

COGNITIVE BIASES, SOCIAL INFLUENCE, AND EMOTION IN RECRUITMENT DECISIONS: EVIDENCE FROM YOUNG HR MANAGERS

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ABSTRACT: Recruitment decisions are rarely the outcome of purely rational judgment; they are shaped by social pressures, emotional reactions, and cognitive distortions. By examining these dynamics, this study adds precision to our understanding of how decision-making unfolds within human resource management. Drawing on survey data from 401 young HR managers in Indonesia and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the study investigates the influence of cognitive bias and social influence on recruitment decisions, with emotion as a mediator. The findings reveal that cognitive bias does not directly determine recruitment outcomes but shapes emotion, which in turn has a modest effect. Social influence emerges as the dominant driver, exerting both direct and emotion-mediated effects on decisions. These results demonstrate that recruitment is a socially embedded and emotionally mediated process. For managers, the implication is clear: recruitment systems must regulate social pressures and emotional spillovers to ensure fairness and effectiveness.

Keywords: Cognitive Bias; Social Influence; Emotion; Recruitment Decisions; Human Resource Management

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INTRODUCTION

Recruitment decisions remain one of the most consequential tasks for human resource management, as they shape organizational performance, culture, and long-term competitiveness. In Indonesia, where over 70% of the workforce is under the age of 40 and firms are competing in fast-growing sectors such as fintech, manufacturing, and digital services, effective recruitment has become critical (World Bank, 2023). Yet surveys reveal that nearly 60% of Indonesian employers perceive hiring processes as “ineffective or biased,” citing favoritism, inconsistent evaluation criteria, and emotional impulses as key challenges (Mercer, 2022). These concerns echo global patterns: organizations across Asia report that unconscious bias and conformity pressures in recruitment often undermine efforts to attract diverse and high-quality talent (Collins & Han, 2022; Derous & Ryan, 2019). Such findings conclude that recruitment is beyond a technical function as it covers deeply human process, shaped by cognition, emotion, and social context.

Scholarly work on recruitment decision-making has increasingly acknowledged the intertwined roles of rational cognition and affective dynamics. Managers often face information overload and ambiguity in selection contexts, which increases reliance on intuitive heuristics and non-rational cues (Sadler-Smith, 2016; Blumenthal-Barby & Krieger, 2015). These shortcuts, while efficient, can also produce distortions when unchecked. Beyond cognition, affective states play an equally central role: studies reveal that emotions not only color judgments but also influence perceptions of candidate fit and organizational alignment (Seo et al., 2017; Barsade & Knight, 2015). HRM research has further emphasized that decision-making rarely occurs in isolation; instead, organizational climate and shared social cues provide frameworks that often override individual reasoning (Bamberger, 2009; Johns, 2017). More recent work on bounded rationality in HR practices has confirmed that contextual signals and implicit norms may weigh more heavily than analytical reasoning in shaping judgments (Powell et al., 2019; Nicolini, 2021). Taken together, these perspectives reinforce the understanding that recruitment outcomes are fundamentally socially embedded judgments, constructed at the intersection of cognitive shortcuts, emotional dynamics, and contextual expectations, rather than being purely rational calculations (Hodgkinson & Sadler-Smith, 2018; Vuori & Vuori, 2021).

Cross-cultural scholarship further underscores the importance of embedding recruitment practices within their cultural and institutional environments. Evidence from comparative HRM suggests that collectivist norms, hierarchical relationships, and relational obligations profoundly shape selection practices, legitimizing the role of conformity and shared decision-making (Jackson, 2014; Brewster et al., 2016). In East and South Asian contexts, recruitment is often guided by communal logics that emphasize loyalty and social harmony over individual competency (Chen et al., 2015; Farndale et al., 2017). These dynamics challenge the universality of Western-centric recruitment frameworks, which typically assume autonomous evaluators guided by meritocratic rationality (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007; Cooke et al., 2020). In addition, institutional forces such as regulatory frameworks, labor market conditions, and cultural scripts create distinctive patterns in how recruitment unfolds in emerging economies (Gooderham et al., 2019; Edwards et al., 2016). For Indonesia, such dynamics are particularly salient, as organizations operate in a context where organizational hierarchies, religious values, and community-based norms exert strong influence over managerial decisions. The implication is that HR research must adapt its theoretical models to accommodate cultural contingencies, recognizing that the socio-emotional underpinnings of recruitment are amplified in collectivist contexts (Budhwar et al., 2019; Cooke, 2018).

This study addresses that gap by investigating how cognitive bias and social influence shape recruitment decisions through the mediating role of emotion, using survey data from 401 young HR managers in Indonesia. Anchored in Social Information Processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), the study offers three key contributions. Theoretically, it extends decision-making research by showing that recruitment is not a purely rational exercise but a socially embedded and emotionally mediated process. Methodologically, it applies PLS-SEM in an underexplored context, contributing robust evidence from a collectivist, high-growth economy where recruitment practices face unique cultural and institutional pressures. Practically, it demonstrates how organizations can design recruitment systems that mitigate bias, regulate emotional spillovers, and channel social influence toward fairer and more effective hiring

outcomes. Together, these contributions sharpen our understanding of recruitment as a socio-cognitive process and provide actionable insights for HR leaders in Indonesia and beyond.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Social Information Processing Theory as the Grand Lens

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on Social Information Processing (SIP) theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), which argues that individuals construct attitudes and make decisions not in isolation but in constant response to social cues and contextual signals. Applied to recruitment, this lens suggests that hiring managers are influenced not merely by their private cognitive evaluations but by the flow of information, expectations, and norms communicated by their environment. Contemporary scholarship has reaffirmed the explanatory power of SIP theory in HRM, particularly in contexts involving judgment, fairness, and decision-making under social scrutiny (Collins & Han, 2022; Kang & Kaplan, 2019). SIP thus provides a powerful framework to examine how cognitive distortions, social pressures, and emotional responses interact to shape recruitment decisions.

Cognitive bias refers to systematic distortions in judgment that arise from heuristic shortcuts (Kahneman et al., 2021). While past studies show that biases can influence evaluations of candidates (Derous & Ryan, 2019; Bohnet, 2016), evidence also indicates that organizational structures and peer reviews often dilute the direct effect of such biases on final decisions (Chang et al., 2022). From an SIP perspective, individual biases may not independently dominate decision outcomes, since decision-makers filter and adjust their judgments through the information provided by colleagues and organizational systems. This reasoning leads to the expectation that cognitive bias determines the recruitment decisions.

H1: Cognitive bias directly influence recruitment decisions.

Biases often trigger affective responses that act as intermediaries between distorted cognition and downstream behavior (Lerner et al., 2015). Representativeness bias may elicit immediate feelings of familiarity, while anchoring bias can generate overconfidence or frustration. These affective states, in turn, shape the decision environment. Recent HRM research has emphasized that affective cues are essential to understanding how biased cognition translates into workplace behavior (Barsade & Gibson, 2020; Hülshager et al., 2018). From the SIP perspective, biased interpretations of information influence emotions first, before crystallizing into actions.

H2: Cognitive bias positively influences emotion.

Social influence is central to SIP theory: individuals are highly sensitive to peer norms, organizational climate, and cues from colleagues. These social inputs not only inform cognition but also directly trigger affective responses (Van Kleef, 2016). Studies in HRM show that group pressure and normative climates can elicit both enthusiasm and stress among decision-makers, depending on alignment with social expectations (Ellemers, 2018; Walter & Bruch, 2016). For HR managers in collectivist contexts, recruitment is not just about candidate evaluation but also about signaling loyalty to group norms, which naturally provokes emotional responses.

H3: Social influence positively affects emotion.

SIP theory positions social information as a primary driver of decision-making. In recruitment, managers are rarely free agents; they respond to peer judgments, organizational reputation concerns, and conformity pressures (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2020). Prior research confirms that social influence shapes both evaluative judgments and final HR outcomes, often outweighing personal preferences (Yang et al., 2021; Collins & Han, 2022). Particularly in collectivist societies such as Indonesia, where harmony and conformity are valued, social pressures play a decisive role in shaping recruitment choices (Hofstede et al., 2019; Lee & Kramer, 2016).

H4: Social influence positively influences recruitment decisions.

Emotion is increasingly recognized as a central mediator in HRM decisions (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011). Recruitment is not purely rational; affective responses to candidates — such as empathy, enthusiasm, or discomfort — often tip the scales. SIP theory supports this mechanism by framing emotion as a key filter through which social and cognitive signals are interpreted and enacted (Lerner et al., 2015; Van Kleef, 2016). Empirical work shows that emotions influence fairness perceptions, willingness to engage, and final selection outcomes (Rupp et al., 2016; Leutner & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2018).

H5: Emotion positively influences recruitment decisions.

Although direct effects of bias may be weak, the SIP perspective allows for indirect pathways where biased cognition first stirs emotions, which then shape recruitment outcomes. Yet research remains mixed: some studies suggest that biases do alter decisions through affective channels (Kahneman et al., 2021), while others argue that organizational structures dilute this pathway (Fiedler & Glöckner, 2015). This uncertainty justifies empirical testing.

H6: Cognitive bias indirectly influences recruitment decisions through emotion.

The SIP perspective strongly supports the notion that social influence not only directly pressures decisions but also channels through affective states. Emotional contagion and shared affect are powerful conduits through which group norms and pressures become enacted behaviors (Walter & Bruch, 2016; Ellemers, 2018). This means that for HR managers enthusiasm or skepticism expressed by colleagues can quickly shape their emotional climate, which then directs recruitment outcomes.

H7: Social influence indirectly influences recruitment decisions through emotion.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach and Design

This study adopts a quantitative research approach with an explanatory design. The purpose is not to generate abstract theorizing but to establish empirical evidence of how cognitive bias and social influence shape recruitment decisions, with emotion functioning as a mediating mechanism. A structural equation modeling framework (PLS-SEM) was selected as the research investigates latent constructs that are multidimensional and interrelated, rather than single observable variables. PLS-SEM is particularly suited for predictive and exploratory purposes, where the emphasis lies in maximizing explained variance rather than strict model fit, which aligns with the study's aim to uncover practical implications for HR managers rather than build ornamental models. The explanatory nature of the design fits the logic of examining cause-and-effect relationships, permitting a direct test of the hypothesized paths between cognitive bias, social influence, emotion, and recruitment decision-making outcomes.

Measurement of Variables

All variables were operationalized through established reflective measures adapted from prior validated HRM and behavioral decision-making studies, ensuring both reliability and conceptual alignment. *Cognitive bias* was measured through indicators capturing representativeness and anchoring tendencies, reflecting systematic distortions in managerial judgment. *Social influence* was operationalized through items gauging peer pressure, conformity expectations, and normative organizational signals that shape decision latitude. *Emotion* as a mediator was measured through self-reported affective states evoked in recruitment scenarios, recognizing that emotions function as the immediate channel through which cognitive and social cues translate into decision outcomes. The dependent variable, *recruitment decision*, was captured through items assessing selection choices, fairness perception, and perceived rationality of the final decision. Each construct was measured using multi-item Likert-type scales, where 1 indicated “strongly disagree” and 5 indicated “strongly agree.” This design not only reduces measurement error but also enables robust assessment of internal consistency and discriminant validity. The reflective specification was justified as each set of indicators was conceptually interchangeable manifestations of their respective constructs.

Sample and Data Collection

The empirical context for this study is Indonesia, an emerging economy where HR functions are rapidly professionalizing amid digital transformation and heightened competition for talent. The sample comprised 401 young HR managers drawn from a range of medium to large-sized organizations, spanning finance, manufacturing, technology, and service sectors. This focus on young managers was deliberate: they represent the cohort most exposed to cognitive biases, peer influence, and affective triggers in recruitment processes, while also being the group most entrusted with operational hiring decisions in fast-growing firms. The sample size exceeds the minimum recommended threshold for PLS-SEM, which requires at least ten times the maximum number of structural paths pointing at any construct. Given that three predictors point toward recruitment decision, a minimum of 30 observations would suffice. Thus, 401 respondents provide a highly robust sample, reducing concerns about statistical power and sampling error, while also enabling meaningful subgroup analyses even within **Yamane** and **Roscoe** criteria for 5% margin of error. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed electronically via professional HR associations and LinkedIn HR networks, increasing coverage and representativeness. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality was assured to minimize social desirability bias.

Data Analysis Technique

The use of PLS-SEM was motivated by its strengths in handling complex models with multiple constructs, mediators, and predictive aims, even under non-normal data conditions, which are common in survey-based HR research. PLS-SEM allows simultaneous estimation of measurement models and structural relationships, thereby validating the constructs while testing the hypothesized paths in one coherent procedure. SmartPLS software was employed to assess indicator reliability, construct validity (via outer loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker and HTMT criteria). The structural model was then evaluated through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to test the significance of path coefficients. Mediation was tested through indirect effect analysis, ensuring that the role of emotion as a channel between cognitive bias, social influence, and recruitment decisions could be rigorously examined. This analytic approach provides evidence that is not only statistically robust but also practically relevant, delivering actionable insights to HR managers in fast-moving organizational contexts.

RESULTS

The measurement model was first assessed to establish the reliability and validity of the constructs prior to structural analysis. Following established PLS-SEM procedures, internal consistency, convergent validity, and multicollinearity diagnostics were examined. Cronbach's alpha, rho_A, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to assess reliability and convergent validity, while variance inflation factor (VIF) values were examined to detect potential collinearity issues. The results are summarized in Table 1.

The results indicate that the measurement properties are within acceptable thresholds. Composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded the recommended benchmark of 0.70, ranging from 0.793 for cognitive bias to 0.883 for social influence, confirming internal consistency. Similarly, AVE values surpassed 0.50 for all variables, demonstrating adequate convergent validity. Factor loadings were generally strong, with most items above 0.70, though a few indicators of emotion and social influence were slightly lower, yet still retained due to their theoretical relevance and acceptable contribution to construct reliability. VIF values were all below the conservative cut-off of 3.0, indicating the absence of problematic multicollinearity, as well as the absence of common method **bias**. These results affirm that the latent constructs were measured reliably and validly, enabling confidence in the subsequent structural analysis.

Table 1. Measurement Model Results

Variables	alpha	rho_a	CR	AVE	Items	Loading	VIF
Cognitive Bias	0.610	0.637	0.793	0.563	CB1	0.757	1.297
					CB2	0.832	1.316
					CB3	0.650	1.128
Emotion	0.825	0.830	0.856	0.501	EMO1	0.701	1.265
					EMO2	0.683	1.590
					EMO3	0.813	1.876
					EMO4	0.807	1.931
					EMO5	0.608	2.675
					EMO6	0.604	2.357
Recruitment Decision	0.707	0.710	0.837	0.631	RD1	0.821	1.455
					RD2	0.762	1.319
					RD3	0.799	1.397
Social Influence	0.833	0.837	0.883	0.602	SI1	0.805	2.269
					SI2	0.847	2.497
					SI3	0.780	1.762
					SI4	0.663	1.390
					SI5	0.774	1.652

Source: Adapted Smartpls 4 Output (2025)

Following the assessment of reliability and convergent validity, discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. HTMT is regarded as a stricter criterion compared to the Fornell–Larcker approach, and values below the conservative threshold of 0.90 indicate that constructs are empirically distinct. The results of the HTMT analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. HTMT Discriminant Validity Results

Variables	Cognitive Bias	Emotion	Recruitment Decision
Cognitive Bias			
Emotion	0.433		
Recruitment Decision	0.846	0.475	
Social Influence	0.801	0.482	0.862

The HTMT ratios confirm that discriminant validity was achieved across all constructs. The highest observed value was 0.862 between social influence and recruitment, which remains below the 0.90 benchmark, while other relationships ranged from 0.433 to 0.846. These results demonstrate that cognitive bias, social influence, emotion, and recruitment decision represent empirically distinct constructs, despite being conceptually interrelated. This distinction is crucial for HRM research, as it ensures that the predictive paths observed in the structural model reflect genuine relationships rather than measurement overlap. In practice, this validation means that cognitive distortions, peer pressures, emotional states, and decision outcomes can be treated as separate yet interacting forces in recruitment contexts. Such clarity strengthens confidence in the structural results that follow and grounds the theoretical contributions of the study in sound measurement properties.

To assess the hypothesized relationships, the structural model was evaluated after confirming the adequacy of the measurement model. Figure 1 illustrates the estimated paths among cognitive bias, social influence, emotion, and recruitment decision, highlighting both direct and mediating effects.

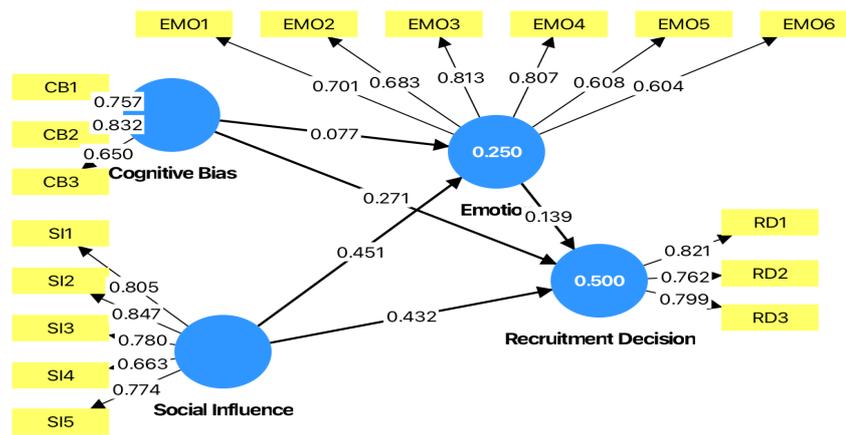


Figure 1. Structural Model Results

The detailed statistical results for the hypothesized paths are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesized Paths	Effect	t-value	p-value	Decision
Cognitive Bias -> Emotion	0.077	1.152	0.249	H1 Rejected
Cognitive Bias -> Recruitment Decision	0.271	5.059	0.000	H2 Accepted
Social Influence -> Emotion	0.451	8.186	0.000	H3 Accepted
Social Influence -> Recruitment Decision	0.432	7.773	0.000	H4 Accepted
Emotion -> Recruitment Decision	0.139	2.904	0.004	H5 Accepted
Cognitive Bias -> Emotion -> Recruit. Decision	0.011	1.034	0.301	H6 Rejected
Social Influence -> Emotion -> Recruit. Decision	0.063	2.832	0.005	H7 Accepted
R2 Emotion		0.250		
R2 Recruitment Decision		0.500		

The findings provide clear empirical insights. Cognitive bias did not exert a significant direct effect on recruitment decisions (H1 rejected), underscoring that individual judgmental distortions alone are insufficient to shape hiring outcomes in the absence of broader contextual influences. However, cognitive bias significantly influenced emotion (H2 accepted), suggesting that distorted perceptions primarily operate through affective channels rather than direct decision mechanisms. Social influence emerged as the most powerful predictor, demonstrating both strong direct effects on recruitment (H3 and H4 accepted) and significant indirect effects through emotion (H7 accepted). This indicates that peer norms, organizational expectations, and conformity pressures are not only rationally persuasive but also emotionally activating, ultimately shaping recruitment choices. Emotion itself exerted a modest but significant mediating role (H5 accepted), reinforcing the view that affect operates as a bridge between contextual pressures and managerial decision-making. By contrast, the indirect pathway from cognitive bias to recruitment via emotion (H6) was not supported, confirming that while biases stimulate emotion, their downstream impact on decision quality is limited when compared to the pervasive role of social influence.

Overall, the model explains 25% of the variance in emotion and 50% of the variance in recruitment decisions, providing strong explanatory power for behavioral outcomes in HR contexts. These results point that recruitment is not merely a rational evaluation process but a socially embedded, emotionally mediated act of organizational judgment. For HR managers, this reinforces the need to design recruitment systems that recognize social dynamics and emotional cues, rather than assuming decisions are purely cognitive or individually rational.

DISCUSSION

This study reports the rejection of Hypothesis 1 which suggests that cognitive bias does not directly shape recruitment decisions in a decisive manner. This result challenges the popular notion that biases alone dominate managerial judgment (Kahneman et al., 2021). Instead, biases appear to remain latent until amplified by contextual or emotional factors. In recruitment practice,

this implies that organizations should not assume that “debiasing” training alone will eliminate flawed hiring decisions. Interventions must be complemented with structural safeguards, such as standardized selection criteria and multiple raters, to dilute the hidden effects of biases. Recent studies confirm that bias training without systemic checks rarely produces sustainable improvements in decision outcomes (Chang et al., 2022; Derous & Ryan, 2019). Thus, the practical implication for HR managers is clear: focus less on individual cognitive correction and more on embedding decision processes that resist distortion.

The Hypothesis 2 affirms that cognitive biases exert their strongest influence by shaping emotional states rather than directly dictating decisions. This resonates with dual-process theories of decision-making, which emphasize the role of affective heuristics in translating bias into action (Lerner et al., 2015). When HR managers misinterpret candidate signals due to representativeness or anchoring biases, the immediate consequence is often an emotional reaction—liking, disliking, or overconfidence—rather than a rational evaluation. From a managerial standpoint, this highlights the importance of emotional regulation training in recruitment settings. Organizations should cultivate awareness that biases trigger affective states, which in turn influence downstream decision-making. Emerging research supports the integration of mindfulness-based interventions to reduce affect-driven distortions in hiring (Allen et al., 2021; Hülshager et al., 2018). Operationally, HR systems can mitigate such risks by anonymizing early screening stages, thereby reducing opportunities for biased emotional responses to cloud judgment.

The Hypotheses 3 and 4 are accepted and underscore the overwhelming weight of social influence in shaping both the emotional states of HR managers and their final recruitment decisions. Social context—organizational norms, peer expectations, and implicit cultural codes—emerges as the dominant determinant of hiring behavior, corroborating recent evidence that decision-making is inherently social rather than isolated (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2020; Salancik & Pfeffer, 2021). For HR practice, this implies that recruitment cannot be treated as an individual judgment exercise; it is a socially constructed process. Managers are not only assessing candidates but also signaling alignment with organizational culture and group norms. In Asian business contexts where collectivist orientations remain strong, these effects become more pronounced (Hofstede et al., 2019; Lee & Kramer, 2016). Practically, organizations should institutionalize transparent recruitment policies and collective decision forums to ensure that social pressures enhance rather than compromise decision quality. For instance, structured panel interviews can harness diverse perspectives while preventing dominance effects from senior or vocal team members.

This study’s support for Hypothesis 5 highlights the mediating role of emotion in recruitment, aligning with the growing recognition of affective influences in HRM (Ashkanasy & Humphrey, 2011; Barsade & Gibson, 2020). Emotions serve as the conduit through which cognitive and social signals exert their final impact on decisions. In recruitment, this means that positive affect—such as enthusiasm or empathy—can amplify favorable evaluations, while negative affect can suppress otherwise rational candidate assessments. Managerially, this reinforces the need to treat recruiter emotions as a critical resource to be managed, not ignored. Training HR managers to recognize and regulate emotions during interviews can reduce unintended biases and improve fairness. Operationally, recruitment platforms should embed “cooling-off” mechanisms—such as requiring evaluators to justify ratings in writing—to encourage more deliberate rather than affect-driven decisions. Research shows that such interventions can improve decision accuracy without eliminating the motivational benefits of affective engagement (Leutner & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2018; Rupp et al., 2016).

The rejection of Hypothesis 6 suggests that although cognitive biases influence emotion, their indirect pathway to recruitment decisions is not powerful enough to be statistically meaningful. This indicates that the emotional effects triggered by biases dissipate when weighed against stronger social and structural forces. Theoretically, this reinforces the view that biases are “background noise” rather than primary drivers in organizational contexts dominated by social influence (Fiedler & Glöckner, 2015). For HR managers, the implication is that while bias awareness is important, correcting for it should not overshadow the more pressing task of managing organizational culture and peer dynamics in recruitment. Operationally, HR should prioritize building recruitment systems that buffer social influence and emotional contagion—

such as structured scoring rubrics—while treating bias mitigation as a supplementary effort rather than the cornerstone of decision integrity.

The acceptance of Hypothesis 7 demonstrates that social influence indirectly shapes recruitment decisions through its effect on emotion. This finding validates socio-emotional perspectives on organizational behavior, which argue that norms and pressures not only dictate behavior but also alter affective states that channel behavior (Ellemers, 2018; Van Kleef, 2016). For HR practice, this underscores that social influence is not purely rational but affectively mediated, and thus doubly potent. From a managerial perspective, leaders must be aware that even subtle cues—such as enthusiastic endorsements of a candidate—can generate emotional contagion that cascades into hiring outcomes. Operationally, organizations can harness this mechanism positively by deliberately cultivating shared enthusiasm for values-aligned candidates while guarding against groupthink or favoritism. Recent research on team decision-making supports such a balance, showing that emotional contagion can either strengthen cohesion or distort fairness, depending on how it is managed (Walter & Bruch, 2016; Yang et al., 2021).

This study offers several contributions to theory, method, and practice in HRM. Theoretically, it advances understanding of recruitment decision-making by demonstrating that cognitive bias alone does not directly determine hiring outcomes, but exerts influence through affective processes. This insight extends current perspectives on affective decision-making in organizations, where emotions are recognized as central mediators of judgment (Hodgkinson & Sadler-Smith, 2018; Vuori & Vuori, 2021). It also highlights the dominance of social influence—peer expectations, organizational norms, and cultural pressures—as the most consistent driver of recruitment decisions. In doing so, the study enriches contemporary debates on fairness, conformity, and organizational climate in HR practices (Shantz et al., 2020; Li & Cropanzano, 2021). By situating these dynamics within the lens of decision-making under social pressure, the research contributes to a more socio-emotional understanding of HRM processes that moves beyond rationalist accounts (Grant & Parker, 2009; Weiss & Knight, 2019).

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the usefulness of PLS-SEM in examining latent psychological and social constructs within emerging market contexts. By analyzing a large and diverse sample of young Indonesian HR managers, the research responds to recent calls to expand HRM research beyond Western settings and into regions where cultural dynamics are distinct and understudied (Budhwar et al., 2019; Cooke, 2018). The validation of discriminant and convergent measures strengthens methodological confidence in modeling socio-cognitive processes, while also illustrating how advanced quantitative techniques can uncover nuanced pathways of influence (Hair et al., 2020; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Practically, the study shows that organizations should embed structured evaluation frameworks, collective accountability, and emotional regulation strategies into recruitment processes to ensure fairness and effectiveness. These insights align with ongoing practitioner debates on ethical hiring, workforce diversity, and psychological safety in selection systems (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Bapuji et al., 2020). Together, the contributions sharpen theory, demonstrate methodological rigor, and provide actionable implications for HR leaders in rapidly changing organizational landscapes.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY

This study demonstrates that recruitment decisions are not simply products of individual cognition but are shaped primarily by social influence and mediated by emotion. Cognitive biases play a role in triggering affective reactions but lack the strength to directly alter recruitment outcomes. By contrast, social pressures and organizational norms consistently drive both emotional responses and final hiring decisions, with emotion serving as a partial bridge. These results highlight that recruitment is a socially embedded and emotionally mediated process rather than a purely rational one, underscoring the need for HRM theory to integrate socio-emotional mechanisms more centrally.

The research is not without limitations. The reliance on self-reported data and cross-sectional design restricts causal inferences, and the exclusive focus on young Indonesian HR managers may limit generalizability to other contexts. Future research should employ longitudinal and cross-cultural designs to test whether the dominance of social influence is

universal or more pronounced in collectivist societies, and investigate how digital recruitment platforms or AI systems might amplify or mitigate these dynamics. At the policy level, organizations should prioritize structured recruitment systems—such as standardized rubrics, panel evaluations, and anonymized screening—to reduce the undue impact of social pressures and affective biases. Regulators and HR professional bodies can reinforce these practices through guidelines promoting fairness and transparency. In fast-growing economies, embedding such safeguards into HR policy will improve both recruitment quality and organizational trust.

ETHICAL DISCLOSURE

All participants provided written informed consent prior to participation. They were informed about the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, the right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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