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Differences in Hireability Ratings Based on Political Orientation, Gender, and Ethnicity

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Correspondence: Denise Vesper (denise.vesper@uni-saarland.de)**Received:** 20 January 2025 | **Revised:** 27 November 2025 | **Accepted:** 16 January 2026**Keywords:** discrimination | ethnicity | gender | political affiliation | recruitment | selection

ABSTRACT

Labor markets in many countries are facing increasing challenges due to aging populations and a lack of skilled workers. Simultaneously, societal changes and migration are contributing to increased diversity, while political polarization exacerbates divisions between people. These dynamics create a complex interplay, where growing diversity is both a response to and a source of tension within polarized societies. With these two studies, we examined the interaction of political affiliation with gender (Study 1) and ethnicity (Study 2) on hireability ratings to acknowledge the role of intersectionality. We conducted experiments in Germany, asking participants to evaluate the hireability of an applicant based on a LinkedIn profile. In both studies, the political affiliation of the applicant was manipulated to be either right-wing or left-wing. In the first study, we additionally manipulated the applicant's gender ($N = 331$), while in the second study, we varied the applicant's ethnicity ($N = 208$). Consistent with the assumptions of the political affiliation model, we observed in both studies that political value similarity predicted perceived similarity, which in turn positively affected hireability ratings. In both studies, right-wing applicants were rated as significantly less hireable than the left-wing applicants. However, we did not observe any effects of gender or ethnicity, nor their interactions with the applicant's political affiliation on hireability ratings. Our results suggest that political orientation can influence hiring processes above and beyond demographic characteristics. Applicants should consider whether they disclose their political engagement during selection processes.

Diversity is increasing due to globalization, migration, and societal changes such as more women working full-time and aging populations (Langer et al. 2023). It is, therefore, important to reflect this diversity in the workforce to prevent litigation and fulfill the needs of diverse customers. Additionally, diversity can help improve decision making and foster innovation by avoiding narrow-mindedness and groupthink (Galinsky et al. 2015). Thus, selection processes should be free of bias to maximize the benefits of increasing diversity. Organizations are encouraged to establish selection and promotion policies based on unbiased criteria that are regularly reviewed (Galinsky et al. 2015). However, diversity in specific aspects, such as political orientation, can also increase conflicts and mistrust. One way to address this issue is to encourage perspective-taking in order to

effectively utilize and incorporate diversity in the workplace (Galinsky et al. 2015).

The early phases of selection processes are particularly prone to bias, as recruiters often base their decisions on minimal information. Despite this, there is a lack of research focusing on these early stages and how to diversify the applicant pool (Langer et al. 2023). During these phases, approximately 40% of recruiters use social media to screen applicants (Society for Human Resource Management 2016), even though such assessments are known to have low reliability and validity (Mönke et al. 2024). As a result, social media screenings can negatively impact the diversity of the applicant pool, as job-irrelevant information may influence decision-making process (Zhang et al. 2020). This introduces bias, as recruiters may base their decisions on factors such as attitudes,

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Summary

- **What is currently known?**
- Cybervetting can lead to biased recruitment decisions.
- Political affiliation/opinion is one piece of information that can be obtained via cybervetting.
- **What does this paper add?**
- We examined the combined effects of political orientation and gender or ethnicity on hireability ratings.
- Hiring bias may stem from political orientation of applicants, even when demographics have no effect.
- **The implications for practitioners**
- Organizations should train staff to recognize and reduce political bias in hiring decisions.
- Organizations should use standardized assessment criteria to reduce the impact of subjective factors like political similarity in screening stages.
- Applicants should be trained in the implications of disclosing political engagement.

beliefs, or values, including political views (Wade et al. 2020). The need for relatedness (Deci and Ryan 2013) and stigmatization (Goffman 1963) could lead recruiters to screen out applicants who are dissimilar to themselves, for example those with differing political orientations, as suggested by the political affiliation model (PAM, Roth et al. 2017, 2020).

However, existing studies addressing the influence of political affiliation on hiring decisions have primarily focused on white male applicants (Mönke et al. 2024; Roth et al. 2020; Sinclair et al. 2023). This approach neglects the fact that people often belong to multiple stereotyped groups, thereby overlooking the role of intersectionality. Examining only one stereotyped characteristic fails to capture the actual experiences of applicants who are frequently members of several stereotyped groups, thus oversimplifying reality (Langer et al. 2023; Lippens et al. 2023). To address this gap, we conducted two studies to further explore how political affiliation influences hireability. These studies broaden the scope from exclusively male applicants to include female applicants (Study 1) and applicants from an ethnic minority (Study 2), acknowledging the impact of multiple group memberships. These studies therefore contribute to the literature on PAM by examining the effects of intersectionality on its theoretically proposed core assumptions for the first time. Additionally, we contribute to the literature on stigmatization and the dual-process theory (Derous et al. 2016) by demonstrating that political affiliation can be a stigma that activates stereotypes and negatively influences hiring decisions. Thereby, we hypothesize that the intersection of gender or ethnicity with political affiliation can amplify biased decision-making.

1 | Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Bias can be defined as favoring specific groups or identities (Henderson and Welsh 2024). The resulting differential treat-

ment of an applicant who is not a member of the preferred group or identity is understood as discrimination. Bias in recruitment and selection can occur based on factors such as disability, gender, or race (Levashina et al. 2014). With increasing diversity worldwide, it is necessary to reduce bias and discrimination in hiring processes (Langer et al. 2023). Doing so can improve decision-making and foster innovation by avoiding narrow-mindedness (Galinsky et al. 2015). Additionally, many countries have anti-discrimination laws. For example, §1 of Germany's General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) states that discrimination based on ethnic origin, race, gender, religion, disability, age, or sexual identity should be eliminated and is illegal (see also König et al. 2025). The 1960 "Convention concerning discrimination in respect of employment and occupation" by the International Labor Organization includes these characteristics as well as political opinion and social origin. This convention has been ratified by 175 countries. Even if specific anti-discrimination laws do not exist, discriminating based on political affiliation, opinion, and other job-irrelevant characteristics can have negative consequences. These consequences include fewer innovations and worse decisions due to a lack of diversity (Galinsky et al. 2015). Hence, selection processes should follow unbiased criteria.

The early phases of recruitment and selection processes are particularly prone to bias, as recruiters often base their decisions on a limited amount of information. Screening of social media is one way to increase the available information (Society for Human Resource Management 2016). However, this practice can harm the diversity of the applicant pool as it may provide job-irrelevant information (Hartwell et al. 2025; Zhang et al. 2020). Consequently, social media screenings are another way to introduce bias as selection decisions may be influenced by factors such as attitudes, beliefs, or values, including political views (Wade et al. 2020).

Political orientation can be defined as a deeply held set of attitudes, values, and beliefs about the organization of society (Jost et al. 2009; Swigart et al. 2020). It is commonly described along a left-right continuum, where the left represents progressive views and the right reflects more traditional values and beliefs (Jost 2006; Swigart et al. 2020). Political orientation is typically perceived as controllable, as most people are not born with their political views but rather adopt them at some point in their lives (Iyengar and Westwood 2015). This perceived controllability is argued to permit others to judge people based on their political values and can result in more negative affect based on stigmatization of political views (Goffman 1963; Wade et al. 2020).

The PAM (Roth et al. 2017, 2020) has been developed to explain how similarity in political orientation influences hiring decisions. Drawing on the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne 1971) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), the model suggests that similarity in political views increases perceived overall similarity between recruiters and applicants, which increases the recruiter's positive perception of the applicant. This, in turn, positively impacts the hireability of the respective applicants.

Additionally, people with an opposing political affiliation have been assumed to trigger stigmatization (Goffman 1963; Roth et al. 2020; Roulin et al. 2023). Stigma is defined as the devaluation of an attribute in a specific context (Goffman 1963).

Stigmas can be unobservable and invisible, such as sexual orientation or political affiliation (Roulin et al. 2023; Summers et al. 2018). According to the dual-process model of interviewer bias (Derous et al. 2016), learning about stigmatized characteristics, such as political orientation can activate Type-I processes, such as stereotypes, which are then used as heuristics to quickly judge applicants (Kunda and Spencer 2003; Swigart et al. 2020). Thus, if recruiters learn about applicants' political affiliations, they may automatically process this information and assume that applicants hold related values and beliefs. For instance, learning that an applicant is politically left-leaning could lead a recruiter to assume that the applicant is open-minded and supports LGBT rights (Jost et al. 2009; Swigart et al. 2020). Conversely, learning that an applicant is politically right-leaning could activate stereotypes of nationalistic tendencies or support for hierarchies.

The core assumptions of the PAM have also been supported by various studies. For example, perceived similarity was linked to candidate ratings in a study that manipulated names and photographs in LinkedIn profiles (Henderson and Welsh 2024). Applicants perceived as more like themselves were evaluated more positively. However, Henderson and Welsh (2024) found that demographic similarity was less important, as neither race nor gender match directly influenced applicant evaluations. Similarly, Mönke et al. (2024) observed that political value similarity significantly increased perceived similarity, which in turn increased hireability ratings in two samples from the USA and Germany. Additionally, political content impacted hiring ratings above individuating information (Wade et al. 2020). Politically similar candidates were rated higher in competence and warmth, and participants were more willing to cooperate and socialize with them compared to politically dissimilar candidates (Sinclair et al. 2023).

These results can be partially explained by the ideological conflict hypothesis (Brandt et al. 2014), which suggests that dissimilar attitudes are perceived as repulsive. Hence, despite legal restrictions regarding discrimination based on political opinions, recruiters may be motivated to select applicants who are politically like themselves to fulfill their need for relatedness and belongingness. The need for relatedness refers to the desire to experience meaningful connections with others at work (Deci and Ryan 2013). Satisfying this need is associated with greater organizational commitment, reduced burnout, improved performance, and decreased turnover intentions (Van Den Broeck et al. 2016). Therefore, screening applicants who fit the values and beliefs of both the recruiters and the organization may help meet this need. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1. *Political value similarity positively predicts overall similarity*

Hypothesis 2. *Perceived similarity positively predicts hireability*

Next to these general effects, there may be nuanced effects based on the specific party an applicant is affiliated with. Previous research using data from 28 European countries has shown that it is particularly far-right parties that are widely disliked (Harteveld et al. 2022). This can be attributed to these parties focusing on populism and nativism, advocating against both immigrants and the elite, which fosters ingroup-outgroup thinking (Harteveld et al. 2022; Tajfel and Turner 1986) and contributes to intergroup

threats (Renström et al. 2023). Hence, the affective polarization not only between parties but also political camps (Bantel 2023) may impact the evaluation of applicants. To distance themselves from applicants affiliated with right-wing parties (Renström et al. 2023), recruiters may be inclined to evaluate them less favorably.

Hypothesis 3. *The far-right applicants receive lower hireability ratings than the applicants with affiliation to a more left-leaning party.*

2 | Study 1

In addition to political affiliation, other characteristics can influence hiring decisions, with gender being one of the most researched. Identical behavior by men and women can be evaluated differently based on gender (Graso and Reynolds 2024). Women whose behavior deviates from stereotypes are often negatively evaluated by others (Rudman and Phelan 2008). This is known as role incongruity (Eagly and Karau 2002). Role incongruity can lead to biased evaluation, as recruiters may perceive a mismatch between job requirements and stereotypes. Despite improvements and a less rigid perception of social roles for both men and women, women continue to face disadvantages in terms of salaries and leadership roles (Graso and Reynolds 2024; Heilman et al. 2024). Gender stereotypes have evolved, as women are now perceived to be as competent as men but still viewed as more communal than men (Eagly et al. 2020). However, meta-analytic findings on hiring discrimination based on gender focusing on correspondence experiments, field audits, and individual job applications have shown that outcomes for female applicants have become more positive (Lippens et al. 2023; Schaerer et al. 2023). Discrimination is mostly only observed in gender-stereotyped jobs, such as men being discriminated against for engaging in female-typed jobs, like working in kindergarten, and vice versa for women. Consequently, the type of job has been identified as a moderator for gender bias in hiring experiments (Galos and Coppock 2023). Other studies also found no effect of gender in LinkedIn-based hiring recommendations (Roulin and Stronach 2022). In some cases, women were even rated as more hireable than men (Henderson and Welsh 2024; Roulin and Levashina 2019; Van Iddekinge et al. 2016).

Alongside the decline in hiring discrimination against women, a literature review suggests that discrimination against women is perceived as more unacceptable than discrimination against men, despite men experiencing similar disadvantages in some contexts (Graso and Reynolds 2024). Additionally, forecasters and researchers overestimated the persistence of bias against female applicants (Schaerer et al. 2023). Based on these findings and observations, we pose the following research question:

Research Question: Do the hireability ratings differ between female and male applicants?

One example of behavior that is differently evaluated for men and women is political engagement. Men and women show varying levels of political engagement and political attitudes across countries (Karp and Banducci 2008). Women consistently exhibit less interest in politics than men throughout their lives (Fraile and Sánchez-Vitores 2020) and across different nations (Fraile and Gomez 2017), which can be partly attributed to gender roles formed in early childhood. These

differences in political interest persist even after controlling other factors such as educational background or cognitive resources.

Women are not only less interested in politics but have also been underrepresented in national parliaments, with fewer than 30% of representatives being female (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2024; Karp and Banducci 2008). In Germany, women were found to be nine percent less likely to participate in political campaign activities and four percent less likely to engage politically compared to men (Karp and Banducci 2008). Additionally, male politicians were rated as more trustworthy, knowledgeable, and convincing than female politicians giving the same speech in an experimental study (Aalberg and Jenssen 2007). This effect was primarily driven by male participants consistently rating female politicians lower than male politicians. Therefore, engaging in politics could be seen as counter-stereotypical behavior for women, which may result in punishments, as this behavior contradicts prescriptive gender stereotypes (Heilman et al. 2024).

Men and women not only differ in their political interests but also in their political orientations. Women are significantly less likely to vote for far-right parties (Hudde 2023; Immerzeel et al. 2015), and this gender gap appears to be widening (Burn-Murdoch 2024). This gap has been attributed to assumptions that far-right parties often portray stereotypical roles of women as mothers and housewives, which conflicts with modern perceptions of gender equality, where both men and women focus on careers and family responsibilities. Therefore, in line with intersectionality, being affiliated with a right-wing party should be seen as role-incongruent behavior for female applicants, leading to less favorable evaluations. Put more formally:

Hypothesis 4. *There is an interaction effect between political affiliation and gender on hireability: The female applicant affiliated with a right-wing party will receive the lowest hireability ratings.*

2.1 | Method

2.1.1 | Transparency and Openness

The hypotheses and methods of this study have been pre-registered at <https://aspredicted.org/wqxp-ks9f.pdf>. Data, the R code to replicate the analyses, and results of additional exploratory analyses are available in our online supplemental materials, which can be accessed through the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/56knm/overview>.

2.1.2 | Study Design, Participants, and Procedure

We conducted a power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al. 2007) to determine the required sample size for a two-factor analysis of variance. Based on a test power of $1-\beta = 0.80$, an assumed α error of 0.05, and a small to medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.04$), the required sample size was calculated to be 199. Therefore, we aimed to collect data from 50 participants per group (i.e., 200 in total). This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards and guidelines set by the ethics advisory board of Saarland University. We also adhered to the Declaration of Helsinki of 1964 and its subsequent amendments. Participation was anonymous and voluntary for all

participants and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data for this study were collected from employees of a German health insurance company experienced in personnel selection and by posting the survey on social media between 14.05. and 04.06.2024. A total of 477 people participated in this study. Of these, one did not consent to the use of their data, and another indicated they had answered carelessly. Both were excluded from the analyses, following recommendations from Ward and Meade (2023). Additionally, participants who answered the relevant items faster than 2 s per item were excluded from the analyses (Huang et al. 2012, $n = 74$). Participants were also required to be employed at least in marginal employment to participate in this study. Based on this pre-registered inclusion criterion, 70 participants were excluded. This resulted in a final sample size of 331. We pre-registered that we would conduct the analyses twice: once with this final sample and once excluding participants identified as longstrings (Johnson 2005). For the latter analysis, a longstring was defined as a response pattern in which the same response option was selected six or more times consecutively ($n = 20$).

Participants in the final sample had an average age of 36.74 years ($SD = 14.82$, range 18 to 65). The sample included more female participants ($n = 193$, 58.31%) than male participants ($n = 131$, 39.58%). Another 3 participants identified as non-binary (0.91%) and one participant did not specify their gender. Regarding political orientation, participants were, on average, slightly left-leaning, $M = 4.35$ ($SD = 1.86$) on a scale from 1 (left) to 11 (right). Participants reported an average level of experience in personnel selection ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.39$), with 64.65% ($n = 214$) indicating they had at least some experience. Similarly, for LinkedIn usage, the average experience level was $M = 2.38$ ($SD = 1.28$), with 66.26% ($n = 216$) reporting at least some familiarity with LinkedIn. Among the participants, nearly half worked full-time ($n = 163$, 49.24%).

In the final sample, participants were almost evenly distributed across the four groups: 81 in the male right-wing (AfD, an abbreviation for the party *Alternative für Deutschland*) group, 82 in the male left-wing (Green) group, 75 in the female right-wing (AfD) group, and 90 in the female left-wing (Green) group. This distribution was statistically equal across groups, $\chi^2(3) = 1.39$, $p = 0.708$. We selected these two parties to represent the social and political opposite poles of political orientation in Germany (Franz et al. 2019) and they achieved similar results in recent polls, in contrast to the Left party, which has been performing poorly in recent polls (infratest dimap 2025).

2.1.3 | Measures

Political value similarity was measured using four items that asked participants to indicate their agreement regarding climate protection, migration, economic policy, and overall alignment with the party of the applicant. The items were introduced with the statement “How closely do your political attitudes and values match those of the [party] in terms of...” Participants rated their agreement on a scale from 1 = not at all to 7 = completely. These items were asked at the end of the survey, following the demographic questions, to ensure that participants valued the party's values rather than those of the applicant. The reliability of the measures was excellent for both

the right-wing party (AfD, McDonald's $\omega = 0.88$) and the left-wing party (The Green party, McDonald's $\omega = 0.93$) was very good.

Perceived similarity was assessed using five items translated into German from Mönke et al. (2024). The original items stem from Roth et al. (2020) and Tepper et al. (2011). Participants rated the extent to which they perceived the applicant as similar to themselves. A sample item reads "The job applicant and I see things in much the same way." For all five items, participants indicated their agreement on a scale from 1 = do not agree at all to 7 = totally agree. The scale demonstrated excellent reliability, McDonald's $\omega = 0.96$.

Hireability was measured using three items asking participants how likely they were to (1) invite the applicant to an interview, (2) hire the applicant, and (3) recommend someone else to hire the applicant. Responses were recorded on a scale from 1 = no at all likely to 5 = very likely (Rudman and Glick 2001). A German translation from an unpublished master thesis was used. The scale also demonstrated excellent reliability, McDonald's $\omega = 0.94$.

Political orientation of the participants was assessed by asking them to place themselves on a scale from 1 = left to 11 = right (Breyer 2015; Kroh 2007). This scale is a classic measure used to assess political orientation in panel studies such as the European Values survey. Additionally, participants were asked the so-called "Sunday question", that inquires which party they would vote for if an election were to take place the following Sunday (elections in Germany are always held on Sundays). The response options included the following main German political parties: Social Democratic Party (SPD), Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), the Green party, Free Democratic Party (FDP), Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Left party, Free Voters (Freie Wähler), Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht (Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht), and others.

2.1.4 | Procedure

After a welcome page and obtaining their consent, participants were asked to imagine themselves in the role of a recruiter. They were then presented with a job advertisement for a project manager vacancy at their organization. The advertisement used was the same as in Mönke et al. (2024). Following the job ad, participants were randomly assigned to view one of four LinkedIn profiles (see Figure 1 for an example), also based on materials from Mönke et al. (2024), which are uploaded to the OSF. After reviewing the profile, participants completed the hireability and perceived similarity items. These were followed by demographic questions, including age, gender, employment status, experience with personnel selection, experience with LinkedIn, political orientation, and political value similarity to either the right-wing (AfD) or left-wing (Green) party. Finally, participants were asked for permission to use their data, confirmed whether they had responded seriously, and were informed about the research questions.

2.1.5 | Analytical Strategy

To test Hypothesis 1, which posits that political value similarity predicts perceived similarity, and Hypothesis 2, which suggests

that perceived similarity predicts hireability, we employed a structural equation model. The measurement model defined the latent variables of political value similarity, perceived similarity, and hireability using the sum of the respective items as a basis. The structural model assumed that political value similarity would predict perceived similarity, which in turn would predict hireability. To address Hypotheses 3 and 4, as well as the Research Question, we conducted a two-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the applicant's party affiliation (AfD or Green) and gender (male or female) as factors, and hireability as the outcome variable.

2.2 | Study 1- Results

2.2.1 | Preliminary Analyses and Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the means, standard variables, and correlations of the focal variables for the overall sample. The corresponding tables for each group can be found in the supplemental online material (Tables S1–S4). The SOM (Table S9 and Figure S1) displays the distribution of responses to the Sunday question by gender.

2.2.2 | Hypothesis Tests

To test whether political value similarity predicted perceived similarity (H1) and perceived similarity predicted hireability (H2), we tested a structural equation model. The fit of the model was good, with $\chi^2(52) = 236.37$, $p < 0.001$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.96, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.10, 95% CI [.09, 0.12], standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.07. Political value similarity significantly predicted perceived similarity, $b = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.49$, and perceived similarity predicted hireability, $b = 0.71$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.60$. The results of the analyses excluding longstrings were similar: political value similarity predicted perceived similarity, $b = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.45$, and perceived similarity did predict hireability, $b = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.55$. Thus, both hypotheses were supported.

We then conducted a two-factor analysis of variance to test whether the right-wing (AfD) applicant would receive lower hireability ratings compared to the left-wing applicant (Green party, H3), whether differences were observed between male and female applicants in their hireability (RQ), and whether the female right-wing applicant would receive the lowest hireability ratings (H4). We found a significant main effect for party, $F(1, 324) = 303.63$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.48$. Applicants affiliated with the right-wing (AfD) party ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.11$) received significantly lower hireability ratings than those affiliated with the left-wing (Green) party ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.63$), supporting H3. The main effect for gender was not significant, $F(1, 324) = 2.60$, $p = 0.108$, $\eta^2 = 0.00$, indicating no significant differences between male and female applicants in their hireability ratings. This was also reflected in the means, as male ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.27$) and female ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.20$) applicants received similar ratings for hireability. Finally, the interaction between applicant party affiliation and gender (H4) was also not significant, $F(1, 324) = 1.31$, $p = 0.254$, $\eta^2 = 0.00$. Means and standard deviations for all four groups are shown in Table 2. The male right-wing applicant received descriptively the lowest

Header: LinkedIn navigation bar with search, home, network, jobs, messages, notifications, and profile links. A banner at the top reads: "Kostenlose telefonische Beratung nach kostenloser Registrierung! Anzeige ...".

Profile Header: Profile picture of Lukas Schneider, name "Lukas Schneider", title "BWL & Management", location "Berlin, Deutschland", and "97 Kontakte". Buttons for "Nachricht" and "Mehr ..." are present. Logos for "Management Consulting, Berlin" and "Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin" are shown.

Aktivitäten:

- Post 1: "Was es in Deutschland jetzt braucht: Erreichtes bewahren, Wirtschaft stärken! ..." (10 comments).
- Post 2: "Herzlichen Glückwunsch: Lukas ist unser Mitarbeiter des Monats! Wir freuen uns sehr, diese Anerkennung..." (4 comments).

Berufserfahrung:

- Projektmanagement:** Management Consulting Schulz & Fischer, Berlin, seit 2019.
- Studentischer Mitarbeiter:** AfD-Fraktion im Bundestag, 2017 – 2018.

Ausbildung:

- Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin:** Master of Science – Betriebswirtschaftslehre, 2017 – 2019 (abgeschlossen), Note 1.5.
- Freie Universität Berlin:** Bachelor of Science – Betriebswirtschaftslehre, 2014 – 2017 (abgeschlossen), Note 1.4.

Ehrenamt:

- Wahlkampfthelfer – AfD Berlin:** 2016 – 2017.
- Handballtrainer – HandballClub Berlin:** seit 2015.

Kenntnisse und Fähigkeiten:

- Englisch
- Verkauf
- Management

Interessen:

- Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
- Freie Universität Berlin
- Harvard Business Journal
- Verband der Wirtschaft

Right Sidebar:

- Anzeige:** "Das berufliche Netzwerk" advertisement.
- Ebenfalls angesehen:**
 - Toni Schmitt (BWL) - Vernetzen
 - Maria Bernd (Informatikerin) - Vernetzen
- Kennen Sie ...?:**
 - Tom Erdman (Marketing) - Vernetzen
 - Eva Mayer (Doktorandin) - Vernetzen
- Anzeige:** "BLACK FRIDAY SALE" advertisement.

Buttons: "Weiter" button at the bottom right.

FIGURE 1 | Example of a LinkedIn Profile (Study 2–Ethnic-Majority Right-Wing Applicant).

TABLE 1 | Study 1—means, standard deviations, and correlations with 95% confidence intervals for the overall sample.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Perceived similarity	3.09	1.37			
2. Political value similarity	3.12	1.87	0.68** [0.62, 0.73]		
3. Hireability	3.16	1.24	0.73** [0.68, 0.78]	0.69** [0.62, 0.74]	
4. Political orientation	4.35	1.86	0.12* [0.01, 0.23]	−0.13* [−0.24, −0.02]	0.02 [−0.09, 0.13]

Note: Perceived similarity and political value similarity were answered on a scale from 1 to 7. Hireability was answered on a scale from 1 to 5. Political orientation was measured using a scale from 1 (left) to 11 (right).

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 2 | Study 1—means and standard deviations for the four groups.

	AfD-Male ($n = 81$)	Green-Male ($n = 82$)	AfD-Female ($n = 75$)	Green-Female ($n = 90$)
Hireability	2.16 (1.07)	3.99 (0.65)	2.36 (1.14)	3.97 (0.63)
Perceived similarity	2.11 (1.06)	3.85 (0.97)	2.13 (1.09)	4.06 (0.94)

Note: AfD = Alternative für Deutschland (German right wing party).

hireability ratings, followed by the female right-wing applicant. The male and female left-wing applicant received the highest hireability ratings. Hence, H4 could not be supported.

When conducting the ANOVA excluding longstrings, the result for party affiliation, $F(1, 304) = 249.40$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.43$, was similar to the analysis including longstrings. However, in this analysis, both the main effect of applicant gender, $F(1, 304) = 17.22$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$, and the interaction effect, $F(1, 304) = 8.25$, $p = 0.004$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$ were significant, though, the effect sizes were relatively small. Upon examining the groups, it became apparent that the exclusion of longstrings mostly affected the group of the female right-wing applicant, as 19 participants were excluded in this group. In contrast, none were excluded in the right-wing male and left-wing female groups, and only one participant was excluded in the left-wing male group. Hence, the only mean that differed compared to the analysis including longstrings was that of the right-wing female group, $M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.09$. All other means remained consistent.

2.2.3 | Exploratory Analyses

We examined whether the four applicants differed in how typical they were perceived as men or women. Participants were asked a single item to rate the typicality on a scale from 1 = not typical to 7 = very typical. We observed that male applicants ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.46$) were perceived as more typical than female applicants ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.53$), $t(325.66) = -3.42$, $p = 0.001$, Cohen's $d = -0.38$. Additionally, the right-wing female applicant ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.30$) was perceived as significantly less typical compared to the female left-wing applicant ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.45$), $t(162.09) = -6.09$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = -0.94$, and compared to the right-wing male applicant ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.49$), $t(153.54) = -4.05$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = -0.65$. However, the male right-wing applicant was perceived as significantly less typical than the male left-wing applicant ($M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.35$), $t(159.02) = -3.34$, $p = 0.001$, Cohen's $d = -0.52$.

We also conducted all analyses only for participants who had at least some experience with personnel selection ($n = 211$). The structural equation model provided results very similar to the overall sample, with political value similarity significantly predicting perceived similarity, $b = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.47$, and perceived similarity significantly predicting hireability, $b = 0.73$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.61$. Regarding the ANOVA results, we again observed a significant main effect for party affiliation, $F(1, 207) = 168.70$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.44$, with right-wing applicants receiving lower hireability ratings than left-wing applicants. Additionally, the main effect for gender was significant, $F(1, 207) = 6.73$, $p = 0.010$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$, showing that female applicants were evaluated as more hireable than male applicants. The interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 207) = 2.53$, $p = 0.113$, $\eta^2 = 0.00$. Hence, we obtained very similar results to those of the overall sample.

Finally, we conducted an ANCOVA, including political orientation (left–right placement), experience in personnel selection, LinkedIn experience, employment status (dummy-coded), and political value similarity as covariates. For this analysis, we used a regression model in which we dummy-coded the scenario factors gender and party. Political orientation and political value similarity significantly affected hireability (see Table S10). More conservative participants and those with a higher political value similarity to the applicant's party were more likely to report higher hireability. As in the analysis without covariate, party affiliation of the applicant had a significant effect, with those affiliated with the Green Party being more likely to receive higher hireability values.

3 | Study 2

The aim of our second study was to replicate the findings from Study 1 regarding political value similarity, perceived similarity, and hireability, while extending it in two ways. First, we incorporated expected task performance and expected

organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as additional outcomes, following previous research (Mönke et al. 2024; Roth et al. 2020). Adding these two outcome variables enabled us to compare our results with existing ones more effectively, as these are the two typical outcomes assessed in other PAM studies. Additionally, we can infer not only whether recruiters would invite an applicant for an interview, but also their expectations regarding the applicant's future behavior within the organization. While we assume that the general tendency should be similar across outcomes, considering not only hireability but also OCB and expected task performance enables a more nuanced evaluation of applicants.

Second, we replaced gender with ethnicity as the second demographic characteristic to account for another combination of multiple group memberships. Meta-analytical results still provide evidence for unequal treatment of applicants based on ethnicity, race, and national origin (Lippens et al. 2023). On average, applicants from ethnic minorities received 29% fewer positive responses in the included studies. Lippens et al. (2023) also examined whether results varied for different minority groups and found that applicants with Maghrebi, Arab, or Middle Eastern backgrounds faced the highest unfavorable treatment, with an average 41% lower probability of receiving a positive callback. Additionally, other studies have consistently concluded that racial discrimination remains an international issue in hiring processes (Neumark 2018; Quillian and Midtbøen 2021).

According to the typology of stigmas (Summers et al. 2018), national origin, and hence ethnicity, can be categorized as visible, protected, but uncontrollable stigma. For example, applicants with Japanese accents were evaluated less favorably than Standard American English accented applicants (Hosoda and Stone-Romero 2010). The stigma of national origin can lead recruiters to assume that applicants might be less sociable and less competent (Summers et al. 2018). These findings lead us to hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5. *Applicants from the ethnic majority are rated as more hireable than applicants from an ethnic minority.*

Additionally, recruiters may use information about applicants' ethnicity to infer social group memberships, thereby activating ingroup/outgroup thinking (Tajfel and Turner 1986) as well as stereotypes associated with this stigma (Derous et al. 2016). Thus, the evaluation of applicants may be influenced by similarity in ethnicity. If recruiters perceive applicants as members of the same group, either ethnic minority or ethnic majority, this could further strengthen the perceived similarity between recruiters and applicants. In the study by Henderson and Welsh (2024), when profiles were more detailed, recruiters with matching racial backgrounds evaluated applicants more favorably than those of other races. Therefore, similarity in ethnicity could foster identity processes, influencing perceived similarity. This effect is likely to be particularly strong when recruiters and applicants share multiple identities, such as being members of an ethnic minority and holding similar political views. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 6. *Similarity in ethnicity positively predicts perceived similarity.*

Hypothesis 7. *The interaction of political value similarity and agreement in ethnicity predicts perceived similarity. Recruiters who perceive a similarity in political values and ethnicity to the applicant report the highest perceived similarity.*

Voting for far-right parties is often associated with nationalist views and anti-foreigner sentiments (e.g., Schmuck et al. 2017). Both cultural concerns over immigration as well as concerns regarding the economic impact of immigration were found to significantly predict far-right voting across Europe (Halikiopoulou and Vlandas 2020). Additionally, far-right parties are especially successful among people with an exclusionary concept of national identity (May 2025), making it unlikely for migrants to support these parties. Schmuck et al. (2017) demonstrated that exposure to right-wing populist advertisements decreased the national identification of young Muslim adults. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the 2021 election, only 2% of voters for the German far-right party AfD had a Turkish background (Goerres et al. 2022). An applicant from an ethnic minority affiliated with a far-right party may challenge established stereotypes of typical voters for such parties. This could lead to backlash among recruiters, resulting in a more negative evaluation of the far-right ethnic minority applicant due to his multiple group memberships. Put more formally:

Hypothesis 8. *There is an interaction effect between political affiliation and ethnicity on hireability: Applicants with right-wing (AfD) affiliation and from an ethnic minority are rated as the least hireable.*

3.1 | Method

3.1.1 | Transparency and Openness

The hypotheses and methods of this study were pre-registered at <https://aspredicted.org/55p8-k3n4.pdf>. Data, the R code to replicate the analyses, and results of additional exploratory analyses are available in our online supplemental materials, which can be accessed through the Open Science Framework: <https://osf.io/56knm/overview>.

3.1.2 | Study Design, Participants, and Procedure

We used the same power analysis as in Study 1 to calculate the required sample size. We adhered to ethical standards and guidelines set by the ethics advisory board of Saarland University and followed the Declaration of Helsinki of 1964 and its later amendments. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data were collected among employees of a German service group and via social media between 18.06. and 23.07.2024. In total, 226 people participated in this study. Of these, 13 did not consent to the use of their data and were excluded from the analyses (Ward and Meade 2023). Another five participants were excluded because they responded to relevant variables faster than the rate of 2 seconds per item (Huang et al. 2012). The final sample thus consisted of 208 participants.

The average age of the final sample was 39.67 years ($SD = 13.47$), ranging from 18 to 64 years. More than two-thirds of the participants were male ($n = 147$, 70.67%), while 47 were female (22.60%). Most participants were from the ethnic majority ($n = 175$, 84.13%). Participants were on average in the political center ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.79$, Range: 1 to 10). Most participants had experience in personnel selection (84.63%, $M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.32$). A similar pattern was observed for experience with LinkedIn, where 87.50% indicated having at least some experience

with LinkedIn ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.15$). The majority of participants were employed ($n = 155$, 74.52%). The participants were equally distributed across the four groups: 47 in the German right-wing (AfD) group, 58 in the Non-German right-wing (AfD) group, 54 in the German left-wing (Green) group, and 49 in the Non-German left-wing (Green) group. The distribution did not differ significantly, $\chi^2(3) = 1.42$, $p = 0.700$.

3.1.3 | Measures

Political value similarity and **perceived similarity** were measured with the same items as in Study 1. However, we modified the response format of political value similarity to a rating scale from 0 to 100 with 11 response levels (0-10-20-30-40-50-60-70-80-90-100). The reliability for the political value similarity was very good, McDonald's $\omega = 0.98$. The perceived similarity scale also demonstrated very good reliability, McDonald's $\omega = 0.94$. We also measured political orientation as in Study 1.

Hireability was assessed using the three-item scale from Rudman and Glick (2001). The scale demonstrated very good reliability, McDonald's $\omega = 0.93$. Additionally, participants rated the expected OCB and expected task performance of the applicants using three items each from Roth et al. (2020), with the German translation from Mönke et al. (2024). Participants rated these items on a seven-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. We included these two scales to allow for a more direct comparison with previous studies based on the PAM (Mönke et al. 2024; Roth et al. 2020). The reliability for expected OCB (McDonald's $\omega = 0.84$) and expected task performance (McDonald's $\omega = 0.92$) was good.

Ethnicity of the participants was assessed by using the definition of the German Federal Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt 2025). This operationalization was chosen because discussions about "race" in Germany are uncommon and historically sensitive (Roig 2017). Participants were presented with this definition and asked to indicate whether they have a migration background based on the provided criteria. Response options included: Yes, Yes (one of my parents), No, and I don't know. The first two categories were coded as minority ethnicity, while the third option was coded as majority ethnicity.

3.1.4 | Procedure

The procedure was similar to that of Study 1. Participants were informed about the study topic, provided their consent, and then asked to imagine themselves as recruiters. They were presented with the same job advertisement for a project manager vacancy at their organization as in Study 1. Following the job ad, participants were randomly assigned to one of four LinkedIn profiles. This time, we manipulated the name of the applicant to either "Lukas Schneider" (German) or "Mohammed Yilmaz" (Turkish). The profiles remained unchanged in all other aspects. We chose to use a Turkish name, as the Turkish migrant group is the largest migrant population in Germany, with individuals of Turkish ethnicity accounting for approximately 11.75% of all migrants in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt 2024). The profiles are available on the OSF. The LinkedIn profile was followed by items measuring hireability, expected OCB, and expected task performance. Participants

then completed the perceived similarity items. These were followed by a set of demographic questions, including age, gender, employment status, ethnicity, experience with personnel selection and LinkedIn, as well as their political orientation and political value similarity with either the right-wing (AfD) or left-wing (Green) party. Finally, participants were asked if they consented to the use of their data, whether they responded seriously, and were informed about the research questions.

3.1.5 | Analytical Strategy

To test Hypothesis 1, which posits that political value similarity predicts perceived similarity, and Hypothesis 2, which states that perceived similarity predicts hireability, we conducted a SEM. This time, we included similarity in ethnicity (H6) and the interaction of political value similarity and similarity in ethnicity (H7) as predictors for perceived similarity within the SEM. Similarity in ethnicity was included as a dummy variable, taking the value 0 if the applicant and participant had different ethnicities, and 1 if they were both from an ethnic minority. We then performed double mean centering to create the latent interaction variable for political value similarity and ethnicity. The other variables were defined as latent variables again in the measurement model.

To test Hypotheses 3, 5, and 8, we performed a two-factor multivariate analysis of variance with party (AfD, Green) and ethnicity (majority, minority) of the applicant as factors and hireability, task performance and OCB as outcomes.

3.2 | Results

3.2.1 | Preliminary Analyses and Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the focal variables for the overall sample are given in Table 3. Correlation tables with means and standard deviations for every group can be found in the SOM (Table S5-S8). Table S9 and Figure S2 show the distribution of responses to the Sunday question by gender.

3.2.2 | Hypotheses Tests

We conducted a structural equation modeling to test whether political value similarity (H1), similarity in ethnicity (H6), and the interaction between political value similarity and similarity in ethnicity (H7) predict perceived similarity, which in turn predicts hireability, task performance, and OCB (H2). The model fit the data satisfactorily, $\chi^2(200) = 305.87$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.05, 95% CI [.04, 0.06], SRMR = 0.05. As hypothesized, political value similarity significantly predicted perceived similarity, $b = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$. However, neither similarity in ethnicity, $b = -0.16$, $p = 0.304$, nor the interaction of political value similarity and similarity and ethnicity, $b = 0.01$, $p = 0.818$, predicted perceived similarity, $R^2 = 0.34$. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was supported, but Hypotheses 6 and 7 were not supported. For perceived similarity, we found that it significantly predicted hireability, $b = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.52$, task performance, $b = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.13$, and OCB, $b = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.26$. These findings further support Hypothesis 2.

To examine the effects of applicant's party affiliation (H3), ethnicity (H5), and the interaction of these two factors (H8), we

TABLE 3 | Study 2 –means, standard deviations, and correlations with 95% confidence intervals for the overall sample.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perceived similarity	3.35	1.19					
2. Political value similarity	4.28	2.65	0.56** [0.45, 0.65]				
3. Hireability	3.11	1.13	0.70** [0.63, 0.76]	0.53** [0.42, 0.62]			
4. Task performance	5.55	1.04	0.32** [0.19, 0.44]	0.15* [0.01, 0.28]	0.46** [0.35, 0.57]		
5. OCB	4.84	1.15	0.45** [0.34, 0.55]	0.24** [0.11, 0.37]	0.46** [0.35, 0.56]	0.56* [0.45, 0.64]	
6. Political orientation	5.16	2.66	0.05 [−0.09, 0.18]	−0.01 [−0.15, 0.13]	0.08 [−0.06, 0.21]	−0.08 [−0.21, 0.06]	0.10 [−0.03, 0.24]

Note: Perceived similarity and political value similarity were answered on a scale from 1 to 7. Hireability was answered on a scale from 1 to 5. Task performance and OCB (organizational citizenship behavior) were rated on a scale from 1 to 7. Political orientation was measured using a scale from 1 (left) to 11 (right).

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 4 | Study 2—means and standard deviations for hireability, task performance, and ocb separated for the four groups.

	AfD-Ethnic Majority (<i>n</i> = 47)	AfD-Ethnic Minority (<i>n</i> = 58)	Green-Ethnic Majority (<i>n</i> = 54)	Green-Ethnic Minority (<i>n</i> = 49)
Hireability	2.61 (1.18)	2.53 (1.07)	3.58 (0.85)	3.76 (0.85)
Task performance	5.23 (1.28)	5.51 (0.77)	5.69 (0.97)	5.73 (1.08)
OCB	4.33 (1.34)	4.86 (1.01)	5.05 (1.10)	5.07 (1.05)

Note: The numbers in brackets represent the standard deviations. Hireability was answered on a scale from 1 to 5. Task Performance and OCB (organizational citizenship behavior) were rated on a scale from 1 to 7. AfD = Alternative für Deutschland (German right wing party).

conducted a two-factor multivariate analysis of variance with party (AfD, Green) and ethnicity (majority, minority) of the applicant as factors, and hireability, task performance and OCB as outcomes. The only significant multivariate differences emerged for party affiliation, $F(3,202) = 21.33$, $p < 0.001$, Pillai's Trace = 0.24. There were no significant multivariate differences for the applicant's ethnicity, $F(3, 202) = 1.14$, $p = 0.333$, Pillai's Trace = 0.02, nor for the interaction of party affiliation and ethnicity, $F(3, 202) = 2.02$, $p = 0.112$, Pillai's Trace = 0.03, in the three outcomes. Means and standard deviations for all three outcomes and four groups are shown in Table 4. The univariate follow-up ANOVAs indicated that applicants affiliated with the right-wing party AfD received significantly lower ratings across all three outcomes compared to those affiliated with the left-wing party, supporting H3. The hypothesis that applicants from the ethnic minority would receive lower ratings than those from the ethnic majority (H5) was not supported, nor was the assumption that the right-wing affiliated applicant from an ethnic minority would receive the lowest hireability ratings (H8). However, the right-wing German applicant received descriptively lower ratings in task performance and OCB compared to the other three groups.

3.2.3 | Supplemental Analyses

As in Study 1, we replicated the analyses including only participants who had at least some experience in personnel selection ($n = 176$). For the structural equation model, we obtained very similar results. Political value similarity significantly predicted perceived similarity, $b = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$, but neither similarity in ethnicity, $b = -.17$, $p = 0.280$ nor the interaction between the two, $b = 0.03$, $p = 0.618$,

predicted perceived similarity, $R^2 = 0.30$. Perceived similarity again predicted all three outcomes: hireability, $b = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.50$, task performance, $b = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.13$, and OCB, $b = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.22$. For the MANOVA, we observed only significant differences for party affiliation, $F(3, 170) = 15.94$, $p < 0.001$, Pillai's trace = 0.22, but not for ethnicity, $F(3, 170) = 0.27$, $p = 0.846$, Pillai's trace = 0.00, nor the interaction, $F(3,170) = 1.22$, $p = 0.303$, Pillai's trace = 0.02. Post-hoc comparisons showed that applicants affiliated with the right-wing party were significantly lower rated in hireability, $F(1, 172) = 46.06$, $p < 0.001$, and OCB, $F(1, 172) = 4.96$, $p = 0.027$, but not in task performance, $F(1, 172) = 3.82$, $p = 0.052$, compared to left-wing party affiliated applicants.

Finally, we ran the analyses regarding mean differences again, this time including political orientation (left–right placement), experience in personnel selection, LinkedIn experience, employment status (dummy-coded), participants' ethnicity, and political value similarity as covariates. For this analysis, we used a regression model in which we dummy-coded the scenario factors ethnicity and party. Of the covariates, only political value similarity had a significant effect on hireability and OCB with higher political value similarity increasing both outcomes (see Table S11).

4 | General Discussion

The aim of these two studies was to examine whether the combination of potential discriminatory characteristics such as political affiliation and gender or ethnicity (i.e.,

intersectionality) influences hiring evaluations of applicants. Across both studies, we found that political value similarity positively influenced perceived similarity, which in turn had a significant positive effect on hireability ratings. Additionally, right-wing applicants were consistently evaluated as less hireable, underscoring the broader aversion to political extremes (Harteveld et al. 2022) and supporting the idea that political affiliation reflects deeply held attitudes, beliefs, and values that can influence hiring decisions (Roth et al. 2017; Swigart et al. 2020). This finding also highlights that political affiliation can elicit stigmatization in recruitment decisions (Roulin et al. 2023).

We did not observe any significant effect of gender or ethnicity on hireability ratings, suggesting that these characteristics may exert weaker effects on selection decisions, at least in a context where political affiliations of applicants are available. This finding partially aligns with recent meta-analyses (Lippens et al. 2023; Schaerer et al. 2023). Furthermore, the interaction between political affiliation and gender or ethnicity did not significantly impact hireability evaluations. Interestingly, in both studies, the male German right-wing applicant consistently received the lowest evaluations. This suggests that it may not be counter-stereotypical combinations, such as female right-wing or ethnic minority right-wing applicants, that are most disfavored, but rather the stereotypical male ethnic majority right-wing candidate who is evaluated less favorably in personnel selection contexts.

The results for our hypotheses based on the political affiliation model (Mönke et al. 2024; Roth et al. 2017, 2020) provide further support for its assumptions. Across both studies, political value similarity was positively related to perceived similarity, and perceived similarity predicted hireability ratings. In Study 2, perceived similarity also predicted task performance and OCB ratings. These findings align with the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne 1971) which suggests that shared political affiliation reflects deeper alignment in attitudes, values, and beliefs (Swigart et al. 2020) as well as with the dual-process model of interviewer bias (Derous et al. 2016). When an applicant shares a recruiter's political views, they are perceived as more similar, which increases the likelihood of receiving positive evaluations. However, if the applicant does expose dissimilar political views, this can activate stereotypes associated with political views and thus lead to stigmatization and exclusion of this applicant.

In Study 2, we also examined the effects of similarity in ethnicity and its interaction with political value similarity, hypothesizing that both would positively influence perceived similarity based on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986). However, neither factor significantly affected perceived similarity. This result may stem from the way ethnicity and similarity were operationalized. Participants were asked only whether they or their parents had a migration background, without specifying the country of origin (as is the custom in Germany). Similarity in ethnicity was then calculated under the assumption that migrants in Germany share a common identity of being an ethnic minority. However, it is possible that migrants identify more strongly with specific subgroups, such as Turkish, Syrian, or Sub-Saharan African, rather than as a single "migrant" or "ethnic minority" category. This could also explain the diverging results from Henderson

and Welsh (2024) who used ethnicity rather than asking whether participants or their parents had a migration background to explain evaluations of matching others. While they observed some favorable evaluations for ethnic matches, they also found no direct relationship between race or gender matches and candidate ratings, corresponding to our results. Additionally, we used the standard procedure for assessing ethnicity in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt 2025) as directly asking for ethnicity is unusual. Future research should consider operationalizing ethnicity in greater detail—for example, by asking about specific countries of origin—to account for more nuanced identities and subgroup affiliations.

For the mean differences between groups, we found only partial support for our hypotheses. Right-wing applicants were consistently evaluated less positively than left-wing candidates, aligning with prior findings that suggest a general aversion to extreme right-wing affiliations across countries (Bantel 2023; Harteveld et al. 2022). Our results imply that this pattern is evident in the context of hiring and selection as well. Although we used applicants affiliated with the Alternative for Germany party as an example, we would assume that the effects should be similar across countries because the underlying processes of stigmatization and social identity are universal. Additionally, the AfD is not an isolated phenomenon; comparable parties exist, such as Rassemblement National in France, Vox in Spain, Sverigedemokraterna in Sweden, Partij voor de Vrijheid in the Netherlands, and Partido Republicano in Chile (Jolly et al. 2022). However, we did not observe interaction effects between political affiliation and gender or ethnicity, nor main effects of gender or ethnicity on hireability ratings. The latter at least partly supports meta-analytical findings, which indicates that discrimination against female applicants has significantly decreased in recent years (Galos and Coppock 2023; Lippens et al. 2023; Schaerer et al. 2023).

The finding that applicants from an ethnic minority were evaluated similarly to those from the ethnic majority in Study 2 contrasts with existing research, which often reports negative treatment of applicants from ethnic minorities (Henderson and Welsh 2024; Neumark 2018; Quillian and Midtbøen 2021; Roulin and Levashina 2019). One potential explanation could be the specific ethnicity used in our study—Turkish origin, which is the most common migration background in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt 2024). It is possible that participants held fewer negative attitudes toward Turkish applicants compared to those from other backgrounds, such as Syrian or Sub-Saharan African countries. This could suggest that Turkish migrants are more widely accepted in Germany compared to other migrant groups. However, Lippens et al. (2023) reported a general decline in ethnicity-based hiring discrimination in European studies, which may be reflected in our results. Most prior studies on ethnicity and hiring discrimination have been conducted in the USA, typically comparing Black and White applicants (e.g., Henderson and Welsh 2024; Roulin and Levashina 2019; see also Quillian and Midtbøen 2021, for an overview). These differences in context and the specific ethnicity examined in our study may have influenced our findings. Future research should aim to replicate these results using applicants from a broader range of ethnicities and collect data in different countries to further explore these assumptions.

The assumption that counter-stereotypical combinations, such as female right-wing and ethnic minority right-wing applicants, would be particularly disfavored, was not supported. While the female right-wing applicant was evaluated as less typical than the female-left-wing applicant, her hireability ratings were not significantly worse. This suggests that political engagement did not strongly affect the hireability ratings, despite evidence that women are less likely to vote for far-right parties (Hudde 2023; Immerzeel et al. 2015) and exhibit lower interest in politics (Fraile and Gomez 2017; Fraile and Sánchez-Vitores 2020). Our results do not support the assumption that such role incongruent behavior would lead to punishment and backlash (Eagly and Karau 2002; Rudman and Phelan 2008). One potential explanation is that women affiliated with far-right parties may be perceived as less threatening than their male counterparts, as women are generally perceived as warmer and more communal (Eagly et al. 2020). Consequently, the affiliation with a right-wing party might have been interpreted as endorsement of traditional values rather than a reflection of anti-immigrant or other far-right sentiments. Future research could explore this hypothesis by collecting data on perceptions of traditionalism, anti-immigrant attitudes, and other relevant dimensions to better understand the nuanced ways in which gender and political affiliation interact in hiring contexts.

For the ethnic minority applicant, we based our argument on the low likelihood of migrants voting for far-right parties (Goerres et al. 2022) and the often anti-immigrant stance of these parties (Schmuck et al. 2017). However, the counter-stereotypical affiliation with a far-right party did not appear to negatively affect the evaluation of the applicant's expected OCB or task performance. For these two outcomes, the ethnic minority far-right applicant received ratings comparable to those of the applicants affiliated with the left-wing party. However, the ethnic minority right-wing applicant received the lowest hireability rating, albeit non-significant. This pattern suggests that while recruiters might view the applicant as capable of performing well and exhibiting OCB, they may still be less inclined to hire him. This discrepancy could reflect underlying biases or hesitations tied to political affiliation, beyond assessments of competence and behavior. Future research could delve deeper into this intriguing pattern, examining whether recruiters' unwillingness to hire such candidates stems from concerns about organizational fit, political alignment, or other factors beyond task-related performance expectations.

4.1 | Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our findings contribute to existing theory in several important ways. First, we demonstrated that the assumptions of the PAM (Roth et al. 2017, 2020) can be extended to include female and ethnic minority applicants. This shows that the effects of political value similarity on perceived similarity, and the subsequent impact of perceived similarity on hireability, are not confined to White male applicants. This underscores the importance of considering political value similarity as a key factor influencing recruitment and selection outcomes. However, we did not find evidence for a moderating effect of applicant gender or ethnicity on hireability evaluations. Based on these findings, we conclude that these demographic aspects may not need to be explicitly incorporated into the PAM. This

suggests that while political value similarity is a critical determinant, other demographic characteristics may exert a weaker or negligible influence on recruitment decisions within the contexts we examined.

Second, our findings support the recent results suggesting that hiring discrimination based on gender is decreasing or may even be absent (Lippens et al. 2023; Schaerer et al. 2023). This calls for a reassessment of theories on gender discrimination in hiring and gender roles, considering the growing body of studies reporting no significant effects of gender on hiring outcomes. While we also observed no effect of ethnicity on hireability, we are cautious in interpreting this as evidence of reduced discrimination. Our study focused solely on applicants with the most common non-German ethnicity in Germany—Turkish heritage. It is possible that the Turkish applicant in our study was not negatively evaluated, while applicants with other ethnicities, such as Syrian or African heritage, might experience different outcomes. Future research should investigate whether these findings generalize across a broader range of minority groups to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how ethnicity influences hiring decisions.

Third, and finally, our results highlight that right-wing affiliated applicants consistently receive the lowest hireability ratings. This finding suggests that the PAM should be extended to account for party differences, as these effects appear to be substantial and warrant further investigation. Specifically, we propose incorporating party affiliation of the applicant as a moderator within the model, given its significant impact on hireability evaluations. Conducting multigroup structural equation modeling could be a valuable approach for future research on the PAM, enabling a more nuanced understanding of how political affiliation interacts with other factors to influence hiring outcomes and examining whether it is stigmas that are associated with specific parties that lead to the differential evaluation of applicants.

From a practical perspective, we encourage organizations to develop and implement policies for handling knowledge of applicants' political affiliations. Recruiters should be aware that this information can introduce bias into recruitment and selection decisions, they should carefully consider whether it is appropriate to factor political affiliation into evaluations of fit and other aspects. Following suggestions from Van Iddekinge et al. (2023), we advocate for utilizing multiple selection procedures, structuring the hiring process, and regularly reviewing these processes to mitigate biased decision making. Additionally, organizations could explore the use of diverse selection committees, as suggested by Henderson and Welsh (2024), as individuals tend to prefer applicants, who are similar to themselves. Increasing diversity within committees can help achieve a more balanced evaluation of applicants. Regarding interventions, short-term education and reminders have been found to be ineffective in changing discriminatory behavior (Costa 2024). Instead, organizations should focus on interventions that directly target discriminatory behavior directly, such as changing social norms or holding individuals accountable, as these have proven more effective in reducing discrimination. For applicants, we recommend that they only disclose their political affiliation or activities if they believe it enhances their application or aligns with the organization's values. Otherwise, it may be wise to omit this information from the application and social media profiles to avoid potential bias.

4.2 | Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with any study, these two studies are not without limitations, which also offer avenues for future research. First, we conducted experimental studies using only LinkedIn profiles as stimulus materials. This limits the external validity of our findings, particularly since the percentage of people who post their political affiliations on LinkedIn may be relatively low. Future studies could consider using less direct signs of political attitudes, such as liking or sharing posts, or using a different platform. Furthermore, the political engagement on the LinkedIn profiles had end dates, which some participants may have interpreted as meaning that the applicants no longer identified with their respective parties. Future research could test this assumption by comparing engagement that has ended with ongoing engagement. Additionally, future research could consider more externally valid methods, such as correspondence testing experiments (Lippens et al. 2023; Quillian and Midtbøen 2021). However, the experimental nature of our studies allows for more controlled comparisons, as variables were held constant. Future experimental research could include a control group of applicants without political affiliations. This would enable direct comparisons between applicants with and without affiliations, which our design did not allow. Additionally, future research could further expand this line of inquiry by including other potentially discriminatory features, such as applicants openly identifying as members of the LGBTQ+ community or those with disabilities. Furthermore, we presented only one LinkedIn profile in our studies. Future research could enhance realism by showcasing multiple profiles or CVs, adopting a within-subjects design to facilitate direct comparisons between equally qualified applicants who differ only in characteristics such as political affiliation, gender, or ethnicity.

Second, we did not measure the perceived controllability of the applicants' characteristics (i.e., political orientation, gender, and ethnicity). We can thus not test whether perceived controllability is an explanatory mechanism for discriminating against politically affiliated applicants or not. However, stigmas are not only categorized regarding their visibility but also their controllability (Summers et al. 2018). Hence, future research should include measures of perceived controllability for characteristics of interest to directly test whether this can explain diverging results in hireability evaluations.

Third, we had non-representative samples, with the first sample also skewing rather left-leaning. In Study 1, we observed an overrepresentation of participants who indicated that they would vote for the Green Party if elections were held the following Sunday (35.35%, see Table S9 and Figures S1 and S2). These participants were, however, distributed equally across the four experimental groups. Additionally, the distribution of voting intentions was similar across the two studies and the last election results in Germany. The number of full-time employees in both studies could have been higher, with 163 of 338 participants in Study 1 indicating themselves to be full-time working and 155 of 208 indicating to be employed. Relatedly, in Study 1, we cannot differentiate between participants from the insurance company and those collected via social media as we did not include a question that would allow us to identify them, nor did we use different questionnaires for the different recruitment

channels. However, we achieved a high percentage of participants with HR experience, and our analyses demonstrated that the results remained consistent when only examining data from participants with HR experience in both studies. These exploratory findings align with previous research showing that HR professionals do not significantly differ from non-professionals in terms of decision-making (Jackson et al. 2018). Nonetheless, further data from recruiters and diverse groups could be useful. For example, almost no participants indicated a willingness to vote for the right-wing party AfD in both samples. Additionally, in Study 2, only 15% had a migration background, making it challenging to assess similarity in ethnicity effectively. Hence, future research could focus on gathering more representative samples or oversampling specific groups, such as individuals with migration backgrounds.

5 | Concluding Remarks

With these two studies, we showed that the political affiliation of applicants can significantly influence hiring evaluations, particularly for right-wing affiliated applicants thereby expanding research on the PAM that had not focused on specific types of political affiliations. We did not observe effects for gender (Study 1) or ethnicity (Study 2), nor did we find interactions between these factors and political affiliation (i.e., intersectionality), suggesting that it is primarily shared political values, attitudes, and beliefs that drive perceived similarity and hiring decisions. Future research should explore the replicability of these findings for other groups or in within-subjects designs or field experiments. For organizations, we recommend establishing policies for handling information regarding applicants' political views to mitigate bias in recruitment and selection processes.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Denise Vesper and Cornelius J. König; Methodology: Denise Vesper, Tim Nichter, and Klara Sandmann; Formal analysis and investigation: Denise Vesper; Writing — original draft preparation: Denise Vesper; Writing — review and editing: Denise Vesper and Cornelius J. König.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethics Statement

This study was performed in accordance with the ethical standards and guidelines by the ethics advisory board of Saarland University, national regulations by the German Science Foundation, and in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Data Availability Statement

Data, the R code to replicate the analyses, and complete results of our analyses are available from our Open Science Framework project: <https://osf.io/56knm/overview>.

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