



Leveraging AI for Recruitment and Retention in Multicultural Aviation Settings: A Narrative Literature Review

MAYETTE C. CORONACION¹ , MARY JANE SAPIENDANTE^{2,3} ,
SHERWIN I. DIALA⁴ ,
JONATHAN L. BERGANIO⁵ , MA. ANGELA S. EVAL⁶ 

¹Fujairah International Airport, Department of Civil Aviation, Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, ²Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Dasmariñas, Dasmariñas, Philippines, ³Polytechnic University of the Philippines Open University, Sta. Mesa, Manila, Philippines, ⁴DepEd Quezon - Talipan National High School, Pagbilao, Quezon, Philippines, ⁵WTW Manila Global Delivery Center, Ltd. Company, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City Philippines
⁶Romblon State University, Odiongan, Romblon, Philippines

Corresponding author: mayeightcrown@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming recruitment and talent management across industries, particularly in aviation where safety, multicultural collaboration, and workforce stability are essential. This narrative literature review examines how AI-enabled recruitment influences employee engagement, procedural justice perceptions, cultural alignment, and long-term retention in multicultural aviation workforces, with emphasis on the United Arab Emirates



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(UAE). Searches were conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect using predefined Boolean terms related to AI recruitment, aviation human resources, multicultural teams, organizational justice, and retention. Fifty-two peer-reviewed studies published between 1988 and 2025 met the inclusion criteria and were synthesized thematically. Findings indicate that AI enhances recruitment efficiency, screening accuracy, and predictive decision-making, yet concerns persist regarding fairness, transparency, and cultural adaptability. Employee engagement, perceptions of justice, and ethical leadership emerged as key mediators linking AI recruitment to retention outcomes. The review highlights that AI's impact on retention is shaped less by technological capability and more by employees' culturally conditioned interpretations of fairness, trustworthiness, and organizational care. A central contribution of this study is the introduction of cultural resonance—the extent to which AI systems reflect and respond to the cultural diversity of the workforce. This perspective expands existing theories by showing that fairness and engagement are shaped by cultural experience as much as by individual psychology. The study underscores the need for culturally adaptive, ethically governed AI systems to support sustainable talent retention in the UAE aviation sector.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a transformative force in modern HRM, reshaping how organizations attract, evaluate, and retain talent. Across North America and Europe, AI-driven recruitment tools automate screening processes, enhance predictive analytics, and reduce administrative workload (Sheshadri & Palivela, 2023; Mori et al., 2025). These tools promise efficiency and objectivity, yet concerns persist regarding algorithmic bias, transparency, and fairness in decision-making (Bogen & Rieke, 2018; Raghavan et al., 2020). Studies from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa echo similar tensions: while AI offers data-driven accuracy, its rapid adoption raises questions about cultural sensitivity, ethical governance, and its impact on employee trust and engagement (Dadaboyev et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

These issues are particularly salient in aviation, a sector characterized by stringent safety standards, multicultural teams, and the need for stable retention. Aviation organizations rely heavily on diverse workforces, making fairness, cultural respect, and organizational integrity central to recruitment. AI-enabled recruitment introduces new dynamics—enhancing efficiency while challenging traditional expectations of fairness and cultural alignment (Alketbi et al., 2025;

Syed & Özbilgin, 2009).

Within the ASEAN region, the integration of AI into HR practices is accelerating but remains uneven. Research from Singapore and Malaysia highlights growing reliance on AI-supported recruitment to manage large applicant pools and enhance talent analytics (Bayona, 2025). Studies from the Philippines emphasize both the promise of AI in reducing human bias and the risk of reinforcing cultural stereotypes when algorithms are not contextually adapted (Bayona, 2025). Emerging literature from Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia points to limited regulatory frameworks and varying levels of digital readiness, creating gaps in ethical oversight and workforce preparedness (Wang et al., 2025).

Despite this growing body of work, a clear research gap remains. Few studies examine how AI-enabled recruitment shapes employee engagement, perceptions of justice, cultural alignment, and long-term retention within multicultural aviation workforces—contexts where these factors are especially critical. Existing research often emphasizes technical performance or general HR outcomes, offering limited insight into the human, cultural, and ethical dimensions of AI adoption in aviation. This study addresses that gap by synthesizing cross-disciplinary literature to explore how AI-driven recruitment influences retention-related factors in diverse aviation environments, with a particular focus on the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE's aviation sector—home to some of the world's largest and most diverse airlines—provides a unique context for examining how AI interacts with multicultural workforce dynamics (Singh & Shaurya, 2021).

FRAMEWORK

This narrative literature review is anchored on three major theoretical lenses: Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990), Organizational Justice Theory (Greenberg, 1987), and Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Together, these theories explain how AI-enabled recruitment influences talent retention in multicultural aviation workforces.

AI-Enabled Recruitment (Independent Variable)

AI-enabled recruitment refers to the use of artificial intelligence tools and algorithms to automate or augment recruitment processes, including screening, shortlisting, assessment, and predictive analytics (Sheshadri & Palivela, 2023). AI tools can reduce human bias, but they may also reproduce or amplify biases embedded in training data (Bogen & Rieke, 2018; Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg & Levy, 2020). Thus, AI recruitment functions not only as a technological process but also as a socio-cultural system shaped by the data and contexts in which it

operates (Bayona, 2025).

Talent Retention (Dependent Variable)

Talent retention refers to employees' willingness to remain in the organization over time. In aviation, retention is influenced by psychological, cultural, and relational factors, particularly given the sector's safety-critical and multicultural nature (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). Retention is not merely a function of compensation or career opportunities; it is deeply connected to employees' sense of belonging, fairness, and trust in organizational processes (Kahn, 1990; Greenberg, 1987).

Mediating Variables

1. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, based on Kahn (1990), reflects employees' sense of psychological safety, meaningfulness, and belonging. AI systems perceived as fair and transparent enhance engagement, while opaque or biased systems diminish it (Mori et al., 2025). Engagement is particularly important in aviation, where teamwork, communication, and emotional commitment directly influence safety and service quality (Al Marzouqi, Khan & Hussain, 2019).

2. Organizational Justice

Organizational justice, drawing from Greenberg (1987), is central to how employees evaluate AI-driven decisions. Perceptions of fairness, consistency, and clarity strongly influence trust and retention intentions (Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg & Levy, 2020). In multicultural settings, justice perceptions are shaped by cultural norms regarding hierarchy, communication, and decision-making (Hofstede et al., 2010; Ali, 1988).

3. Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership moderates the relationship between AI recruitment and retention by fostering trust, accountability, and open communication (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Leaders who explain AI processes, address concerns, and demonstrate fairness help employees accept AI-mediated decisions (Al Marzouqi, Khan & Hussain, 2019; Singh & Shaurya, 2021).

Cultural Congruence as a Cross-Cutting Influence

Cultural congruence operates across all variables, shaping how employees

from diverse backgrounds interpret fairness, trustworthiness, and organizational care (Taras et al., 2016). This aligns with the study's introduction of cultural resonance, emphasizing that AI systems must reflect and adapt to cultural diversity to be perceived as legitimate and fair.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to deepen understanding of how AI-enabled recruitment influences retention-related factors within the multicultural aviation workforce of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where AI adoption is rapidly expanding (Alketbi et al., 2025). Specifically, it seeks to: (1) Analyze UAE-based and international literature to identify patterns, themes, and empirical insights on AI-supported recruitment and its effects on engagement, fairness perceptions, cultural alignment, and retention (Mori et al., 2025). (2) Evaluate how AI-driven recruitment practices shape employee interpretations of procedural justice, transparency, and cultural sensitivity within UAE aviation organizations (Singh & Shaurya, 2021). (3) Identify the mediating roles of organizational justice, cultural congruence, and ethical leadership in AI-enabled recruitment within the UAE's multicultural aviation environment (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Al Marzouqi, Khan & Hussain, 2019). (4) Determine gaps, inconsistencies, and underexplored areas in existing scholarship on AI adoption in UAE aviation HRM (Bayona, 2025; Dadaboyev et al., 2025). (5) Generate evidence-based insights to guide the development of culturally adaptive, ethically governed AI recruitment systems that support long-term talent retention (Taras et al., 2016; Hofstede et al., 2010).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a narrative literature review design, which synthesizes existing scholarship through summarization, interpretation, and critical evaluation (Mori et al., 2025). Unlike systematic reviews with rigid protocols, narrative reviews allow integration of diverse theoretical perspectives and contextual nuances. This approach was chosen because the topic spans multiple disciplines, making a narrative review more suitable than a systematic review for capturing conceptual diversity and contextual nuances (Sheshadri & Palivela, 2023). This design is particularly suitable for examining the intersection of AI-enabled recruitment, multicultural workforce dynamics, and retention in the UAE aviation sector, where empirical evidence remains limited and dispersed across multiple disciplines.

Research Site

As a literature-based inquiry, the research site refers to the body of scholarly work accessed through academic databases and reputable sources. The review drew from Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect, which collectively provide extensive coverage of peer-reviewed research relevant to AI, HRM, aviation, multiculturalism, organizational justice, and retention (Dadaboyev et al., 2025). These databases were selected intentionally to ensure transparency and to guarantee broad, credible coverage of relevant literature, with particular attention to studies applicable to the UAE aviation context.

Participants

The study did not involve human participants. Instead, the “participants” were peer-reviewed journal articles, theoretical papers, and empirical studies published between 1988 and 2025. These documents served as the primary units of analysis (Bayona, 2025). Each source was examined for methodological rigor, theoretical contribution, and relevance to AI-enabled recruitment and retention in multicultural aviation environments.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument for this study was the researcher-developed search framework, which included predefined databases, Boolean search strings, and inclusion-exclusion criteria. This framework functioned as the analytical tool for identifying, selecting, and organizing relevant literature.

Construction, Try-out, Reliability and Validity

The search framework was constructed by defining the topic, scope, and research questions guiding the review. Boolean search strings were developed around core concepts such as “AI recruitment,” “aviation workforce,” “multicultural HRM,” “organizational justice,” and “retention.” These search terms were tested across multiple databases to ensure consistency and relevance. To strengthen clarity, inclusion criteria required that studies be peer-reviewed, published between 1988 and 2025, and directly address AI in recruitment, HRM, aviation, multicultural teams, or retention. Exclusion criteria removed non-scholarly sources, purely technical AI engineering papers without HR relevance, and studies unrelated to workforce dynamics or retention. Reliability was enhanced by applying the same search strategy across all platforms, while validity was strengthened by limiting the review to peer-reviewed and conceptually relevant studies. The iterative refinement of search terms and screening criteria ensured that the final selection of literature

accurately reflected the scope of the study (Sheshadri & Palivela, 2023).

Research Ethics Protocol

Although the study did not involve human subjects, ethical standards were upheld by ensuring accurate citation, avoiding misrepresentation of authors' findings, and respecting intellectual property (Brown & Treviño, 2006). All sources were used solely for academic purposes and acknowledged following Harvard referencing conventions.

In this study, AI tools were used only to help improve the clarity, flow, and organization of the manuscript. They supported the writing process by refining language and helping structure ideas. All literature selection, screening, and thematic synthesis were done manually by the authors. Every AI-assisted output was carefully reviewed and corrected to ensure accuracy and academic integrity. The authors take full responsibility for the content of this

work and affirm that the use of AI followed ethical standards for transparency.

Informed Consent and Ethics Review Board Clearance

Because the study relied exclusively on publicly available academic literature, informed consent was not required, and ethics review board clearance was not applicable. No personal data, confidential information, or human interactions were involved.

Data Collection

Data collection followed the established narrative review procedure. First, the topic and scope were defined to clarify the research problem. Second, literature was searched across the selected databases using the predefined Boolean terms. Third, studies were screened for relevance, methodological soundness, and conceptual contribution. The initial search yielded 210 sources; after removing duplicates, 124 articles remained, and 52 met all inclusion criteria. Fourth, the selected literature was organized thematically to identify patterns, contradictions, and emerging insights. Finally, the review was written in a structured format, integrating theoretical and empirical findings into a coherent narrative.

Statistical Techniques

No statistical techniques were employed, as the study utilized qualitative thematic analysis to interpret and synthesize the selected literature (Mori et al., 2025). The emphasis was on conceptual integration, critical interpretation, and thematic organization rather than numerical analysis (Sheshadri & Palivela, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Because this study is a narrative literature review, the results and discussion are presented together. The findings are organized according to the study's objectives, using the objective keywords as side-headings. Each section integrates global, regional, and UAE-specific literature to explain how AI-enabled recruitment influences retention-related factors in multicultural aviation workforces.

Patterns and Themes in Global and UAE Literature

The review revealed consistent international patterns showing that AI-enabled recruitment enhances efficiency, accuracy, and predictive capability in talent acquisition. Studies from North America and Europe report that AI reduces manual screening and improves candidate-job matching by automating up to 60–70% of initial filtering tasks (Sheshadri & Palivela, 2023; Mori et al., 2025). Research from Asia and the Middle East similarly highlights improvements in speed and objectivity, particularly in large multicultural organizations (Rahman & Putri, 2021; Dadaboyev et al., 2025).

In the UAE aviation sector, AI adoption is driven by national digital transformation priorities and the need to manage highly diverse workforces. UAE-based studies emphasize that AI supports large-scale recruitment while maintaining compliance with safety and regulatory standards (Alketbi et al., 2025). Research involving Emirates Group and Etihad Airways highlights the use of AI-supported screening tools to manage high-volume international applications while ensuring alignment with aviation safety competencies (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). However, concerns persist regarding algorithmic transparency, cultural sensitivity, and employee trust—issues echoed across continents (Bogen & Rieke, 2018; Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg & Levy, 2020).

Procedural Justice, Transparency, and Fairness in AI Recruitment

A dominant theme across the literature is the importance of procedural justice in shaping employee perceptions of AI-enabled recruitment. Organizational Justice Theory is strongly validated: employees evaluate AI systems not only on outcomes but on the fairness, clarity, and consistency of the recruitment process (Greenberg, 1987).

European studies show that transparent AI systems increase trust and reduce perceived bias (Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg & Levy, 2020). Asian research highlights the risk of cultural misalignment when AI tools rely on Western-centric datasets (Rahman & Putri, 2021). Middle Eastern studies, including those from

the UAE, emphasize that transparency and communication are essential to prevent misconceptions about AI replacing human judgment (Singh & Shaurya, 2021).

Across continents, employees who perceive AI as fair are more likely to accept recruitment decisions and demonstrate stronger retention intentions (Mori et al., 2025). Several studies also note that unclear or opaque AI decisions trigger emotional responses such as anxiety and uncertainty, which directly influence retention in multicultural aviation settings (Wang et al., 2025; Rani et al., 2025).

Cultural Congruence and Multicultural Workforce Dynamics

Cultural alignment emerged as a critical mediator between AI recruitment and retention. Aviation workforces—especially in the UAE—are composed of employees from diverse national, linguistic, and professional backgrounds. Studies from Southeast Asia show that AI systems must be adapted to local cultural norms to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or disadvantaging minority groups (Rahman & Putri, 2021).

Research from the Middle East highlights the influence of collectivist values, religious ethics, and hierarchical work structures on how employees interpret AI-driven decisions (Ali, 1988; Hofstede et al., 2010). In the UAE aviation sector, cultural congruence is essential because employees expect fairness, respect, and culturally sensitive communication (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). Studies involving cabin crew and ground operations staff show that culturally misaligned AI assessments can lead to feelings of exclusion or misrecognition, particularly among minority nationalities, which undermines engagement and retention (Taras et al., 2016).

Ethical Leadership and Employee Trust in AI Systems

Ethical leadership consistently moderates the relationship between AI recruitment and retention. Ethical Leadership Theory is validated across global studies: leaders who communicate openly about AI's purpose, limitations, and safeguards foster trust and acceptance (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

European research shows that ethical leadership reduces employee anxiety about automation (Mori et al., 2025). Asian studies emphasize the role of leaders in bridging cultural gaps in AI interpretation (Rahman & Putri, 2021). UAE-based research highlights that leadership transparency is essential in aviation, where safety, trust, and organizational credibility are deeply interconnected (Al Marzouqi, Khan & Hussain, 2019; Singh & Shaurya, 2021).

When leaders demonstrate accountability and fairness, employees are more likely to view AI as a supportive tool rather than a threat. This reassurance reduces emotional resistance—such as fear of automation or loss of human judgment—

especially in aviation roles where psychological safety influences performance and retention (Kahn, 1990).

Gaps, Inconsistencies, and Underexplored Areas

The review identified several gaps in the literature: (1) Limited empirical studies specifically focused on UAE aviation (Alketbi et al., 2025). (2) Insufficient research on culturally adaptive AI design (Rahman & Putri, 2021). (3) Lack of longitudinal studies linking AI recruitment to actual retention outcomes (Dadaboyev et al., 2025). (4) Overreliance on Western-developed AI models with limited cross-cultural validation (Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg & Levy, 2020). (5) Minimal exploration of employee emotional responses to AI-driven hiring (Rani et al., 2025). (6) Limited examination of how UAE aviation regulations and national digital transformation policies shape AI recruitment adoption (Almarri et al., 2025).

These gaps justify the need for continued research on AI recruitment in multicultural, safety-critical environments such as aviation.

Table 1
Summary Table of Significant Findings

Objective Keyword	Summary of Findings	Supporting Authors	UAE-Specific Insights
Patterns & Themes	AI improves efficiency and screening accuracy; trust concerns remain	Sheshadri and Palivela (2023); Mori et al. (2025)	UAE airlines (e.g., Emirates, Etihad) use AI to manage high-volume multicultural applications while maintaining aviation safety standards.
Procedural Justice	Transparency increases trust and retention; opaque AI reduces fairness perceptions	Bogen and Rieke; Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg & Levy (2020); Aldabal (2025)	UAE studies show employees expect clear explanations of AI decisions to avoid misconceptions about automation replacing human judgment.
Cultural Congruence	Cultural misalignment reduces engagement; adaptive AI improves acceptance	Rahman and Putri; Ali (1988)	UAE aviation staff report feeling more valued when AI tools reflect diverse cultural norms and avoid Western-centric assessment biases.

Ethical Leadership	Leadership moderates' acceptance of AI; communication enhances trust	Brown and Treviño (2006)	Transparent leadership in UAE aviation reduces anxiety about AI and reinforces trust in safety-critical decision-making.
Research Gaps	Limited UAE-specific evidence; need for culturally adaptive AI	Multiple authors	Emotional responses to AI (e.g., anxiety, uncertainty) remain underexplored in UAE aviation contexts.

Validation of Theoretical Frameworks

The findings strongly validate the study’s theoretical foundations: (a) Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990) is supported: AI influences retention only when employees feel valued, safe, and connected. (b) Organizational Justice Theory (Greenberg, 1987) is reinforced: perceptions of fairness and transparency are decisive in multicultural aviation settings. (c) Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown & Treviño, 2006) is confirmed: leadership behavior shapes employee trust in AI systems.

Together, these theories provide a robust lens for understanding how AI recruitment affects retention in the UAE aviation sector.

Critique of Methods and Theories

While the narrative literature review allowed for broad thematic integration, it is inherently limited by potential selection bias and the uneven availability of aviation-specific studies. The reliance on secondary data restricts the ability to measure actual retention outcomes, and the theories used—while validated—originate primarily from Western contexts, requiring cautious application in Middle Eastern aviation environments. Their application to multicultural, Middle Eastern aviation environments requires cautious interpretation, as cultural values, leadership expectations, and organizational norms differ significantly across regions. Future research would benefit from empirical studies conducted directly within UAE aviation organizations to strengthen contextual relevance and theoretical refinement.

CONCLUSION

This narrative literature review concludes that AI-enabled recruitment is reshaping talent acquisition in aviation, yet its influence on retention depends

less on technology itself and more on employees' perceptions of fairness, cultural alignment, and leadership behavior (Greenberg, 1987; Kahn, 1990). The study validates the central propositions of Employee Engagement Theory, Organizational Justice Theory, and Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown & Treviño, 2006), confirming that engagement, perceived fairness, and leadership integrity remain decisive predictors of retention even in AI-mediated processes (Al Marzouqi, Khan & Hussain, 2019).

A key and original insight of this review is the concept of cultural resonance—the idea that employees respond more positively to AI systems when the technology reflects, respects, and adapts to the cultural diversity of the workforce (Taras et al., 2016; Hofstede et al., 2010). Positioning cultural resonance as a central finding strengthens the study's theoretical contribution, as it highlights that fairness and engagement are shaped not only by psychological factors but also by culturally conditioned expectations (Ali, 1988). The findings therefore support previous conclusions on AI's potential benefits while challenging the assumption that efficiency alone improves retention. Instead, the study proposes that culturally adaptive AI governance may represent an emerging theoretical contribution, offering a new lens for understanding how technology interacts with multicultural human systems in safety-critical industries such as aviation.

Beyond theoretical implications, the findings suggest practical considerations for HR managers in aviation: AI tools should be paired with transparent communication, culturally sensitive design, and strong ethical leadership. In UAE aviation settings, ensuring that AI systems align with diverse cultural norms can enhance acceptance, strengthen engagement, and support sustainable retention outcomes (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Singh & Shaurya, 2021).

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of this study can be translated into accessible and practical forms of communication to ensure that aviation professionals, HR practitioners, policymakers, and multicultural employees can understand and apply the insights meaningfully (Mori et al., 2025). Scientific information on AI-enabled recruitment and retention can be translated into policy briefs that help aviation organizations develop transparent and culturally adaptive AI governance frameworks. Visual media—including posters, infographics, and illustrated booklets—can simplify complex concepts like algorithmic fairness, ethical leadership, and cultural congruence for frontline staff (Brown & Treviño, 2006;

Rahman & Putri, 2021). These materials can be integrated into UAE aviation training modules—such as pre-departure briefings, safety refreshers, and HR onboarding—to ensure consistent understanding across diverse employee groups (Al Marzouqi et al., 2019; Singh & Shaurya, 2021).

Storytelling formats—such as short narratives, scenarios, or brief video explainers—can demonstrate how employees from different cultural backgrounds experience AI-mediated recruitment (Taras et al., 2016; Hofstede et al., 2010). More streamlined creative outputs—such as short video clips or animated explainers—can effectively communicate the emotional and ethical dimensions of AI adoption without requiring highly specialized production formats (Rani et al., 2025). For training and awareness, organizations may use interactive workshops and role-play activities to help employees explore fairness, trust, and engagement in AI-supported HR processes (Kahn, 1990; Greenberg, 1987). Through these translational forms, the study's insights become accessible, actionable, and relevant to diverse audiences across the UAE aviation sector (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Alketbi et al., 2025).

Author Contributions: *Mayette C. Coronacion*-Developed the central research focus, identified the need to explore AI-driven recruitment and retention in multicultural aviation contexts, and framed the guiding questions for the narrative review. Wrote the initial manuscript sections, including background, thematic findings, and implications for AI-enabled HRM in aviation. Provided overall guidance, ensured methodological rigor, validated interpretations, and oversaw the final integration of all manuscript components.

Jonathan L. Berganio-Designed the narrative review approach, established inclusion/exclusion criteria, selected databases, and outlined the thematic synthesis strategy. Performed thematic coding, synthesized cross-study patterns, identified conceptual gaps, and integrated findings into coherent themes.

Sherwin I. Diala-Conducted the literature search, screened articles, extracted key insights, and verified relevance to AI, HRM, and multicultural aviation settings.

Mary Jane Sapiendante-Refined arguments, improved clarity and coherence, ensured alignment with academic standards, and strengthened the narrative flow.

Ma. Angela Eval-Organized the selected studies, managed reference lists, ensured proper documentation, and maintained the review matrix for transparency.

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