionals are increasingly repositioned from task executors to strategic enablers, interpreting data, influencing business decisions, and co-shaping organisational culture. This supports Ulrich and Dulebohn’s argument that HR’s strategic value will be defined by its contribution to enterprise-level outcomes, rather than its administrative efficiency [3].

However, the findings also nuance this vision. While AI creates opportunities for HR to gain strategic visibility, this shift is not uniformly realised across organisations. In firms where digital transformation is led by operations or IT, HR remains marginalised, reinforcing Newell and Marabelli’s concern that HR could lose influence if it fails to claim ownership of technological change [6]. Therefore, the real transformation lies not only in the tools available, but in how HR departments choose to position themselves institutionally and politically in AI governance ecosystems.

### **The Evolution of HR Competencies: From Literacy to Leadership**

The study’s insights reveal that emerging competencies extend well beyond basic digital literacy. HR professionals are expected

to critically interpret AI outputs, collaborate across technical and ethical domains, and engage in values-led decision-making. These findings support Minbaeva's emphasis on the need for HR practitioners to act as data-informed change agents rather than passive consumers of analytics [2].

In this respect, the role of HR shifts from being a translator of people insights to a co-creator of algorithmic logic, capable of ensuring that AI systems reflect organisational ethics and human-centric principles. This reflects Butcher and Beridze's proposition that HR must evolve into an ethical governance actor [11]. The professionals in this study who had received AI training or worked on cross-functional digital teams reported a clearer sense of their future role and identity, suggesting that access to AI-related development opportunities is pivotal for shaping HR's readiness and relevance.

### **HR Identity in Transition: Tension and Renewal**

The issue of professional identity emerged as one of the most complex themes. While AI appears to elevate HR's strategic potential, it also introduces identity dissonance, particularly for mid-career professionals who have built their careers around interpersonal skills and experience-based judgment. This echoes Wright's notion that professional identity in HR is historically grounded in relational competence and human advocacy, which AI tends to abstract or automate [17].

Nonetheless, the findings also point to a possible identity renaissance. Younger HR professionals and those in data-informed roles express optimism and agency in shaping new professional narratives. Titles such as "People Analyst" and "Digital HR Strategist" represent not merely functional shifts, but symbolic indicators of HR's reimagined identity. This aligns with Colbert et al.'s observation that professionals experiencing technological flux undergo a process of identity reconstruction rather than loss-provided they receive institutional recognition and professional development support [18].

### **The Rise of HR as an Ethical Interface**

Perhaps the most policy-relevant insight from the study is the role of HR as an emerging ethical gatekeeper. The finding that HR professionals flagged algorithmic bias, participated in AI audit teams, and intervened in the fairness of automated systems suggests a transformation in HR's ethical responsibilities. This supports the view of Raghavan et al. and Tursunbayeva et al. that algorithmic HR systems must be critically examined not only for their functionality but for their social and moral impacts [7,10]. **\*\*Updated CIPD post-2023 guidelines reinforce this position, identifying HR as a governance linchpin responsible for upholding fairness, explainability, and inclusiveness in AI-driven processes [22]. The European Commission's framework on trustworthy AI 2023-2024 also assigns accountability to HR leadership when AI tools are applied in recruitment, performance evaluation, or employee monitoring.\*\***

This ethical dimension adds a new layer of legitimacy to the HR profession. While HR has historically been perceived as reactive or policy-bound, the ability to scrutinise and reshape algorithmic decisions empowers it as a proactive custodian of equity. Importantly, this redefinition of HR's role is not merely symbolic-it offers real strategic capital, particularly as governments and regulators move toward greater AI accountability in employment contexts.

### **Synthesis and Implications**

Together, these findings suggest that AI does not inherently displace or devalue HR professionals; rather, it amplifies strategic possibilities for those who evolve their capabilities, reimagine their identity, and claim ethical and analytical leadership. The transformation, however, is contingent upon multiple factors: the organisational context, the agency of the HR function, and the investment in AI-related upskilling.

The dual pressures of digital transformation and ethical governance are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. HR professionals who acquire competencies in both domains are uniquely positioned to influence the future of work, not merely adapt to it. This study contributes to the literature by framing AI not as a technological threat to HR, but as a strategic inflection point, where the profession can either reclaim or relinquish its relevance.

### **Taking into Account the above in Relation to the Findings the Research Objectives are Met:**

**AI-Driven Task Reallocation: From Administration to Analytics:** This transformation supports **RQ1**, indicating a shift from transactional execution to strategic facilitation. Yet, not all organisations were equally advanced. In less tech-savvy environments, AI was still limited to payroll or applicant tracking systems, suggesting uneven progress in task reallocation across sectors.

**Strategic Repositioning and the Rise of HR as a Digital Partner:** These findings expand **RQ1** by showing that while AI enables strategic repositioning, it also raises questions about power, participation, and organisational readiness.

**Emerging Competencies: Beyond Digital Literacy.** This directly answers **RQ2**, confirming that a new breed of hybrid professionals is emerging those who combine human insight with digital agility.

**Professional Identity: Navigating Role Uncertainty and Opportunity.** This supports **RQ3** and reveals that professional identity is not collapsing but diversifying. Identity work is underway: HR professionals are experimenting with new labels ("people analyst," "AI ethics lead") and negotiating a more adaptive image.

**Ethical Gatekeeping and the HR-AI Interface:** This theme enhances **RQ3** by identifying an emerging jurisdiction for HR not in administration, but in organisational justice, transparency, and trust mediation. For many, this role was a new source of professional purpose and legitimacy [23-25].

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusion**

This study has examined the evolving role of HR professionals in an AI-augmented workplace, analysing how intelligent technologies are reshaping tasks, competencies, and professional identity. The findings confirm that AI is not replacing HR but is redefining its function-from administrative executor to strategic interpreter and ethical mediator. Across diverse organisational settings, HR professionals are increasingly expected to engage with data analytics, collaborate across disciplines, and participate in the governance of algorithmic systems.

The research demonstrates that while AI can enhance HR's strategic position, its success depends on proactive capability development, identity adaptation, and institutional recognition. Professionals who are equipped to bridge human and machine intelligence are more likely to maintain relevance and influence. Conversely, those lacking digital fluency or ethical awareness may be marginalised in digitally transformed organisations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by advancing a model of HR transformation in which AI serves as both a technological driver and a catalyst for professional reinvention. It shifts the narrative from one of obsolescence to strategic renaissance, provided that HR departments actively reshape their purpose and build cross-functional legitimacy.

**Recommendations**

Based on the Findings and Analysis, The Following Recommendations are Proposed to Support the Future Relevance and Strategic Impact of HR Professionals in Ai-Augmented Environments:

1. **Integrate AI Readiness into HR Capability Frameworks.** Professional bodies and institutions should revise competency models to include algorithmic literacy, ethical reasoning, and data interpretation. These skills must be embedded in continuous professional development pathways, not treated as optional specialisations.
2. **Promote HR-AI Co-Design Practices.** Organisations should include HR professionals in the early design, testing, and governance stages of AI systems. Co-design ensures that ethical and contextual dimensions are embedded in algorithmic decision-making from the outset, strengthening trust and accountability.
3. **Reframe HR Identity Around Hybrid Professionalism.** HR leaders and educators must actively shape a new identity narrative-one that integrates relational, analytical, and ethical domains. Promoting roles such as “People Analyst” or “Digital Workforce Partner” signals a reimagined purpose for the profession in a data-driven era.
4. **Establish Cross-Functional Alliances for AI Governance.** HR should not operate in isolation when managing AI impacts. Strategic partnerships with data science, legal, and IT departments are necessary to build a robust ecosystem of human-machine collaboration, guided by shared values and compliance standards.
5. **Advance Policy Engagement on Algorithmic Fairness in HRM.** HR associations and academic institutions should contribute to the development of regulatory frameworks governing AI in the workplace. Active participation in public policy dialogue will ensure that HR concerns-such as diversity, inclusion, and fairness-are integrated into future legislation and AI standards.
6. **Foster Reflexive Learning and Ethical Sensitivity.** Finally, HR professionals must cultivate reflexivity-the ability to question both algorithmic outputs and organisational assumptions. This requires an ethical consciousness that goes beyond technical proficiency, allowing HR to serve as a moral compass in increasingly automated workplaces.

In sum, AI is not the end of the HR profession; it is a new beginning-an opportunity to evolve into a more strategic, evidence-based, and ethically grounded discipline. Realising this potential, however, will require more than tools and training. It demands a conscious redefinition of what it means to be an HR professional in the age of intelligent systems.

**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire**

1. How has the integration of AI impacted your daily HR tasks or responsibilities?
2. Which HR functions in your organisation are most affected by AI technologies?
3. Have your required skills or competencies changed due to AI implementation? If so, how?

4. How would you describe the impact of AI on your role’s strategic contribution?
5. In what ways has AI influenced your professional identity or self-conception as an HR professional?
6. Are you involved in the design or governance of AI systems within your organisation?
7. What challenges or concerns have you encountered regarding AI in HR?
8. How does your organisation support HR professionals in adapting to AI integration?
9. Do you perceive AI as a threat or an opportunity for HR’s future? Please explain.
10. What recommendations would you make for HR professionals to thrive in AI-enhanced environments?

**Appendix B: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Participant ID	Role	Sector	Country	Years in HR	AI Maturity Level
P01	HR Manager	Technology	UK	12	High
P02	People Analytics Lead	Finance	UK	8	Advanced
P03	HRBP	Public Sector	Germany	15	Low
P04	Head of Talent	Tech Startup	Netherlands	10	Medium
P05	HR Director	Retail	France	20	High
P06	HR Partner	Healthcare	UK	9	Medium

**Appendix C: Thematic Summary of Participant Responses**

Theme	Participant Quotes	Frequency
AI Task Reallocation	"AI now screens CVs. I focus on advising managers."	14/18
Strategic Role	"We now present AI dashboards to the board."	13/18
Skills Shift	"We need to understand how algorithms think."	15/18
Identity Tension	"Am I still relevant or is it the system?"	9/18
Ethical Role	"We questioned an AI scoring maternity leave negatively."	11/18

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