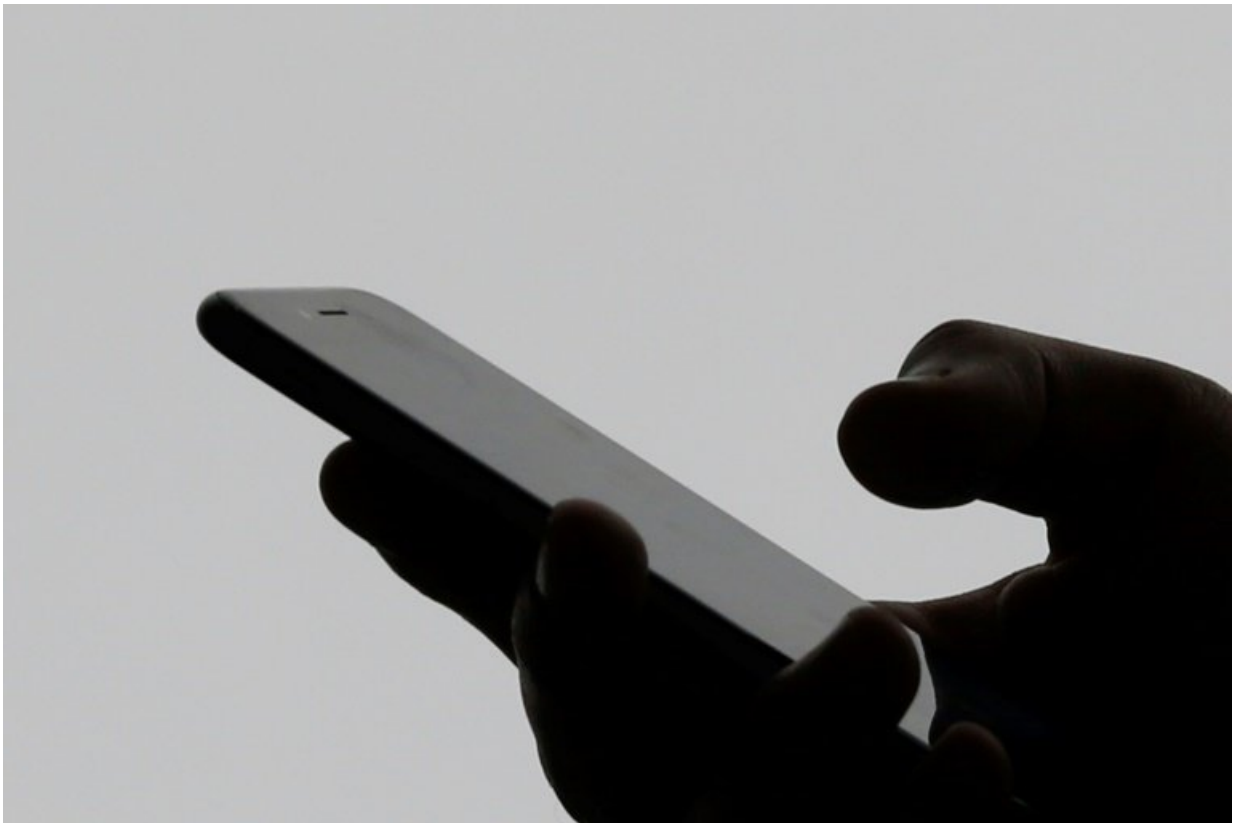


Beware of replicating sexism in AI, experts warn

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AI is the science of programming machines or computers to reproduce human processes, like learning and decision making

Artificial intelligence could emulate human bias, including sexism, if there is no oversight on data used to create it, experts at the world's

largest mobile phone fair in Barcelona warned Thursday.

"We're all very aware the machines will learn the same bias as those who coded them," Emma McGuigan, in charge of technology at consultants Accenture, said at the Mobile World Congress.

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Julie Woods-Moss, chief innovation officer at Indian mobile operator Tata Communications, said that in order to do this, a large amount of human-led data was needed.

"We have to be very careful that we don't encourage AI to be biased," she said, calling on professionals in the sector to find ways to identify these biases.

Woods-Moss said there should be ways to "consciously look for this bias—for instance if you start seeing patterns that say 'man is the doctor' or 'woman is the nurse'."

She also criticised the fact that "most personal assistants are female," giving as an example in cars, the underlying assumption is that the driver is a man and will want to hear a female voice on the GPS device.

Most of these devices work thanks to [artificial intelligence](#), analysing conversations by their users to be able to respond.

Amazon's virtual assistant, named Alexa, "has only recently joined the hashtag MeToo," said Woods-Moss, referring to the movement launched on social media to encourage women to make public any sexual assault or harassment against them.

"Before, if you would call the assistant a horrible sexually explicit name, it would reply 'thank you for the feedback.' Now Alexa says 'I am not responding to that'."

Lisa Wang, founder of SheWorx, a financing platform for female entrepreneurs, said that over 90 percent of those creating AI technology "are still men."

"That ultimately is going to amplify the biases of the people who are creating it," she said.

According to a 2016 report by the World Economic Forum, just 19 percent of workers in the mobile technology industry were women.

Highlighting worries about the issue, the American Civil Liberties Union last year started looking into concerns that machines are showing signs of hidden racial or [gender bias](#).

The MWC in Barcelona wrapped up on Thursday with organisers saying attendance figures were similar to last year's fair despite simmering tensions over the Catalonia region's failed bid to break from Spain.

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