Executive Summary: The world is moving towards advanced automated technologies. People are more relying on technology in order to reduce human intervention from their daily work. But it’s high time to think and examine that whether these replacements of humans by machines are justified by the ethical codes of conducts and professional practices or not. In this report, a discussion is presented in order to find possible answers to that question and best ethical practices by analyzing the use of AI in human resource functionalities where ethical issues are more likely to be involved frequently. Because managing human resources raises ethical concerns. And finally recommendations are proposed to use AI and other emerging technology in this field with caution and more robust implementation.

Introduction: Professional ethics are set of principles that governs the individual’s behavior and activities in professional field. Professional ethics provide a guideline or set of rules on how a professional person should behave, communicate and act towards other peers and organizations. Professional ethics increases productivity, communication skills and reduce degrees of risks (Mirkamandar, S. and Beheshtifar M., 2015) because professional ethics aim to set standards that are essential to improve the working experience and environment for professional people.

Employees and staffs are the most important factors for a company to run its business properly. But it is more essential to have appropriate staffing plan, maintain good relationship and communication among them. That’s where the Human Resource (HR) department comes into play their roles. A human resource department of a company is responsible to perform the necessary tasks that ensures all employees are aligned to the company and ethical standards. Company may have their own terms and policies, and HR department has to assess and evaluate employee actions in order to verify that they are not violating any policies at any cost. As HR persons are in charge of every aspects of employees in an organization, they should also be aware of their own professional ethics and practices. Because all other employees are relying on them and they should be the role model for the employees. From recruitment to payroll and managing staffs, all aspects of an employee life cycle, are provisioned and managed by the HR department which require unbiased, rational decision making and professionalism.

In recent era of modern science and technology, business environment has changed dramatically in the last few decades because of the emergence of advanced technologies. Business models, values and professional ethics are also changed due to the global digital transformation. Also business leaders are now more focusing on accommodating emerging technologies and their digital impacts that can benefit the business. New codes of conducts are being made because technology is introducing new and diverse business models every day.

Recently, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has shown significant promises in many aspects of business environment. AI aims to automate and reduce human interventions like making decisions, monitoring and supervising etc. It essentially tries to mimic how the human brains work by learning from historical data. And it offers opportunities to automate human resource tasks as well. From screening resumes to perform complex decision making processes, AI has shown a great promise in this field of business. But there are still limitations and dependencies for AI tools which can violet ethical practices in business environment (Kodiyan A., 2019). Such as in order to make an unbiased and solid decision, An AI algorithm should be trained on unbiased data. So it is highly dependent on the historical data. And that raises ethical issues and questions whether or not use AI tools in human resource management. Also there are concerns about data privacy, security and integrity.

In this report, a discussion is made on the uses of AI tools in human resource management tasks along with their limitations and possibilities. Also a detailed analysis based on professional codes of conducts and ethical practices is presented. And finally a few recommendations and best ethical practices are proposed based on the analysis from the point of view of an ICT professional.

Discussion: In this section, first background of the given case study is discussed. Following that, analysis of the situation from the case study based on “Doing Ethics Technique” (Simpson, C., Nevile, L. and Burmeister, O., 2003) and “Australian Computer Society (ACS) code of ethics” (ACS, 2020) is presented with a few recommendations in the next sub-section.

Background of the Case Study: This case study focuses on the uses of modern technologies like Artificial Intelligence in Human Resource Management (HRM) functionalities and how the business leaders are adopting these emerging technologies to reduce human dependency and intervention in their daily HR activities. But the main concern is, are these technologies violating ethical codes of conducts and professional practices. The case study also mentioned Amazon’s recruitment process where they used automated resume filtering process with AI to find their potential candidate for a certain job position. But the results from this process showed biasness in order to select a candidate’s resume because the algorithms were developed based on biased data. Results showed that male candidates were selected most of the times and female candidates were ignored, regardless of their potential and qualification (Dastin, J., 2018). But in professional world, this should not be the case and it violates moral issues and rights of the candidates. If that is the case, should AI and other emerging technologies be used, what are the challenges, possibilities and promises in order to replace and reduce human intervention in HR functionalities? To answer these questions, a deeper analysis is required from the point of view of an ICT professional.

Analysis I, “Doing Ethics Technique”: This analysis technique can be implemented on the case study by answering a few questions step by step. This technique can provide ethical issues and concerns involved, also the possible solutions. First, we need to consider the synopsis of the situation. We need to simulate the scenario from different perspectives and from different point of views. Then, we have to find the facts and ethical issues involved from those perspective, find out who are getting affected by the facts, what are the possible options to get rid of them and finally how to make best use of the situation by accumulating all the factors and options.

In this case, if we consider the perspective from an HR manager to filter out the resumes for recruitment process from a big pole of potential candidate’s resume, s/he should be concerned that how s/he can select the most potential candidate’s resume based on candidate’s qualifications, job position requirements and descriptions, obviously not on the candidate’s gender or age or ethnicity. This should be a rational and unbiased selection process by which the HR manager can fulfill the company’s requirements by selecting a qualified candidate for the position. But if the AI tool provides biased results, this should be an ethical issue and should not be a professional practice. If we think from a candidate’s perspective, it raises more questions about the recruitment process. If the AI system always picks up a male candidate, it is not fair and just for the female candidate. Also from the company owner’s perspective, it is a loss for the company that they are failed to hire the best candidate. So, candidates, recruiting personnel and even the company are affected if the selection process of resume is not unbiased. The ethical issues from these perspectives are biasness and dishonesty in judgement, violation of company’s rules and regulations, lowering the employment potentials etc. Biased and dishonest judgement can be harmful for all of the stakeholders, in this case the candidates, other employees and the company. Candidates are going to be discouraged and frustrated by the company’s policy and codes of conduct which will affect the company’s reputation. A good reputed company will not want to harm their reputation among the potential candidates. Despite of losing reputation, the company also setting a bad example of their biased judgement. Setting a bad record can harm their internal relationship with the employees. Also whole company structure can become vulnerable due to one bad track record like this because it violates ethical and professional practices. Stakeholders will not trust the governing body of the company like they used to before.

To overcome the challenges, more robust technology should be used. AI tools should be trained with unbiased and solid data to avoid these issues in the future. And also it should not be fully automated or adopted at once. HR people should always evaluate the tools and make sure they are giving results by aligning the codes of conduct and not violating any ethical issue. Also it should be a trial and fix process, before adopting the technology for regular use.

Analysis II, ACS code of ethics: The Australian Computer Society (ACS), an association for information and communications technology (ICT) professionals, was formed in 1966 and now has around 45,000 members throughout Australia. ACS provides code of ethics as a guideline for Australian ICT professionals that should be honored and maintained by them (ACS, 2020). These codes of ethics should also be in concern when making new business models or enhance business models with new technologies. So, the given case study should be justified under the ACS codes of ethics. The key points of ACS code of ethics are discussed based on the case study.

* The primacy of the public interest: Public interest should be the main concern where personal and business interest should be overlooked in order to make a rational decision. And making rational decision is important in business. Using AI or other automated tools in HR functionalities reflect not only personal or company interest but also reflect public interests as well. Because though it makes easier and less time-consuming for the company to find out their potential candidates, it also makes the process faster which means candidates don’t have to wait long for the results. And by making the process faster, company can focus on other activities and production.
* The enhancement of quality of life: The service should enhance the quality of life for those who are involved, the stakeholders. Innovation of every technology aims to enhance the quality of life of people. And the main goal of AI technologies is to replace repetitive tasks from human by putting some intelligence to the machines. By saving time and energy, AI is actually enhancing the quality of life, there’s no doubt. But some irrational and wrong decision making also may do harm to the stakeholders as well.
* Honesty: An ICT professional should be honest in delivering his/her skills, knowledge, and services. An HR person is responsible for making crucial decisions like recruiting, terminating and managing employees etc. These decisions should be unbiased and honest. Due to the dependency of AI tools on historical data, this becomes a big challenge. That’s why the data should contain honest and unbiased examples.
* Competence: The delivery of the work should be competent and diligent. Machines or technologies are likely to make less mistakes than humans if it is trained and used properly. So competence of the work is highly dependent on the historical data on which the AI tool will be trained and also the use of the technology.
* Professional development: The work should develop own professional skills as well as for the colleagues and peers. Accommodating new technologies always develop professional skills because technology always aims to maximize productivity and quality of services. By automating resume filtering process, HR persons can focus on other HR activities and improve their services. Also these technologies can provide better insights by which they can improve their quality of work, also for their colleagues as well.
* Professionalism: People should try to enhance integrity, moral values and respect between stakeholders. This is the key thing to develop and maintain a productive work environment. As technology emerging very frequently, business models, strategies and moral thinking are also changing. Professionalism in this era is not the same as previous. And it will change in the future as well. So, the HR people should ensure that the standards are not decreased. Irrational and biased decision making can hamper professionalism which can be very harmful to company and employee’s reputation.

Recommendations: Technology has always aimed to enhance the quality of people’s lives by automating their works, by saving time and energy, and even by providing intelligence or insights. But we have to make sure that technology is being used properly. To make sure that technologies are not violating any ethical issues and professional practices, we should be evaluating the use of different technology tools frequently. We need to improve and restrict their uses in order to align with the codes of conducts and ethical practices. Though AI raised ethical questions and concerns, it can be eradicated by proper use. And if we can ensure that, AI can improve the productivity for HR people by providing more automated services. AI has a lot of possibilities in this field of business. AI can be implemented to automate business processes like answering queries and delivering notices via phone calls, messages, chat bots and emails; it also can manage and monitor employee’s behavior, performance, can give better insights of their daily activities and work environments etc. So AI is definitely a useful tool, but we have to make the best use of it. We should be concerned about fairness in decision making, data dependency, privacy, security, integrity and other issues that may violate ethical and professional practices when using these technologies.

Conclusion: Technology is a blessing to the modern era. It is improving our living experience and standards by easing things for us every day. But as we are more relying on technologies, we should be aware of moral and ethical issues before adopting and using new technologies in our business. Because we are now relying on them to replace human interventions like making complex, fair, rational decisions and other business processes. And we should also remember that professional practices and ethical concerns are important in business environment. Without professional practices, values and ethics, business is not going to be successful or achieve goals. So, it should be maintained in every aspects. We need to evaluate technology in order to find out its ethical issues and best practices before adopting it. We should not use technology unless it supports our moral values and beliefs.

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