

A Framework of the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in Human Resource Practices Using a Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) is integral to modern human resources (HR) practices, enhancing effectiveness and efficiency. Organizations seeking competitive advantage increasingly adopt AI. However, its use raises ethical concerns, including discrimination and misuse of personal data, causing reluctance among HR practitioners. This article aims to develop a framework for the ethical use of AI in HR. It examines AI's utility in HR management and addresses ethical concerns by analyzing literature from 2020 onward, focusing on business and HR research articles. The article contributes to the field by bridging the gap between AI adoption and ethical HR practices. The proposed framework provides actionable strategies for HR professionals to mitigate unethical practices while leveraging AI to improve operational efficiency. This article uniquely addresses the challenges faced by industry practitioners in integrating AI ethically into HR operations, offering practical guidance to navigate this evolving landscape.

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a cornerstone in the operations of organizations in various industries across the globe, and it is reshaping decision-making, customer experiences, and operations (Horvat et al., 2023). AI has demonstrated considerable ingenuity in its capability to revolutionize practices in the manufacturing and service sectors by enhancing operational efficiency, error reduction,

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and uncovering insights that were previously unattainable in the absence of AI. The human resources (HR) function is one of the fields ripe for disruption through the adoption of AI (Kshetri, 2021). In this regard, integrating AI into HR practices has allowed organizations to restructure critical HR processes such as recruitment and HR analytics. While AI presents various opportunities to the HR practitioner, its adoption has raised significant ethical concerns, calling for the need for a moral framework to guide ethical AI use in the HR function (Eftimov & Kitanovikj, 2023; Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Rehman, 2023). Charlwood & Guenole (2022) note that ethical dilemmas in AI adoption emanate from the fact that AI developers typically neglect ethics in favor of technical and commercial priorities. Thus, HR practitioners should find ways to incorporate ethics into such algorithms.

Almost every organization globally is finding a way to enhance efficiency and competitive advantage. Adopting AI is one way to ensure this is possible, as its ability to analyze vast amounts of data instantly enables managers to navigate the complexities of modern business environments easily. The AI market is growing as governments and private entities heavily invest in AI research and development (Buczynski et al., 2022; Gursoy & Kakadiaris, 2023; Mhlanga, 2020). For instance, in 2023, the global market for AI was valued at 200 billion U.S. dollars, and it is projected to grow to over 1.8 trillion U.S. dollars by 2030 (Statista, 2024). Businesses, because they need to cut costs and augment their bottom line, welcome the adoption of AI, which is why some are heavily investing in AI research. This trajectory is a revelation that AI adoption by companies worldwide is inevitable. Hence, a framework for ethical AI adoption should be designed, particularly for the HR function, which deals with employee data and employee concerns from hiring to firing.

Traditional HR systems had the HR practitioner at the center of the HR process. They relied on labor-intensive practices to execute all HR tasks, such as resume screening, recruitment, work allocation, workforce analytics, performance management, and personalized career coaching (Banking, 2021). Since the advent of AI, these tasks could now be automated, leaving the HR practitioner with time to focus on other essential functions of a strategic nature. However, despite the documented benefits of adopting AI in HR practices, the question of ethics continuously pops up as practitioners and AI researchers grapple with determining which set of tasks to delegate to AI and what data should be exposed to AI (Eftimov & Kitanovikj, 2023). Such questions are critical, and there is a need for practitioners, AI researchers, and governments to agree on an AI ethical standard. The current study draws inspiration from Rodgers et al. (2023), who reckon that studies on AI ethics in HR practices still need to be made available. Hence, we propose a framework for ethical AI use by the HR practitioner. The proposed framework equips HR practitioners with practical tools and actionable steps to effectively navigate the complexities of AI adoption. Key ethical issues the study addresses include bias, accountability, transparency, and privacy. Therefore, the framework provides HR practitioners with strategies to reduce these risks and optimize the advantages of adopting AI. As such, the following questions guided the study in designing such a framework:

- i. What are the key roles of AI in human resource management practice?
- ii. What are the ethical concerns and criticisms surrounding AI use in human resource practices?
- iii. How can human resource practitioners ethically utilize AI?

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