

Nikitha Rao

Research Fellow
Microsoft Research
Bangalore, India

✉ nikitharao006@gmail.com
🏠 <https://raonikitha.github.io/>
🎓 Google Scholar

EDUCATION

- **PES University (previously known as PES Institute of Technology or PESIT)** 2015 - 2019
B.Tech in Computer Science and Engineering with a specialization in Data Science.
Advisor: Dr. Gowri Srinivasa
 - Cumulative GPA: 9.48/10.0
 - Won the **Best Student Award** for demonstrating academic excellence, for the graduating class of 2019 (360 students).
 - Five time recipient of the **CNR Rao Scholarship** for academic performance in the Computer Science Department.

WORK EXPERIENCE

- **Microsoft Research, India - Research Fellow** July, 2019 - Present
Advisors: Chetan Bansal, Dr. Subho Mukherjee, Dr. Nachi Nagappan, and Dr. Tom Zimmermann
Project Domains: Machine Learning for Software Engineering, Data Science, and Web Search
Additional Responsibilities: Research Fellow representative for the Diversity and Inclusion committee.
- **Microsoft Research India - Research Intern** January - June, 2019
Advisor: Dr. Sreangsu Acharyya
Project Domain: Data Science
- **Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh - Research Intern** Summer 2018
Advisor: Dr. Shawn Blanton
Project Domain: Machine Learning
- **Indian Institute of Science, India - Summer School Program** July, 2017
Was among the youngest students selected for the 5th Summer School Program conducted by the Computer Science and Automation (CSA) Department.

PUBLICATIONS

- **Handling Class Imbalance with POISE: pAUC Optimization in Supervised Experiments** [preprint]
Nikitha Rao, and Sreangsu Acharyya
Preprint of full paper available. (9 pages)
🏆 **Best Short Paper Award** at MLADS-SYNAPSE, 2020. [Presenter]
Microsoft internal Conference on Machine Learning and Data Science for Asia-Pacific region
[Acceptance Rate \approx 8%]
- **Code Search Intent Classification Using Weak Supervision** [arXiv]
Nikitha Rao, Chetan Bansal, and Joe Guan
Under review at ICSE - NIER, 2021. (5 pages)
- **Neural Knowledge Extraction from Cloud Service Incidents** [arXiv]
Manish Shetty, Chetan Bansal, Sumit Kumar, Nikitha Rao, Nachiappan Nagappan, and Thomas Zimmermann
Under review at ICSE - SEIP, 2021. (12 pages)
🏆 **Featured on VentureBeat:** [Microsoft's SoftNER AI uses unsupervised learning to help triage cloud service outages.](#)
- **Analyzing Web Search Behavior for Software Engineering Tasks** [arXiv]
Nikitha Rao, Chetan Bansal, Thomas Zimmermann, Ahmed Hassan Awadallah, and Nachiappan Nagappan
IEEE International Conference on Big Data (IEEE BigData), 2020. (10 pages)
[Acceptance Rate \approx 15.5%]
- **Product Insights: Analyzing Product Intents in Web Search** [paper]
Nikitha Rao, Chetan Bansal, Subhabrata Mukherjee, and Chandra Maddila
International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management (CIKM), 2020. (4 pages) [Presenter]
[Acceptance Rate \approx 26%]
- **Studying Ransomware Attacks Using Web Search Logs** [paper]
Chetan Bansal, Pantazis Deligiannis, Chandra Maddila, and Nikitha Rao (*alphabetical order*)
International Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval (SIGIR), 2020. (4 pages) [Presenter]
[Acceptance Rate \approx 30%]

PATENTS

- **Identification of Content Gaps based on Relative User-Selection Rates between Multiple Discrete Content Sources** filed with the USPTO. *October 16, 2020*
Co-inventors: Chetan Bansal, Junia George, Casey Gossard, Dung Nguyen, Dave Ludwig, and Curtis Anderson.
- **ExtraQuery Context-Aided Search Intent Detection** filed with the USPTO. *October 9, 2020*
Co-inventors: Chetan Bansal, Joe Guan, Mark Wilson-Thomas, Nachiappan Nagappan, and Thomas Zimmermann.
- **Automatic Recognition of Entities Related to Cloud Incidents** filed with the USPTO. *June 19, 2020*
Co-inventors: Manish Shetty, Chetan Bansal, Sumit Kumar, Nachiappan Nagappan, and Thomas Zimmermann.

PROJECTS

- **Automatic Detection of Bugs During Code Review** *August, 2020 - Present*
Advisors: Chetan Bansal, and Dr. Subho Mukherjee, *Microsoft Research*
 - Working on automatic detection of bug related pull request comments using weak supervision and few-shot learning.
 - We are building a taxonomy for various types of bugs that are found during code review.
 - Goal is to automatically detect bugs and generate bug fixes using machine learning models.
- **Code Search Intent Classification Using Weak Supervision** *June, 2020 - Present*
Advisors: Chetan Bansal, *Microsoft Research*
 - Worked on automatic detection of code search intent for C# and Java queries using weak supervision techniques.
 - We released 'Search4Code', the first web query dataset for code search.
 - Paper under review at *ICSE - NIER, 2021*.
- **Partial-AUC Optimization to Handle Class Imbalance** *January, 2019 - Present*
Advisor: Dr. Sreangsu Acharyya, *Microsoft Research*
 - Developed a novel partial AUC maximization algorithm to handle class imbalance using a game theory formulation.
 - We also developed a novel task-specific vector embedding technique that captures the geometry induced by decision trees to extend the algorithm to non-linearly separable data. This improved the overall performance by $\approx 40\%$.
 - We empirically showed that our approach significantly outperformed the existing baselines by 5% to 9% on learning to rank task and 16% to 67% in binary classification tasks in domains where the class imbalance is a prominent issue.
- **Search Insights: Analysing Web Search Behavior to Mine Insights** *August, 2019 - July, 2020*
Advisors: Chetan Bansal, Dr. Subho Mukherjee, Dr. Nachi Nagappan, and Dr. Tom Zimmermann, *Microsoft Research*
 - Millions of search logs from Bing are analyzed to characterize user intent and behavior.
 - We studied the distribution of intents across various web search metrics and other trend characteristics.
 - The work done on ransomware attacks has been accepted at *SIGIR, 2020*.
 - The work done on product search has been accepted at *CIKM, 2020*.
 - The work done on software engineering tasks has been accepted at *IEEE BigData, 2020*.
- **Neural Knowledge Extraction from Cloud Service Incidents** *January, 2020 - July, 2020*
Advisors: Chetan Bansal, Dr. Nachi Nagappan and Dr. Tom Zimmermann, *Microsoft Research*
 - We developed SoftNER, a framework for unsupervised knowledge extraction from cloud service incidents that leverages structural patterns for bootstrapping the training data.
 - We have built a novel multi-task learning based BiLSTM-CRF model that uses both the semantic context and data-types for named-entity extraction.
 - We show that using the knowledge extracted by SoftNER significantly helps improve model performance for important downstream tasks like incident triaging.
 - Paper under review at *ICSE - SEIP, 2021*.
 - This work has been featured on **VentureBeat** - *Microsoft's SoftNER AI uses unsupervised learning to help triage cloud service outages*.
- **Retinopathy of Prematurity – Feature Engineering and Predictive Analysis.** *August, 2018 - July, 2019*
Undergraduate Thesis, Computer Science Department, PES University.
Advisor: Dr. Gowri Srinivasa
 - Features extracted from the retinal images of prematurely born infants are used to build a rule-based model to automatically classify the severity of the disease.
 - This is in collaboration with Narayana Nethralaya (specialized hospital) and Rx Digi Health Platform (start-up).
- **Defining the Level of Hardware Obfuscation using Machine Learning Techniques** *June - July, 2018*
Advisor: Dr. Shawn Blanton, *Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh*
 - We analyze the patterns in input-output sequences of various obfuscated circuits to define a metric to quantify the level of obfuscation in a circuit using machine learning techniques.