

Transforming management in the era of post-globalization and agentic economy

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Foreword

The annual Sinergie-SIMA Management Conference is more than an opportunity to present and discuss research findings. It is a moment in which our scientific community comes together to reflect on the transformations affecting firms and organizations and, at the same time, on the evolution of management as a discipline.

The 2026 Conference, hosted by the University of Pavia and entitled Transforming Management in the Era of Post-Globalization and Agentic Economy, invited us to consider this double transformation. We are experiencing profound changes whose direction, scope, and consequences are often difficult to anticipate. Understanding them is already a demanding task. Management must then translate them into organizational choices, processes, and practices that work in concrete contexts.

A significant part of managerial work has traditionally consisted of collecting information, synthesizing it, and transforming it into reports, scenarios, forecasts, and decisions. Artificial intelligence does not “know everything”, but it greatly increases the capacity to process information. As a result, managerial value no longer resides primarily in access to information or in routine analysis, but in the ability to steer how knowledge is generated, filtered, integrated, and critically interpreted. Managers are therefore called upon to become even more critical interpreters. They must recognize ambiguities, balance conflicting objectives, and assess organizational constraints, as well as the reputational, social, political, and institutional implications of different courses of action. Information may be increasingly abundant and accessible, but judgment and responsibility cannot be delegated to a technological system.

The nature of coordination is also changing. Management has always involved coordinating people, organizational units, and processes. Today, alongside people, there are data, algorithms, platforms, and artificial agents. Human teams are increasingly becoming hybrid systems. The challenge is to design work architecture in which human and artificial intelligence can cooperate effectively, without people losing control, competence, or responsibility. Technology should strengthen human capabilities. It should not reduce the human contribution to the passive execution of technologically generated instructions or subject individuals and organizations to an unsustainable acceleration of productivity expectations.

The limits of these technologies are not yet fully understood, nor is their medium- and long-term impact on organizations and society. What is already clear, however, is that the way artificial intelligence enters organizations changes decision-making processes and redistributes responsibilities, competencies, and power. Management, therefore, does not disappear. It changes its nature. If the nature of management changes, the responsibility of our scientific community must also evolve. We must examine whether the concepts and theories we use to interpret organizations remain adequate. We must investigate how technologies transform work, coordination, authority, and accountability. We must also reflect on the contributions that management studies can make to firms, institutions, and society in a period of rapid, sometimes contradictory change. The “SIMA Manifesto degli studi di management” was developed in this spirit: not as a definitive answer, but as a platform for discussion. It invites us to question what matters today for our discipline, whether the categories we use to interpret emerging phenomena are still appropriate, and what relationship management scholars intend to build with firms, institutions, and society.

The papers collected in these Proceedings provide tangible evidence of the vitality and diversity of our community. They represent different theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and fields of inquiry. Together, they demonstrate the ability of management research to address complex questions with rigor, openness, and responsibility. They also reflect a community capable of bringing together research and teaching, senior and younger scholars, international engagement, and dialogue with firms and institutions. This ability to connect different dimensions of academic life is one of the distinctive strengths of the Sinergie-SIMA Conference. A scientific conference truly fulfills its purpose when it is not merely a program of scheduled sessions, but becomes a space inhabited by its community: a space in which papers are presented and discussed, questions are raised, different perspectives are compared, relationships are developed, and new collaborations begin. Attention must be devoted to younger scholars. Their ideas, questions, and research trajectories are essential to the future of our discipline. Creating opportunities for their development, supporting their participation in the scientific community, and encouraging research that combines academic quality with practical relevance are central responsibilities for SIMA.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Sinergie Italian Journal of Management, the University of Pavia, the Conference Chairs, the scientific and organizing committees, the Chairs of the tracks and SIMA thematic groups, the reviewers, and all those who contributed to the organization of the Conference and to the preparation of this volume. Above all, I thank the authors and participants who presented their work, discussed papers, raised questions and animated the many opportunities for exchange. Their engagement made the Conference the expression of a living scientific community.

A conference ends well when it does not close a discussion but leaves participants eager to continue it. I hope that these Proceedings will carry forward the ideas, questions, relationships, and new possibilities for joint work that emerged in Pavia and will strengthen the capacity of management research to understand and responsibly shape the transformations of our time.

Beatrice Luceri, President of Italian Society of Management (SIMA)

Editorial Note

To the reader,

This volume contains the short papers presented at the Sinergie-SIMA 2026 Management Conference, hosted by the University of Pavia on 28 and 29 May 2026. The Conference, entitled *Transforming Management in the Era of Post-Globalization and Agentic Economy*, provided an opportunity to discuss the transformations affecting organizations, managerial practices, and management research.

The conference program included contributions related to:

- the main Conference theme;
- the research areas represented by the SIMA thematic groups;
- management case studies.

The diversity of the subjects addressed, theoretical perspectives adopted, and the methodological approaches employed reflected the breadth and vitality of the Sinergie-SIMA scientific community.

The Conference call invited the submission of both short and long papers. Overall, the editorial team received 315 submissions, consisting of 249 short papers and 66 long papers.

All submissions underwent the peer-review process established for the Conference. Short and long papers were evaluated by 245 reviewers, selected from the Sinergie and SIMA scientific communities on the basis of their expertise in the subjects addressed.

The submissions were assessed according to the following criteria:

- clarity of the research aims;
- appropriateness and rigor of the methodological approach;
- originality and innovativeness of the contribution;
- theoretical and practical relevance;
- clarity of communication;
- quality and significance of the bibliographical foundations.

For the short and long papers, the evaluation followed the peer review process, with a double-blind review performed by, respectively, one and two referees - university lecturers and experts about the topic - selected from among members of the SIMA community. At the end of the evaluation process, the authors received the reviewers' reports and incorporated their observations into the presentation and discussion of their work at the Conference.

The evaluation process resulted in the acceptance of 296 papers. The present volume contains 216 short papers whose authors authorized their publication.

All the contributions included in the volume were presented and discussed during the Conference and are made available online through the Sinergie-SIMA Management Conference portal (<https://www.sijmsima.it/>). The papers collected here should be understood not only as individual research contributions, but also as evidence of the questions, perspectives, and developing research trajectories that characterized the scientific debate in Pavia.

We wish to thank the authors for entrusting their work to the Conference; the reviewers for the quality and care of their assessments; the track and thematic group Chairs for coordinating the evaluation and discussion processes; and all participants for contributing to an open and constructive scientific exchange.

We hope that this volume will support the further development of the research presented during the Conference and contribute to the wider debate on the transformation of management and organizations.

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2033

AI Literacy as a Hiring Signal in Project Management Recruitment

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Abstract. *Generative Artificial Intelligence is increasingly impacting project work, yet whether AI literacy is becoming a screening criterion for project managers remains an open empirical question. This is important in Human Resource Management, where project-based organisations select staff using competence frameworks that combine technical, managerial, and behavioural criteria. To fill this gap, we examine labour-market demand using a mixed-methods approach that includes web scraping, computational text mining, and qualitative content analysis. The dataset includes 530 Project Management vacancies posted on the job-recruiting digital platform Indeed across Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Quantitative analyses identify requested skills, education, certifications, and tools, while qualitative coding examines advertisements that explicitly mention Artificial Intelligence or Generative Artificial Intelligence to understand how these capabilities are represented. AI-related signals are present, but inconsistently specified and rarely treated as clear entry thresholds; instead, they typically appear as expectations for working within organisational systems or AI-enabled interfaces. We position job advertisements as recruitment signals that shape the formalisation of emerging technologies in selection practice.*

Keywords: Recruitment signals, Selection criteria, Skill requirements, Generative artificial intelligence, Project management, Cross-national labour markets

Framing of the research. *Artificial Intelligence (AI) has shifted from a field primarily for technical specialists to a versatile technology now deeply integrated into daily organisational processes across various industries (Eloundou et al., 2024). Organisations leverage AI to automate routine and semi-structured tasks, derive predictive insights from extensive data, tailor interactions, and facilitate real-time decision-making (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). More recently, the growth of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), capable of producing text, images, and other artefacts, is further transforming how knowledge work is performed and evaluated. Early evidence suggests GenAI can affect task allocation and productivity, especially in writing- and communication-intensive work, with gains that vary by worker characteristics and context (Brynjolfsson et al., 2025; Noy & Zhang, 2023). However, classic accounts of technological change underscore that labour-market effects depend on how technologies are embedded in workflows and recomposed into tasks and complementary roles (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2019). Widespread use does not automatically translate into widespread formal requirements, making employer demand an empirical question rather than a foregone conclusion.*

This question is particularly salient for Project Management (PM), a role often positioned as a change-agent function but frequently staffed through ad hoc or subjective selection in transformation contexts, a mismatch that raises strategic risk when capability requirements are poorly specified (Doyle, 2002). Project managers operate at the intersection of formal methods (e.g. planning, scheduling, risk and cost control) and relational coordination (e.g. leadership, communication, stakeholder alignment). Contemporary standards emphasise adaptability and tailoring across predictive, agile, and hybrid approaches (ISO, 2020; PMI, 2021). As organisations trial AI-enabled forecasting, decision support, and generative tools for documentation, reporting, and communication, project work appears especially exposed to AI in everyday practice. However, whether employers are codifying AI literacy as a hiring threshold or treating it merely as a complementary advantage remains uncertain.

Although scholars have begun to investigate how AI can support project activities, document reviews, and the growing ecosystem of project management tools (Almeida et al., 2025; Bento et al., 2022), systematic evidence of the specific AI-related requirements that employers express in recruitment remains limited. This study addresses that gap by examining online job advertisements as a timely proxy for employer skill signals, while remaining attentive to issues of representativeness and measurement (Kureková et al., 2015). Anchored in Human Resource Management (HRM), the study focuses on selection validity, competence signalling, and talent pipeline development. Its scope is to clarify which AI-related competencies are demanded in the labour market and to assess the implications of these signals for recruitment practices, curriculum design in higher education and professional training, and individual upskilling priorities as GenAI becomes increasingly pervasive. Methodologically, it adopts a mixed-methods design that combines quantitative text mining and qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2018), drawing on a systematic web-scraping of PM vacancies posted on the job-recruiting digital platform Indeed between late July and August 2025, across Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, yielding a cleaned sample of 530 advertisements. By shifting attention from normative forecasts to observed recruitment signals, the paper offers comparative evidence on whether AI-related competencies are beginning to be institutionalised within hiring criteria for PM roles.

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Purpose of the paper. *This paper investigates whether and how AI literacy is being formalised as a hiring criterion for project managers. Drawing on a cross-national dataset of job advertisements from Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, it combines computational text mining with qualitative content analysis to examine the extent to which AI-related competencies appear in recruitment signals and how they are framed relative to established selection criteria such as experience, relational skills, and methodological fluency. The analysis positions job advertisements as institutionalised HRM artefacts that reveal how emerging technologies are (or are not) being codified into competence-based selection practices for project-based roles. By considering job advertisements as institutionalised artefacts of HRM, the study shifts focus from normative predictions about what project managers should know regarding AI to observable evidence of what employers actually formalise when granting access to managerial roles. To ground this investigation, the evolving landscape of AI in literature and applications within PM is briefly discussed.*

Over the last decade, research on AI in PM has shifted from treating AI as a single tool to understanding it as a diverse portfolio of techniques (e.g., machine learning, optimisation, natural language processing, and, more recently, GenAI) applied across specific PM processes and performance domains. For HRM, this diversity matters because AI-related competencies are unlikely to correspond to a single bounded skill; rather, they suggest evolving, hybrid competence profiles that complicate job design and selection criteria (Cheng et al., 2005; do Vale et al., 2018).

In general, AI use cases can be mainly categorised into four domains. Estimation and forecasting, where AI is extensively used to predict costs, effort, and duration, thereby reducing initial uncertainty (Adamantiadou & Tsironis, 2025; Davahli, 2020; Taboada et al., 2023). Scheduling and optimisation, with AI aiding in schedule creation, robustness evaluation, and resource-constrained planning; Bahroun et al. (2023) highlight the significance of this area. Risk and safety management involves applications such as anomaly detection, early-warning systems, and uncertainty modelling to facilitate proactive interventions (Nenni et al., 2025; Salimimoghadam et al., 2025). Finally, decision support and reporting, which includes an AI-powered Decision Support System that generates dashboards and recommendations, particularly for construction sustainability (Smith & Wong, 2022). These four domains mainly correspond to “hard” PM activities, which are generally easier to formalise in job descriptions than the relational and leadership functions emphasised in HRM (Ahsan et al., 2013).

Systematic reviews reveal that AI-enabled PM applications tend to concentrate in areas where data are abundant and outcomes are measurable, particularly in planning and control. Taboada et al. (2023) categorise research in various performance areas, highlighting AI mainly as an analytical tool that enhances forecasting, monitoring, and decision-making without replacing managerial judgment and accountability. Nenni et al. (2025) present AI as a catalyst for PM “digitisation”, emphasising data-driven planning, risk detection, and performance assessment, while noting uneven maturity and validation across settings. A methodological note of caution from Müller et al. (2024) highlights persistent weaknesses in transparency and reporting rigour, suggesting that translating AI capability claims into formal competence frameworks poses a greater risk to recruitment and staffing decisions (Ahsan et al., 2013).

The literature on the field highlights a strong industry skew. Construction projects dominate empirical settings, arguably due to the richness of operational data (e.g., cost and schedule baselines, progress reporting, sensor streams, and BIM information), which enable modelling and automated monitoring. However, HRM systems in construction differ from those in services, the public sector, or creative industries, limiting the generalisability of AI-related skill expectations across project-based labour markets (do Vale et al., 2018; Gardiner et al., 2025). Broader reviews include IT/software and multi-project contexts, but typically with less consistent evidence of effectiveness at scale (Nenni et al., 2025; Taboada et al., 2023). The field’s most robust evidence thus reflects particular project types and data infrastructures, complicating HRM efforts to standardise competence requirements across industries (Cheng et al., 2005).

The literature also reveals a persistent lifecycle imbalance. Planning and monitoring/control phases are significantly more developed than the closing and post-project learning phases. Stakeholder, procurement, and communication management are less addressed compared to prediction-focused tasks (Davahli, 2020; Nenni et al., 2025; Salimimoghadam et al., 2025)—and this discrepancy is significant for HRM, since these are the competencies most prominently featured in recruitment and appraisal frameworks (Ahsan et al., 2013; Borg et al., 2023). Related perspectives on cognition further emphasise the relevance of HRM. Stingl et al. (2025) contend that “project cognition” remains underdeveloped and call for greater integration with cognitive science. This perspective becomes increasingly urgent as AI influences how information is generated and acted upon. Ika and Pinto (2025) revisit Kahneman’s influence on project theory and describe AI as both a potential tool for debiasing and a new source of overconfidence if accepted without scrutiny, reinforcing HRM concerns about judgment and behavioural competence (Cheng et al., 2005; Doyle, 2002).

GenAI represents a notable shift, focusing on creating and transforming project artefacts rather than merely predicting numerical outcomes. It can draft documentation, summarise meetings, generate status updates, translate communications, and assist with requirements work. These functions overlap with tasks that require coordination and communication, core to managerial skills frameworks (Cheng et al., 2005; do Vale et al., 2018). Recent reviews view GenAI as a tool to enhance, rather than replace, knowledge-intensive PM responsibilities (Nenni et al., 2025; Salimimoghadam et al., 2025). Evidence on how roles evolve aligns with this view; Holzmann et al. (2022) found that project managers expect AI to increasingly automate technical and analytical tasks, while emphasising the importance of human skills such as communication, leadership, and judgment. This duality supports HRM perspectives that technology can enhance managers’ behavioural and relational skills (Doyle, 2002; Prikshat et al., 2023).

Overall, the literature aligns with a socio-technical perspective. AI might enhance PM performance, but human capital readiness remains a key constraint, emphasising the importance of AI competence for project professionals (Adamantiadou & Tsironis, 2025; Nenni et al., 2025; Salimimoghadam et al., 2025). However, the literature is much less explicit about whether this competence has become a labour-market gatekeeper. Most reviews focus on applications and implementation challenges rather than hiring procedures, credentialing, or integrating AI skills into job criteria. Several reasons might explain why AI competence hasn't yet become a clear hiring requirement. For instance, specialised roles can facilitate AI usage, high-impact applications often depend on infrastructure that is unevenly accessible, PM focuses on leadership and stakeholder engagement, with AI seen as a complementary tool (Bahroun et al., 2023; Cheng et al., 2005; Davahli, 2020; do Vale et al., 2018). Advances in digital infrastructure may eventually lead to more direct integration of AI within operational processes in specific sectors (Adebayo et al., 2025; Smith & Wong, 2022). Recent research on job role evolution shows that in some contexts, familiarity with AI is highly valued, while in others, leadership and stakeholder insights are the key differentiators (Gardiner et al., 2025; Pinto et al., 2025). Therefore, despite ongoing discussions about capabilities, concrete evidence on whether AI skills are becoming part of explicit hiring criteria remains limited, prompting analysis of job ads as formal HRM signals (Ahsan et al., 2013; do Vale et al., 2018). These considerations form the basis for the following research question: To what extent and in what ways are AI-related competencies emerging as selection criteria within HRM-driven recruitment processes for project managers?

Methodology. This study adopts a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design in which large-scale quantitative evidence from online job postings is complemented by qualitative interpretation of postings that explicitly reference AI. This approach is appropriate when pattern detection at scale must be combined with contextual understanding of meanings embedded in text (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). It is also well suited to recruitment research because job advertisements both describe required competencies and signal organisational priorities and values to applicants (Ahsan et al., 2013; Barber, 1998). Integrating text mining with qualitative content analysis enables the study to capture the prevalence of AI-related signals and the ways AI competencies are framed as desirable, expected, or mandatory.

Data were collected via systematic web scraping of the job search platform Indeed, chosen for its broad labour-market coverage, cross-country comparability, and availability of structured, extractable data fields. Other sources were evaluated but not used: Remote OK was excluded due to its limited representation of PM roles, and LinkedIn was avoided due to restrictions on automated, large-scale data collection. The scraping was conducted using Apify and the Indeed Scraper by Misceres, allowing a standardised, automated process across different markets and ensuring reliability for cross-national comparisons (Ahsan et al., 2013; Den Hartog et al., 2007). Using the same methodology, 200 job postings per country were initially collected for Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States (total N = 600).

After export to .xlsx, a structured cleaning process removed non-relevant roles while retaining a broad set of project-management-related titles (e.g., Project Leader, Junior/Assistant Project Manager, Project Coordinator/Officer) to reflect occupational boundaries and entry routes, consistent with HRM perspectives on boundary construction (Ahsan et al., 2013; Hodgson, 2002). The final dataset includes 530 postings: Italy (n = 180), UK (n = 185), US (n = 165). Extracted fields include employer, title, full description, job categorisation, location, posting date, and salary, where available.

Quantitatively, the posts were organised in Excel and then analysed using Python (Anaconda/Jupyter). The text mining process involved cleaning the data, removing stopwords (in Italian, English, and custom lists), and creating frequency maps with WordCloud to identify top terms as part of the exploratory analysis (Gallivan et al., 2004; Sodhi & Son, 2008). Targeted frequency analyses focused on education, certifications, tools/software, and skills, guided by the PMI Talent Triangle's Ways of Working and Power Skills; Business Acumen was excluded. AI-related posts were identified through keyword searches, with manual validation to prevent false positives from Italian "ai," following best practices in content analysis (Ahsan et al., 2013; Krippendorff, 2018). For the qualitative aspect, validated AI posts were coded in Taguette (Rampin & Rampin, 2021), categorised by ad section and functional framing of AI, with additional comparisons between tech-intensive and non-tech-intensive sectors.

Results. This study is currently a work in progress. The initial findings indicate that recruitment signals for PM roles largely rely on traditional selection criteria rather than on new technological capabilities. In the three labour markets examined, job ads primarily depict the project manager as responsible for coordination, delivery, stakeholder alignment, and project process management. This suggests a pattern of continuity rather than change: employers continue to prioritise prior experience, organisational reliability, and cross-team ability in their hiring criteria, while AI-related skills are still secondary in the overall selection process.

A second pattern highlights the ongoing significance of educational and professional signals, though these vary across different countries. Job ads show that employers still rely on traditional indicators of competence, such as degree type, sector experience, and recognised certifications, to assess candidates' readiness for project roles. Nevertheless, these signals now seem more aligned with general expectations of professional maturity and credibility rather than specific technical expertise. This indicates that, despite the influence of digital transformation, hiring practices still favour traditional markers of employability and responsibility over newer forms of technological skills.

The preliminary findings also suggest that methodological fluency remains a central dimension of employability in PM. Advertisements consistently refer to familiarity with planning, monitoring, scheduling, delivery frameworks, and cross-functional coordination practices, confirming that employers still view project work through a structured

managerial lens. At the same time, the language of agility and hybridisation appears to be an extension of this logic rather than a replacement for it. In other words, organisations seem to value adaptability in methods, but within a competence profile that continues to emphasise execution, control, and communication.

Another initial finding highlights the importance of relational and behavioural skills. Key aspects such as communication, stakeholder engagement, leadership, negotiation, and the ability to collaborate across organisational boundaries are evident as core elements in role definition across all three countries. This point reinforces the study's broader argument, demonstrating that employers still view PM as a socio-organisational role rather than just a technical one. Even when referring to tools, platforms, or digital environments, these are usually seen as part of a broader expectation that project managers exercise judgment, coordinate stakeholders, and maintain alignment amid uncertainty. In this context, mentions of AI are limited and lack formal weight. When AI or GenAI is brought up, it is rarely considered a specific requirement for the role. Instead, it is usually described as part of the organisational environment or as an additional form of familiarity associated with innovation-focused settings. This indicates that AI literacy has not yet become a formal gatekeeping criterion in PM hiring. Rather than a standalone qualification, it currently functions as an emerging but not well-standardised signal, often overshadowed by more established expectations regarding experience, communication, and methodological skills.

Overall, the preliminary results support the interpretation that AI is entering recruitment discourse in PM in an incremental and dissimilar way. Employers appear aware of the growing relevance of AI-enabled work practices, yet this awareness has only partially translated into explicit competence requirements in job advertisements. The labour-market signal indicates a transition rather than full formalisation: AI is increasingly influencing the project work environment, but has not yet replaced the traditional basis for hiring project managers.

Research limitations. *This study notes several research limitations to consider when interpreting the results. First, using online job ads as coded signals of recruitment may not fully reflect actual hiring decisions, informal screening, or post-hire work requirements. Employers might use generic templates, omit new skills to keep applicant pools broad, or rely on internal training, leading to underreporting of AI-related expectations. Second, the dataset covers a brief period (July -August, 2025) and is drawn from a single platform (Indeed), which limits its generalizability across time, platforms, and labour market segments. Although Indeed enables cross-national comparisons, job postings there may differ systematically from those on LinkedIn, corporate career sites, or niche PM boards. Third, identifying references to AI and GenAI using keywords may miss implicit signals, such as tool names or phrases like “automation” or “data-driven,” especially in Italian, and may require measures to prevent false positives. Fourth, text-mining results highlight lexical prominence rather than the actual importance of criteria in hiring decisions and do not account for skill trade-offs. Finally, cross-country comparisons may be affected by institutional and linguistic differences in job-ad formats, credentialing, and disclosure practices (such as salary and contract info), which could bias observed frequencies regardless of actual employer demand.*

Managerial implications. *The findings are likely to have multiple impacts on HRM practices, education, training, and PM. For employers and HR teams, the evidence indicates that AI literacy is not yet a standard gatekeeping criterion in hiring project managers. Nonetheless, the appearance of AI signals in some job postings—often described as working with AI teams or in AI-enabled settings—suggests that organisations are beginning to incorporate AI into project work, even if they do not explicitly include it in their selection criteria. This presents an opportunity to enhance recruitment clarity: as AI tools become more integrated into project workflows, employers can minimise mismatches between actual role requirements and applicant expectations by clearly indicating whether AI-related skills are necessary, preferred, or situational. Such transparency can improve the accuracy of selection, aid candidates in self-assessment, and ensure that hiring practices align with job design and governance structures.*

Regarding workforce development and talent pipelines, the findings suggest that traditional PM skills remain the most reliable and adaptable foundation across different labour markets. These include experience, communication, coordination, stakeholder management, and methodological fluency across predictive, selectively agile, or hybrid methods. Consequently, HRM systems should continue to emphasise the assessment of essential skills and accountability-related competencies through behavioural interviews, work samples, and structured reference checks. Additionally, organisations operating in IT-heavy or data-rich settings might find it beneficial to create role-specific AI capability profiles, which differentiate between basic literacy for engaging with AI-enabled platforms, governance skills for evaluating outputs, managing risks, and promoting responsible use, and technical expertise that resides with specialised analytics or AI roles rather than project managers.

For universities and training providers, the evidence supports a balanced curriculum strategy. Programmes should preserve a strong emphasis on relational skills, leadership, and project-method foundations while integrating AI and GenAI literacy as complementary capabilities. The most valuable learning outcomes are likely not tool-specific proficiency, which changes rapidly, but transferable competencies: critical evaluation of AI outputs, prompt literacy for communication tasks, awareness of bias and reliability limits, data and privacy fundamentals, and the ability to embed AI use within project governance and ethical standards. Certification bodies and professional associations can also leverage these insights to update competence frameworks and continuing professional development pathways without prematurely treating AI proficiency as a universal baseline.

For project professionals, the findings indicate that AI-related skills currently function mainly as differentiators in specific contexts rather than as general employability thresholds. Investing in responsible, practical AI literacy, especially for documentation, reporting, and coordination tasks, may yield an advantage in sectors where AI adoption is more advanced, while continued strength in communication and stakeholder leadership remains central across all markets. Overall, the study highlights the need to translate technological possibilities into purposeful hiring signals and development pathways, ensuring that AI complements rather than displaces the core managerial capabilities required by project work.

Originality of the paper. This research is original in three key ways. First, it shifts the focus from predictions and capability narratives about AI in PM to observable HRM practices. Specifically, it examines job advertisements as institutionalised signals of recruitment that reveal what employers officially specify when granting access to managerial roles. While previous studies primarily map AI tools, applications, and barriers to adoption, there is limited systematic evidence on how AI skills are embedded in project managers' selection criteria. Second, the study offers a comparative, cross-national perspective by analysing three labour markets—Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States—within the same time frame and using a standardised data collection method. This approach allows a direct comparison of how AI-related signals differ across institutional contexts, sectors, and job-posting conventions, rather than assuming demand is consistent everywhere. Third, the research combines computational text mining with qualitative content analysis focused specifically on postings that mention AI or GenAI. This mixed-method approach captures both how often AI is requested and how it is framed—such as organisational context, interface expectations, desirable skills, or explicit requirements. Overall, the study establishes a labour market baseline that helps determine whether AI literacy is becoming a standard requirement for hiring project managers and provides a replicable method for monitoring this process over time.

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