Impressions of employees who use AI at work.

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Background

Employees increasingly use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to complete a variety of tasks at work. There is a significant body of research examining productivity gains from these tools (e.g., Noy & Zhang, 2023) and how people perceive AI systems (see Glikson & Woolley, 2021 for review), yet we know little about how evaluators perceive the *people who use them.* Drawing on attribution theory, we predicted that observers would evaluate employees who receive assistance from AI more harshly than employees who receive assistance from other (non-AI) sources at work.

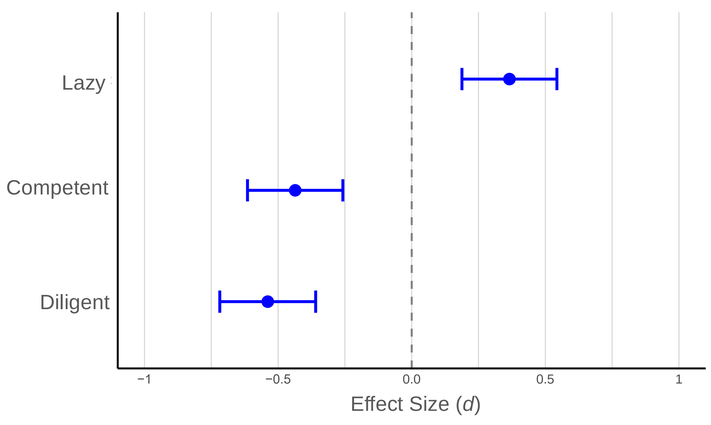
Methods

- 3 experiments examining perceptions of people who get help from AI versus people who get help from other sources
- Study 1: Measured how people believe others would perceive them for using an "AI" vs. "dashboard" tool (N = 497)
- Study 2: Measured social evaluations of employees who receive AI help vs. non-AI help vs. no help (N = 1,203)
- Study 3: Examined how managers make hiring decisions when workers' AI use vs. do not use AI (N = 1,746)

Results Summary

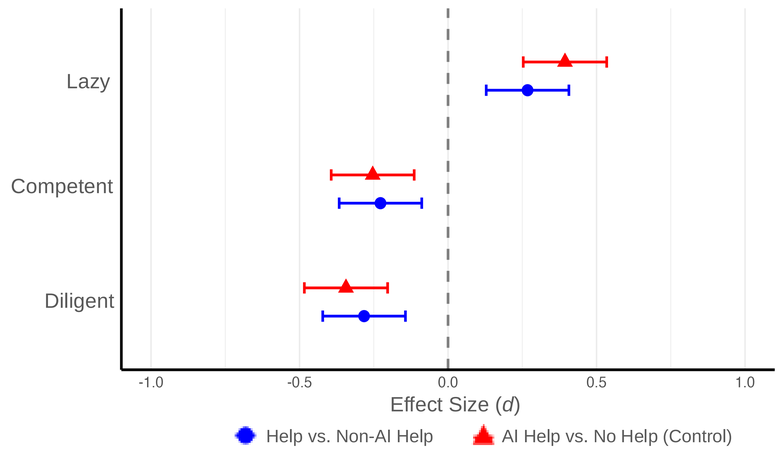
Study 1

Key Findings: Employees *expect* to be seen as less competent, less diligent, and lazier when they get help from AI sources relative to help from non-AI sources.



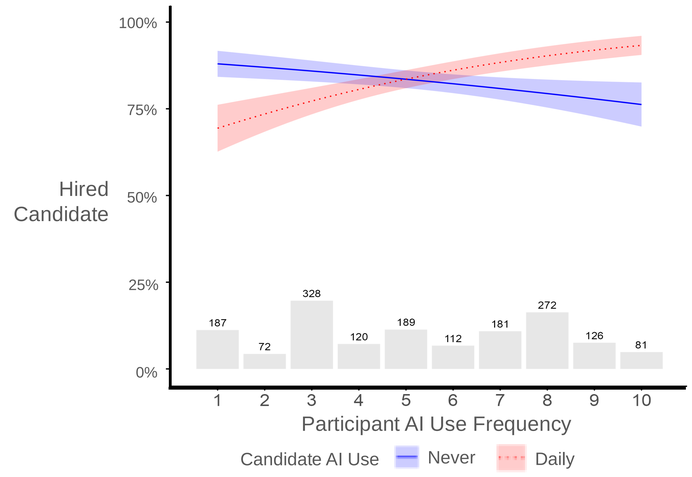
Study 2

Key Finding: Employees *are* evaluated as less competent, less diligent, and lazier relative to employees who get help from non-AI sources or receive no help.



Study 3

Key Finding: In an incentive-compatible hiring task, people who were not AI users themselves acted on their negative assumptions about people who use AI by hiring them at a lower rate.



Implications

- **People make negative inferences about the abilities of those who use AI.** The use of AI introduces attributional ambiguity because it reduces the need for effort and ability to achieve outcomes. Observers of AI users infer low competence and motivation.
- **A social evaluation dilemma.** Employees who use AI achieve productivity gains (e.g., Noy & Zhang, 2023) but incur a social cost. This evaluation penalty may limit the extent to which employees are willing to disclose AI use and share best practices.

Additional Details and References