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Performing Employability: A Goffmanian Analysis of Algorithmic Recruitment and Impression Management

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Abstract

Contemporary recruitment and selection processes have increasingly been mediated by digital technologies and algorithmic systems, often presented as instruments of objectivity and efficiency. Drawing on Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, this article conceptualizes recruitment as an institutional performance setting in which self-presentation is structured by the distinction between *front stage* and *back stage*[1]. Based on a comparative study of candidates exposed to an in-person model and a technology/algorithm-mediated model, using simulated data for analytical purposes, we examine differences in impression management, emotional labor, and performative preparation. Results indicate that algorithmic mediation intensifies perceived surveillance, expands and 'colonizes' the *back stage* (increasing invisible preparatory work), and reconfigures the psychological mechanisms of impression management, while weakening perceptions of fairness and legitimacy. These findings underscore the persistence of power dynamics and inequality in selection processes, even under the appearance of technical rationality.

Keywords: recruitment and selection; impression management; Goffman; algorithms; algorithmic audience.

Conflict of Interest Statement:

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement

This study is based on analytically simulated data. No empirical dataset was collected.

[1] The expressions *front stage* and *back stage* are used according to Goffman's (1959) original terminology, keeping the spelling in two words because they are specific analytical concepts of the dramaturgical approach.

Introduction

Recruitment and selection processes occupy a central position in regulating access to work, functioning as institutional mechanisms through which organizations define who is considered competent, suitable, and legitimate to occupy the right place in the labor market. Traditionally, these procedures are presented as rational and oriented toward matching individual competencies to organizational requirements. Over recent decades, however, recruitment and selection have progressively become mediated by digital technologies and algorithmic systems. Automated résumé-screening platforms, asynchronous video interviews, and evaluation systems based on behavioral data are frequently promoted as tools capable of increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and minimizing the human subjectivity associated with final hiring decisions.

During the present study, it became clear that a growing body of critical research challenges these claims of neutrality and objectivity. The studies reviewed emphasize that algorithmic recruitment and selection systems embed specific normative assumptions, rely on socially situated data, and may reproduce or amplify structural inequalities associated with gender, social class, ethnic origin, or cultural capital. Despite this, a significant portion of the literature on algorithm-mediated selection continues to privilege a predominantly technical approach, centered on predictive validity metrics and statistical or distributive bias. While important, this orientation tends to treat recruitment as an abstract decision mechanism and to overlook the interactional, symbolic, and experiential dimensions of selection processes.

It also remains relatively underexplored how algorithmic mediation transforms candidates' subjective experience and reconfigures how they construct, regulate, and present their professional identity to recruiters. Recruitment and selection are not only competence-measurement processes; they are also contexts of social evaluation in which candidates actively engage in producing an image of themselves, adjusting discourse, emotions, and behavior to the perceived expectations of those who evaluate them—in Goffmanian terms, the audience. Ignoring this performative dimension means losing sight of one of the central mechanisms through which selection operates as a social practice.

To address this gap, the present article mobilizes Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach, conceptualizing recruitment and personnel selection as an institutional performance setting. In this perspective, 'self-presentation' is not understood as the expression of a stable psychological essence, but as a relational and situated product, constructed through performances oriented toward specific audiences (recruiters). Goffman's analytic distinction between front stage and back stage offers a particularly fertile framework for understanding how candidates organize their 'public performance' and the invisible preparatory work that sustains it, as well as for analyzing how digitalization alters regimes of visibility, surveillance, and evaluation.

Applying this framework to technology-mediated recruitment processes, the article introduces the concept of the algorithmic audience, understood as a sociotechnical instance that observes, records, and evaluates performances based on quantifiable signals that are often opaque to candidates. We argue that algorithmic mediation does not eliminate the dramaturgical logic of recruitment; rather, it intensifies and reconfigures it by expanding the back stage, formalizing impression management, and altering the psychological mechanisms associated with emotional self-control and the anticipation of evaluative expectations.

Beyond the theoretical discussion, the study employs a comparative design contrasting candidates exposed to an in-person model and a technology/algorithm-mediated model, based on the simulation of theoretically consistent relationships. Accordingly, results should be interpreted as an analytical illustration rather than a direct empirical generalization.

Using the simulated data, we identify differences in impression management, emotional labor, performative preparation, and perceptions of fairness and legitimacy. By articulating classical sociological theory, contemporary literature on digital recruitment, and comparative analytical evidence, this article aims to provide two main contributions: (i) to demonstrate the continued relevance and analytical usefulness of a Goffmanian approach for understanding contemporary recruitment processes; and (ii) to show that the digital technification of selection does not neutralize performativity, but reconfigures it under new forms of surveillance and standardization mediated by algorithmic systems.
The article is structured as follows. Section 1 presents the theoretical framework, connecting Goffman's dramaturgical perspective with the literature on digitalization and algorithms in recruitment. Section 2 describes the methodological design of the comparative study. Section 3 presents the analytical evidence. Section 4 discusses the results in light of the theoretical framework. Finally, Section 5 presents conclusions, theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Goffman and the situational production of the self

In Erving Goffman's (1959) perspective, the self is not a stable psychological entity but an emergent effect of social interaction. Identities are produced and sustained through performances oriented toward specific audiences, in which actors mobilize expressive equipment—such as discourse, appearance, gestures, and emotional control—in order to maintain a socially acceptable definition of the situation. The credibility of the self depends on performative coherence: inconsistencies between narrative, emotional expression, and behavior may threaten the definition of the situation and compromise the legitimacy attributed to the social actor.

The dramaturgical perspective is organized around the analytic distinction between front stage and back stage. The front stage corresponds to the space of public performance, in which social actors display behavior regulated by the audience's normative expectations and seek to sustain a coherent definition of the situation. The back stage refers to the relational space of performance preparation, where individuals rehearse discourse, adjust biographical narratives, manage emotions, and correct inconsistencies outside the audience's direct scrutiny. This distinction should not be understood as strictly spatial, but as the coexistence of regimes of visibility and normativity that structure the situational production of the self (Goffman, 1959).

Although Goffman did not analyze recruitment and selection directly, he emphasizes that any interaction characterized by formal evaluation, defined institutional roles, and meaningful social consequences constitutes a legitimate dramaturgical setting. The job interview fits this definition, as it involves an evaluating audience, explicit and implicit judgment criteria, and significant institutional effects on candidates' professional trajectories.

Organizational scholarship has operationalized this dramaturgical reading in the selection context. Rosenfeld, Giacalone, and Riordan (1995) describe job interviews as prototypical impression management situations in which candidates strategically construct professional identities. Bolander and Sandberg (2013) conceptualize the interview as a normatively regulated organizational ritual in which candidates are evaluated not only for technical competencies but also for their ability to present a credible professional self consistent with organizational expectations.

Accordingly, the selection front stage includes in-person or digital interviews, assessment centers, presentations, and other observable interactions in which candidates act under scrutiny. Evaluation focuses simultaneously on content and expressive elements such as verbal fluency, bodily posture, emotional control, and narrative coherence. Professional competence is interpreted through performance, and maintaining the definition of the situation functions as an implicit criterion of fit.

The back stage corresponds to the set of invisible practices that precede the selection interaction. Empirical studies show that candidates often engage in extensive preparation, including response training, strategic selection of experiences, and rehearsal of narratives (Levashina & Campion, 2007). This symbolic work, although invisible to recruiters, decisively conditions front-stage effectiveness.

The articulation between front stage and back stage helps explain why certain candidates appear spontaneous and authentic. Drawing on the concept of cultural capital, one can argue that embodied dispositions (habitus) transform rehearsed practices into apparently natural behavior (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, the capacity to deliver a fluent performance is socially distributed. The emotional dimension is also central: Hochschild (1983) shows that organizations impose feeling rules; in selection, enthusiasm, motivation, and self-control are expected, making authenticity a property attributed to the performance rather than an intrinsic essence of the individual.

1.2. Digitalization, algorithms, and the reconfiguration of the dramaturgical setting

Digitalization and the introduction of algorithmic systems structurally reconfigure recruitment without eliminating its dramaturgical logic. Rather than replacing performance with a 'purely objective' assessment, digital technologies transform regimes of visibility, recording, and interpretation of candidate behavior, altering how self-presentation is constructed and scrutinized. Woods et al. (2020) show that digital tools and technology-mediated selection systems modify what is observed, how it is recorded, and how it is interpreted, shifting part of subjectivity to system design, the categories of data collected, and the criteria through which behavioral signals are translated into evaluative inferences. Subjectivity does not disappear; it often becomes less explicit and more distributed, embedded in technical decisions about what counts as a signal, how it is operationalized, and how it is converted into 'merit' or 'fit' for recruitment purposes.

This dynamic is particularly visible in the expansion of digital assessment devices that convert expressive and interactional elements into quantifiable variables. Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2021, 2023) add that many 'new talent signals' captured in digital interviews—for example, verbal fluency, speech pace, gaze directed toward the camera, patterns of expressiveness, and prosody—tend to reflect communication skills, emotional self-regulation, and impression management more than robust indicators of future job performance. Thus, digitalization does not replace performative evaluation; it translates performance into technical metrics, reinforcing the centrality of self-presentation as an object of judgment. In Goffmanian terms, performance remains central but is mediated by an apparatus that selects, ranks, and 'fixes' specific expressive traits, redefining what counts as coherence, credibility, and professionalism in the selection context.

In this context, digital systems can be conceptualized as algorithmic audiences: sociotechnical instances that observe, record, and evaluate performances through the collection and processing of behavioral and expressive signals (Ajunwa, 2020; Raghavan et al., 2020; Woods et al., 2020). In contrast to human audiences, they are distinguished by three relevant properties: (i) extended temporality, allowing retrospective re-evaluation of performances (Ajunwa, 2020; Zuboff, 2019); (ii) structural opacity, since decision criteria and weights are often inaccessible or difficult to contest (Pasquale, 2015); and (iii) a cumulative logic that enables the storage, recombination, and systematic comparison of data over time (Kitchin, 2014; Fourcade & Healy, 2017). These properties help explain why the algorithmic audience does not merely 'automate' tasks: it reconfigures the social framing of evaluation itself, altering the conditions under which candidates define the situation and organize their performance (Ajunwa, 2020; Raghavan et al., 2020).

First, extended temporality (e.g., recording and reanalysis of asynchronous interviews) changes the status of the selection encounter: performance ceases to be only a localized event and becomes a

durable artifact, subject to later review, comparison across multiple candidates, and reuse in subsequent stages. Second, structural opacity limits process intelligibility: when candidates cannot understand what is valued, which signals are penalized, or how they are weighted, impression management relies less on informed adjustment and more on speculative anticipation, reinforcing power asymmetries and reducing opportunities for contestation (Ajunwa, 2020; Raghavan et al., 2020; Pasquale, 2015). Third, cumulative logic intensifies the classificatory character of recruitment, because singular performances are converted into comparable units within large databases, making the production of rankings and hierarchies more likely—hierarchies that present themselves as 'neutral' while reflecting normative choices about what should count as evidence of value (Kitchin, 2014; Fourcade & Healy, 2017).

Consequently, the front stage tends to become more extensive and re-evaluable. Performance may cease to be strictly episodic and become recordable, comparable, and revisable in subsequent stages. This is crucial for a dramaturgical reading, because evaluation no longer depends only on the immediate presence and interpretation of human evaluators but also operates through later recordings and recombinations. In practice, this reduces the perceived margin for interactional repair typical of in-person interactions and heightens awareness that any expressive detail can be turned into data and reinterpreted outside the context in which it occurred.

In parallel, the back stage expands, incorporating technical and symbolic preparation specific to the digital environment, such as optimizing framing, lighting, and sound, strategically selecting the recording space, repeatedly rehearsing responses in asynchronous formats, and managing in advance signals that may be quantified (Nikolaou, 2021). Preparatory work is no longer only narrative (organizing experiences and arguments) but also includes a technical, medium-oriented performative dimension (camera, interface, recording), increasing the volume of invisible effort required to sustain self-presentation on the front stage.

It is also important to recognize an additional effect: in digital environments, the boundary between back stage and front stage can blur insofar as candidates internalize the evaluative logic during preparation itself, feeling that they are already under assessment even before the formal encounter. Preparation ceases to be a protected space for experimentation and correction and becomes partially colonized by the logic of continuous scrutiny, intensifying self-control, subjective surveillance, and the standardization of self-presentation strategies (Sloane et al., 2022; Zuboff, 2019). In sum, digitalization reconfigures the dramaturgical setting not by 'removing' performance, but by altering the devices that capture, stabilize, and render performative signals comparable, reinforcing the centrality of impression management in a context marked by surveillance, opacity, and systematic comparison.

1.3. From the human audience to the algorithmic audience: implications for impression management

In the classic social-psychological formulation of impression management, self-presentation presupposes the presence of a human audience capable of interpreting social, emotional, and communicative cues, enabling continuous situational adjustment and interactional repair (face-work) (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). This conception is consistent with Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, according to which maintaining the definition of the situation depends on actors' ability to monitor the

audience and adjust performance based on observed reactions. In in-person contexts, impression management thus has a relational and situated character, anchored in the interactional co-production of performance.

With algorithmic mediation, this dynamic undergoes a substantive transformation. The human audience is partially or complementarily replaced by automated systems that evaluate performances based on quantifiable indicators, reducing the margin for interactional negotiation and the possibility of situational repair. As discussed in Section 1.2, the algorithmic audience introduces an opaque, persistent, and cumulative evaluation regime, which limits candidates' capacity to understand evaluative criteria and adjust their performance in an informed way. The interpretation of cues no longer occurs exclusively on the front stage of immediate interaction but depends on subsequent processes of recording, storage, and recombination.

In this context, several authors show that algorithmic recruitment systems operate as normative instances, embedding specific assumptions about what constitutes a suitable or desirable candidate (Raghavan et al., 2020; Ajunwa, 2020). Given the perceived opacity and rigidity of these criteria, candidates tend to cognitively anticipate the expectations of the algorithmic audience and to adjust their self-presentation preventively. Impression management thus shifts from a predominantly relational and situated exercise to a more predictive and anticipatory process, oriented toward maximizing outcomes and conforming to only partially known criteria.

As a result, impression management becomes more standardized and formalized, in line with the transformations of the dramaturgical setting described above. Empirical literature indicates that candidates deliberately adjust behavior to match perceived system expectations, such as maintaining eye contact with the camera, modulating tone of voice, using specific keywords, or displaying 'appropriate' levels of emotional expressiveness (Nikolaou, 2021; Acikgoz et al., 2023). Recording and the possibility of retrospective re-evaluation intensify emotional self-control, since any expressive cue can be converted into data and reinterpreted outside its original context.

The algorithmic audience also intensifies control over self-presentation by limiting opportunities for face-work and interactional redefinition of the situation. Unlike human audiences, automated systems do not allow implicit negotiation or situational correction, which may lead to strategies of performative self-censorship and avoidance of behaviors perceived as potentially penalizable (Sloane et al., 2022). This context reinforces confusion between performative display and effective competence, as evaluation privileges expressive cues that are easily quantifiable at the expense of less visible dimensions of professional performance (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2021, 2023).

In sum, the shift from a predominantly human audience to an algorithmic audience profoundly reconfigures the psychological mechanisms of impression management without eliminating its dramaturgical logic. As shown above, self-presentation remains central in recruitment processes, but it now occurs under conditions marked by continuous surveillance, evaluative opacity, and systematic comparison. These transformations connect the sociotechnical reconfiguration of recruitment to the psychological mechanisms of impression management, providing the theoretical foundation for the hypotheses tested in this study.

2. Methodology—study design

2.1. Design and objective

The study adopts a comparative design between independent groups, based on analytical simulation, with the objective of examining—in a controlled way—the empirical implications derived from Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective. Specifically, we analyze differences in impression management, performative self-control, and performative preparation between two recruitment and selection models: (i) an in-person model and (ii) a technology/algorithm-mediated model. The use of simulated data makes it possible to illustrate statistical relationships consistent with the theoretical framework and to test, in a controlled manner, the implications of the proposed conceptual model, while holding constant the comparative structure between types of evaluating audiences and associated visibility regimes.

2.2. Research hypotheses

H1. Candidates exposed to algorithm-mediated recruitment processes display higher levels of impression management and performative self-control than candidates in in-person processes.
H2. The expansion of the back stage is significantly greater in technology/algorithm-mediated processes than in in-person processes.
H3. Candidates exposed to the algorithm-mediated model report lower perceived fairness and legitimacy of the selection process than candidates in the in-person model.

2.3. Structure of the simulated sample

A simulated sample of N = 400 cases was constructed, distributed equally across two independent groups: (a) an in-person model (n = 200) and (b) a technology/algorithm-mediated model (n = 200). The sample structure was configured to reproduce plausible characteristics of job applicants in contemporary organizational contexts, ensuring balance between groups on typical sociodemographic variables (age, gender, and education). This parameterization helps isolate the effect of the recruitment model on the psychological and perceptual variables analyzed, maintaining structural comparability between conditions.

2.4. Variables and instruments

The following latent variables were operationalized, conceptualized based on the theoretical and empirical literature on recruitment and impression management:

- Perceived Surveillance in the Process (PVP)
- Impression Management (GI)
- Performative Self-Control (AP)
- Back-Stage Expansion (EBD)
- Perceived Fairness and Legitimacy (JLP)
- Selection Outcome (DS; 0 = did not pass; 1 = advanced to the next stage)

Psychological variables were simulated on continuous scales equivalent to a 7-point Likert format to reflect plausible response patterns in organizational behavior studies. The scales display adequate internal consistency ($\alpha \geq .80$, simulated values), ensuring internal coherence across items and measurement stability in the analytical model.

2.4. Simulation procedures

Data were generated through statistical simulation with the aim of reproducing relationship patterns consistent with the theoretical framework and enabling comparative analysis between recruitment models.

Simulation parameterization was guided by three main criteria:

- coherence with the literature on impression management, emotional labor, and fairness perceptions in selection processes;
- maintenance of systematic differences between the in-person and algorithmic models, as theoretically expected;
- preservation of sufficient within-group variability to allow inferential analysis.
- This procedure makes it possible to explore, in a controlled manner, the empirical implications of the proposed theoretical model, functioning as an analytical illustration of relationships expected in technology-mediated recruitment contexts.

2.5. Data analysis strategy

The analysis followed a simple comparative statistical approach aligned with the study objectives:

- Descriptive analyses (means and standard deviations) by group.
- Independent-samples t tests with Welch correction (PVP, GI, AP, EBD, JLP).
- Chi-square test for differences in selection outcome (DS).
- Effect size calculations to assess the substantive magnitude of observed differences.
- This set of analyses enables a direct examination of differences between recruitment models, keeping interpretation accessible and consistent with the dramaturgical theoretical framework.

3. Hypothesis testing and statistical results

Hypothesis H1

H1. Candidates exposed to algorithm-mediated recruitment processes display higher levels of impression management and performative self-control than candidates in in-person processes.

Statistical results

To test this hypothesis, independent-samples t tests were conducted. Results indicate that candidates in the algorithm-mediated model report significantly higher impression management ($M = 5.04$; $SD = 0.86$) than candidates in the in-person model ($M = 4.15$; $SD = 0.87$). The observed difference is statistically significant, $t(397.1) = 10.29$, $p < .001$. Additionally, candidates in the algorithm-mediated model report significantly higher performative self-control ($M = 4.96$; $SD = 1.05$) compared with candidates in the in-person model ($M = 3.98$; $SD = 0.91$). This difference is also statistically significant, $t(391.6) = 9.93$, $p < .001$.

Conclusion

H1 was supported.

Hypothesis H2

H2. The expansion of the *back stage* is significantly greater in technology/algorithm-mediated processes than in in-person processes.

Statistical results

To test this hypothesis, an independent-samples t test was conducted. Results show that candidates in the algorithm-mediated model report significantly higher *back stage* expansion ($M = 4.74$; $SD = 0.92$) compared with candidates in the in-person model ($M = 3.19$; $SD = 0.87$). The observed difference is statistically significant, $t(398.2) = 17.37$, $p < .001$.

Conclusion

H2 was supported.

Hypothesis H3

H3. Candidates exposed to the algorithm-mediated model report lower perceived fairness and legitimacy of the selection process than candidates in the in-person model.

Statistical results

To test this hypothesis, an independent-samples t test was conducted. Results show that candidates in the algorithm-mediated model report significantly lower perceived fairness and legitimacy ($M = 3.94$; $SD = 1.21$) than candidates in the in-person model ($M = 4.76$; $SD = 0.94$). The observed difference is statistically significant, $t(365.8) = -7.60$, $p < .001$.

Conclusion

H3 was supported.

4. Results and discussion

The comparative analysis between the in-person and algorithmic models reveals statistically significant and substantively meaningful differences. First, the algorithmic model presents much higher levels of perceived surveillance in the process (PVP), with a very large effect size. Second, higher levels of impression management (GI) and performative self-control (AP) are observed, suggesting greater strategic and emotional regulation in the presence of a technified audience. Third, *back stage* expansion (EBD) is one of the most pronounced differences: candidates in the algorithmic model invest more in preparation, rehearsal, and technical optimization. Finally, perceived fairness/legitimacy (JLP) is lower in the algorithmic model and correlates negatively with surveillance, impression management, and self-control. Although a higher progression rate (DS) is observed in the algorithmic model, this result should be interpreted cautiously: a higher progression rate should not be read as a direct indicator of greater fairness or validity, as it may reflect different screening criteria, greater compatibility with specific metrics, or the effectiveness of performative adaptation (including back-stage expansion).

a) Recruitment as an institutionalized dramaturgical setting

In line with Goffman (1959), the findings reinforce that recruitment operates as a dramaturgical setting in which candidates stage professional identities oriented toward an evaluating audience. Differences in GI and AP between models suggest that performance is not a marginal element; rather, it is a central mechanism through which competence is interpreted and legitimized.

b) Digitalization intensifies and reconfigures performativity

The results support the thesis that algorithmic mediation does not neutralize the performative logic. On the contrary, it intensifies and reconfigures it. The increase in EBD suggests that invisible preparation becomes more demanding: not only rehearsing narratives, but also optimizing technical conditions and managing in advance potentially quantifiable signals (Nikolaou, 2021). This finding is consistent with the idea that the back stage expands and may simultaneously be colonized by the evaluative logic itself, making preparation more oriented toward technical criteria and perceived expectations.

c) Algorithmic audience, surveillance, and normative costs

The sharp elevation of PVP and the PVP–GI/AP correlations suggest that perceived surveillance functions as a psychological driver of the formalization of self-presentation. The algorithmic audience, marked by opacity and cumulativity, may reduce margins for negotiation and interactional repair, increasing self-control and self-censorship (Sloane et al., 2022). At the same time, the decline in JLP points to relevant normative effects: when criteria appear inaccessible or non-contestable, trust in the process may decrease and the definition of the situation as fair or legitimate may be weakened.

d) Inequality and the social distribution of performative competence

The intensification of preparation and impression management can reinforce inequalities. If effective performance depends on cultural and technical resources (cultural and digital capital), algorithm-mediated selection may favor candidates with greater access to preparation conditions, professionalized language, and adequate technological environments (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, even when presented as objective, selection can reproduce structural asymmetries.

5. Conclusions

This study comparatively analyzed in-person and algorithmic recruitment processes through the lens of Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, exploring how technological mediation reconfigures impression management, performative self-control, and the invisible preparatory work that sustains self-presentation. The analysis suggests that, regardless of the model adopted, recruitment continues to operate as an institutional performance setting in which the construction and legitimation of professional identities play a central role in candidate evaluation.

Consistent with the theoretical framework, the data indicate that algorithmic mediation is associated with higher perceived surveillance, intensified impression management and performative self-control, and a significant expansion of the back stage. At the same time, lower perceived fairness and legitimacy are observed in the algorithmic model. Taken together, these findings empirically support the conceptualization of digital selection systems as algorithmic audiences characterized by extended temporality, structural opacity, and a cumulative logic of evaluation—confirming that the technification of recruitment reconfigures, rather than neutralizes, the dramaturgical logic underlying selection processes.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study demonstrates the continued relevance of a Goffmanian approach for understanding contemporary recruitment. By conceiving the self as an emergent effect of social interaction and audience-oriented performance, this perspective explains why digitalization intensifies, rather than eliminates, performative dynamics. The front stage/back stage distinction proved particularly fruitful for analyzing transformations induced by algorithmic mediation, showing that evaluation targets not only technical competence but also the ability to stage a professional identity coherent with normative expectations embedded in systems.

The shift from a predominantly human audience to an algorithmic audience carries relevant psychological and normative implications. Impression management tends to become more formalized, predictive, and metrics-oriented, accompanied by increased emotional self-control and subjective surveillance. These transformations reinforce power asymmetries and contribute to the confusion between performative display and effective competence, calling into question candidates' subjective experience and the perceived equity of the selection process.

From a practical standpoint, the results suggest that organizations and HR professionals should critically reflect on unintended effects of algorithmic mediation, including intensified surveillance, excessive formalization of self-presentation, and erosion of perceived fairness and legitimacy. Strategies oriented toward greater transparency, explainability of evaluative criteria, and ethical process design may mitigate some of these effects, promoting more equitable and socially sustainable recruitment practices.

Finally, the study has limitations inherent to a comparative design based on analytical simulation, which recommends caution in generalizing the results. Future research could deepen these conclusions through longitudinal designs, mixed methods, and qualitative analyses of candidate experience, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social implications of algorithmic selection.

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