

Artificial Intelligence in Action: Ensuring Ethical and Socially Responsible Hiring Decisions with HireVue

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Summary

This case study explores the ethical dilemma faced by Matthieu Ayoude, the global head of talent acquisition at a multinational company based in Paris. Ayoude is confronted with a decision regarding the implementation of an AI-based interview platform called HireVue for hiring and selection purposes. However, Ayoude, who comes from immigrant parents and identifies as a black person, harbors concerns about potential biases in AI-backed applications. This case study delves into the ethical implications of using AI technology in recruitment processes and highlights the importance of addressing potential discrimination and bias.

Teaching objectives

By the end of this case study, students should be able to (1) understand the ethical implications of using AI technology in talent acquisition, (2) analyze the potential biases and discrimination that can arise from AI-based interview platforms, (3) evaluate the impact of biased AI systems on diversity and inclusion efforts within organizations, and (4) propose strategies to mitigate bias in AI systems and promote fair and inclusive recruitment practices.

Keywords

Ethical decision making, AI-based interview platform, bias in AI systems, hiring, recruitment, discrimination, fairness



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Background

Matthieu Ayoude, a talented and driven individual, held the prestigious position of global head of talent acquisition at a multinational company in the bustling city of Paris. A graduate of a leading French business school, Matthieu was known for his exceptional skills and unwavering commitment to diversity and inclusion. He took great pride in his work, striving to create an equitable and inclusive workplace. However, a storm was brewing in the corridors of the corporate world, and it would soon present Matthieu with a profound ethical dilemma. It was a crisp autumn morning when he received a call from Greg Kraczynski, the company's Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). With a tone of excitement, Greg shared the news that the company was considering implementing HireVue, an AI-based video interview platform, for hiring and selection decisions. The promise of increased efficiency, objectivity, and time-saving benefits captivated the attention of the CHRO.

But as the conversation unfolded, Matthieu's heart sank. As an employee with immigrant parents and a person of color, he knew all too well the challenges and biases that individuals from underrepresented backgrounds often faced. His mind raced with concerns about the potential consequences of employing an AI system to evaluate candidates. Matthieu understood that AI systems heavily relied on vast datasets to train their algorithms. However, he also knew that these datasets might not have sufficient numbers of reliable observations for successful hiring of people from underrepresented backgrounds and non-native speakers, particularly candidates from African descent like himself. He was concerned that the lack of representation in the original dataset could lead to biased outcomes, perpetuating systemic discrimination and hindering diversity and inclusion efforts within the company. Moreover, Matthieu couldn't shake off the discomfort of interacting with a machine devoid of the warmth and human touch that genuine face-to-face interviews provided. His company was known and long appreciated for its human-centered approaches in all talent acquisition processes, including selection, hiring, and promotions. He strongly believed that true connection and understanding could only be achieved through personal interactions, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of a candidate's character beyond scripted answers or facial expressions captured by AI algorithms. Additionally, Matthieu had witnessed the success of cultural fit and value-based hiring practices, which had been instrumental in building cohesive teams and fostering a positive work culture. Based on this experience, he questioned the need for implementing AI-based interview platforms, as these traditional hiring approaches had already proven effective.

Matthieu's concerns were not unfounded. He had experienced firsthand the challenges and biases faced by underrepresented individuals in the hiring process. As a graduate from a leading business school in Paris, he had worked hard to overcome societal barriers and achieve professional success. He understood the value of a diverse workforce and the unique perspectives that individuals from different

backgrounds could bring to the table. Matthieu had seen the potential of AI technology to revolutionize various industries, but he also recognized its limitations and potential for unintended consequences. Determined to address these concerns, Matthieu embarked on a quest to educate himself further about the potential ethical and social implications of implementing HireVue. As a graduate from a leading business school in Paris, he knew the importance of critical thinking and informed decision-making. He delved into research, engaging with experts in the field, and studying the experiences of other organizations that had adopted AI-based interview platforms. The more he learned, the more convinced he became that a thoughtful approach was crucial to safeguard fairness, inclusivity, and humanity in the hiring process.

Armed with his newfound knowledge and an unwavering commitment to his principles, Matthieu decided to take action. He embarked on a mission to convince the CHRO and other upper management about the weaknesses and limitations of AI and facial recognition in hiring success. Matthieu diligently prepared a comprehensive report that highlighted the potential biases embedded in AI algorithms and the challenges of relying solely on facial recognition technology for assessing candidates. He emphasized that the original dataset used to train the AI system might not adequately represent the diversity of candidates, leading to biased outcomes and perpetuation of existing inequalities.

However, convincing the CHRO and other upper management was no easy task. Matthieu faced skepticism and resistance from some who saw AI as a solution to streamline the hiring process and remove human biases. He encountered reluctance to acknowledge the potential flaws and ethical concerns associated with AI-based interview platforms. Undeterred by the challenges, Matthieu persevered. He organized meetings, presentations, and discussions to present his findings and engage in thoughtful dialogue. He enlisted the support of colleagues who shared his concerns and together they formed a diverse task force dedicated to exploring alternative solutions and ensuring a fair and inclusive hiring process.

Matthieu's struggles, concerns and unwavering commitment to ethical hiring practices, unfortunately, went ignored and unnoticed within the upper management of the company. Despite his relentless efforts to raise awareness about the potential biases and limitations of AI-based interview platforms, he encountered resistance and skepticism from the CHRO and other decision-makers. It was disheartening for Matthieu to see his concerns brushed aside, especially given his deep understanding of the challenges faced by underrepresented individuals in the hiring process. He knew that implementing an AI-based platform without adequate safeguards could perpetuate biases and hinder the company's diversity and inclusion goals. Undeterred by the lack of support from upper management, Matthieu sought alternative ways to make a difference. Yet, he was not sure how he could continue to stay in his post and implement a technology that he believed counterproductive and not aligned with his own values.

HireVue, Facial Recognition in Selection

HireVue is an AI-based interview platform that leverages advanced technologies such as natural language processing, facial recognition, and machine learning algorithms to automate and streamline the hiring and selection processes. It allows organizations to conduct video interviews remotely, assess candidates' responses, and provide insights based on various data points captured during the interview.

Criticisms over the Use of AI-based Video Interviewing in Hiring

While AI-based interview platforms have gained popularity in the corporate world, they have also faced significant criticism and scrutiny. Some of the key criticisms are as follows:

- **Bias and Discrimination:** One of the most significant concerns surrounding AI-based interview platforms is the potential for bias and discrimination. AI systems are trained on existing data, which may include historical biases and discriminatory patterns. As a result, these biases can be inadvertently perpetuated, leading to unfair outcomes for certain groups, including people of color, women, individuals from marginalized backgrounds, and non-native speakers.
- **Lack of Transparency:** Another criticism leveled against AI-based interview platforms is the lack of transparency in how they make decisions. The complex algorithms and machine learning models used by these platforms often operate as "black boxes," making it challenging to understand the factors considered and how decisions are reached. This lack of transparency raises concerns about accountability and the ability to challenge or address biased outcomes.
- **Ethical Concerns:** The use of AI technology in hiring raises broader ethical concerns. For instance, the use of facial recognition algorithms to analyze candidates' facial expressions and micro-expressions during video interviews raises privacy and consent issues. There are concerns about the collection and storage of personal data and potential misuse or unauthorized access to sensitive information.
- **Reinforcement of Existing Biases:** AI-based interview platforms, if not designed and implemented carefully, can inadvertently reinforce existing biases in hiring practices. The reliance on historical data can perpetuate systemic discrimination and limit diversity in the workplace. This can result in missed opportunities to tap into talent from underrepresented groups and hinder efforts to build diverse and inclusive organizations.
- **Non-Native Speaker Disadvantage:** AI-based interview platforms may inherently disadvantage non-native speakers. These platforms often heavily rely on language proficiency as an indicator of a candidate's ability, which can unfairly favor native speakers or those with a strong command of the language. This bias can result in qualified non-native speakers being overlooked, hindering diversity and inclusion efforts within the company.
- **Tech Savviness and Access:** AI-based interview platforms may disproportionately favor candidates who are technologically savvy or have better access to the necessary equipment and internet connectivity. This can inadvertently disadvantage certain groups, such as individuals from low-income backgrounds or those with limited access to technology.
- **Legal and Regulatory Concerns:** The use of AI in hiring processes also raises legal and regulatory concerns. Companies need to navigate the complex landscape of data privacy laws, anti-discrimination regulations, and employment laws to ensure compliance and minimize legal risks associated with bias and discrimination. These concerns are particularly pertinent in light of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which emphasizes the protection of personal data and individuals' rights to privacy.

The Ethical Dilemma

Consequently, Matthieu Ayoude finds himself at the center of an ethical dilemma. On one hand, he recognizes the potential advantages of implementing an AI-based interview platform, which can automate various aspects of the recruitment process, save time, and increase objectivity. On the other hand, Ayoude is acutely aware of the existing biases within AI systems and fears that using such technology may exacerbate discrimination against people of color, non-native speakers, and individuals from marginalized backgrounds.

Discussion Topics

1. **AI and Bias:** Discuss the concept of bias in AI systems and the potential for discrimination. Highlight how seemingly objective algorithms can reflect and perpetuate societal biases, leading to unfair outcomes for certain groups.
2. **Impact on Diversity and Inclusion:** Analyze the implications of biased AI systems on diversity and inclusion efforts within organizations. Explore the importance of building diverse teams and the potential consequences of biased hiring practices.
3. **Legal and Reputational Risks:** Examine the legal and reputational risks associated with discriminatory AI practices. Discuss potential lawsuits, regulatory actions, and damage to the company's brand and public image.
4. **Ethical Responsibility:** Explore the ethical responsibilities of organizations and individuals when implementing AI technology. Should Matthieu prioritize the efficiency gains of AI or advocate for fair and unbiased recruitment practices?
5. **Mitigating Bias in AI Systems:** Discuss strategies to mitigate bias in AI systems, such as ensuring diverse and representative training data, ongoing monitoring, and accountability measures. Highlight the importance of involving ethicists and diverse stakeholders in the development and implementation of AI technology.
6. **Alternative Approaches:** Present alternative solutions to the dilemma, such as using AI as an assistive tool rather than a decision-making authority in the hiring process. Explore the benefits of combining human judgment and AI capabilities to achieve a more balanced and fair approach.