Artificial intelligence technology is now used by a growing number of companies looking to hire the best employees, but new research from Rice University warns how it can incorporate biases and overlook important characteristics among job applicants.

The study explores the scientific, legal and ethical concerns raised by personnel selection tools that rely on AI technologies and machine learning algorithms. Authors Fred Oswald, a professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Rice University; Nancy Tippins of the Nancy T. Tippins Group, LLC, and independent researcher S. Morton McPhail reviewed the use of this technology.

Oswald points out that if an applicant is in a minority group or has a disability, the algorithms might not have as much data on these groups to understand and judge their unique talents, which could then limit diversity in the hiring process.

Finally, this research expresses serious ethical concerns about employers reviewing information that was not part of the employee's application package. In the past, job applicants could more carefully manage the materials reviewed by a potential employer, but now, machine technology can mine the internet for unrelated materials.

"Just because organizations can mine the internet for applicant information doesn't mean that they should," Oswald says. "And related to this concern, we are now seeing how issues of applicant privacy
and fairness are beginning to influence organizational policies as well as state and federal laws."

Oswald and his fellow authors hope the research will serve as a call to action for those building and using this technology to engage researchers to evaluate liabilities, risks and other associated problems.

"Scientific, Legal and Ethical Concerns About AI-Based Personnel Selection Tools: A Call to Action" appeared in a recent edition of Personnel Assessment and Decisions.


Provided by Rice University

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