

Reading Response

Mar/09/2021

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We live in the unique times in the history of automation and many things are decided by the algorithms and human intervention is desired to be reduced. We want it less as humans have their own biases and factors that can influence their judgement. Software like COMPASS seem desirable by the jurisdiction as they want to reduce the human intervention, want to reduce cost it takes to convict a person which is way too high. So, it seems desirable to pass the policies in favor of the use of such systems. But what we forget is that this software that gives out probabilities of the criminals are skewed against the minorities and poor people. Such software is more likely to be marking a black offender riskier than a white offender with more heinous crime and term record. The scores are referred by the judges that might and might not be considered for the final verdict. But in most cases they do influence the price an offender has to pay for the bail (the bond amount / sentencing) and may be the rehabilitation services they should receive.

The question here is – Is AI smart and capable enough to make such decisions. I think yes. But what we are forgetting here is that there are biases involved and not every problem can be sophisticatedly solved by AI as by humans. But a matter of fact is that these algorithms work solely on the historic data set and therefore the judgement is given based on the quality of data set that is being fed into it.

My personal thoughts on reading the Pro-publica paper is that yes there is indeed a bias in the system but they fail to discuss how these biases can be tackled. I do see the benefits of AI in accumulating and assisting the judge but human being using these softwares (a human judge) in this case is not trained enough on how much to rely on the jurisdictional softwares. Also allowing a private player in developing a software could significantly be wrong as their goal is to just earn money. Even though judges say that they do not refer scores I still feel that their decision making could be swayed away by the software themselves.

Final takeaway, although it seems desirable by government to bring the AI into jurisdictional systems, I feel this should not be brought into practice until the software becomes sophisticated enough. This is because people with felony charge usually face trouble finding the jobs and having an even a slightest error or bias towards one race could lead to them not getting the jobs ever. This is making sure the on race will eventually stay out of the job market. A slightest error in the software like COMPASS can have serious repercussions on a community as a whole and we are talking about automating that cycle.

