Course Name: AI in Human Resource Management

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Lec 41: Boon or Curse: Co-existence of HR & AI (Part-1)

Hello learners, welcome back to the course on AI in human resource management. We move almost to the last end of the particular course of AI in human resource management and typically for the last I had reserved a certain discussion on whether the coexistence of artificial intelligence and human resource management is at the boon or curse. Now this is a debatable topic at least for now but I would like to bring in different perspectives. Understand that it from different dimensions and see how we generally see it as a boon or a curse and how we can navigate if it is a curse.

So we will look deeply into what exactly AI and HR with the understanding we have made from the last few modules. I'll try to make it a refreshing approach with respect to the boon or curse when you are looking into the coexistence of HR and AI.

I'm Dr. Abraham Cyril Issac. I'm an assistant professor at the School of Business, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati. Now, when you look into the coexistence of HR and AI, we have to see that it is not mere technology that has come in.

It is more than that. With the influx of artificial intelligence and its technology, we see that there has been a lot of development with respect to the efficiency part of the organization. And specifically, that is a welcome move when you're looking into the traditional mundane activities, which was otherwise impossible. Very highly restrictive and there were not many of the creative practices that could have been there. But let's look into that from an angle where you see the coexistence of both.

Now let's define the coexistence of both of these separately. The first one to understand the basics would be the integration of AI in HR, which certainly sparks a debate. Now let's look into the rapid advancements. We have seen across the different modules the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence in HR, which has sparked a global debate. So the question is, can AI coexist harmoniously with HR functions, or does it create challenges that outweigh its advantages?

So this is the fundamental question which we would generally like to answer. And from this particular question emerges all the further discussions. So the question is central as companies try to integrate AI into HR workforce as organizations tend to amalgamate the technology and human resource management. So on one hand, AI promises efficiency and data-driven insights. On the other, it raises ethical concerns and fears of job displacement, making its role difficult.

In HR, a double-edged sword, if I may use the term. So basically, you see that there is a certain need for balance. And the need for balance is all about balancing AI's benefits and drawbacks. That is vital. That is critical.

Now, when you are looking into a well-integrated AI, it can optimize HR processes, freeing HR professionals for strategic work that enhances performance, workplace culture, and employee satisfaction. But let's say, if mismanaged, it risks creating resistance, reducing human interaction, and potentially harming organizational morale. So the goal of this particular discussion today is to explore whether AI—artificial intelligence—can truly act as an HR boon, driving positive outcomes, or if it's just a curse that disrupts the organization's harmony.

Now, let's understand it from the angle of positivity—that is, artificial intelligence as a boon in HR management. Now, when you talk about AI as a boon in HR management, please note we have to understand some critical differences artificial intelligence and the technology associated with that are bringing into the domain. A paradigm shift, which we are talking about, is the automation of routine tasks. Now, when you are looking into AI, it streamlines repetitive tasks like payroll, scheduling—which we have categorically

discussed in the previous module—and even data entry, reducing the administrative burden on HR teams.

So, by automating these time-consuming processes, AI increases productivity, allowing HR professionals to focus on strategic goals—be it employee development, employee retention, job enrichment, task interdependency, the increase of knowledge sharing, or whatever the case may be. You see that AI certainly increases efficiency and productivity to a great extent. Let's take an example to understand this. You know, AI-powered platforms—like what we have already seen, robotic process automation (RPA)—can specifically handle benefits processing or recruitment scheduling. So, you look into any HR angle, any HR dimension, which was otherwise very difficult to handle—let's say something like performance management, which, even with the possibility of objectivity it can have,

It was still difficult. So, those things specifically, and in general, the total HR, it has freed up a lot of time for the HR professionals as just discussed. So, this not only increases the accuracy by minimizing human error, but please note, it also ensures faster processing times, benefiting both HR and the employees. When we look into AI as a boon in HR management, we also have to understand it from an enhanced talent management angle. And how does it happen?

You know, AI certainly revolutionizes recruitment. We have seen that by screening resumes or ranking candidates based on skill alignment and potential cultural fit. So this, particularly if you ask me, helps HR teams manage large applicant pools effectively, reducing the time to hire and lowering recruitment costs. So, artificial intelligence typically helps reduce unconscious bias, fostering a fairer selection process.

And this can be understood by an example. Let me take an example here. You know, platforms like HireVue—if you have gone through the previous lectures, you will see that we have discussed HireVue or Pymetrics, for that matter. Use AI algorithms to assess candidates' soft skills and even, let's say, sometimes personality traits, helping organizations hire based on merit rather than, let's say, superficial first impressions. That could be a significant factor.

Another aspect would be employee engagement and retention. Now, the moment you are talking about artificial intelligence, it revolutionizes recruitment by screening resumes and ranking candidates based on skill alignment and potential cultural fit. So, this helps the human resource teams manage large applicant pools effectively and Reducing time to hire and lowering the recruitment cost. So, AI also helps reduce the possible unconscious bias which we were discussing before.

Fostering a fairer selection process. Again, let's take an example to understand it very clearly and in a crisp fashion. Platforms which we have seen with respect to The third aspect would be employee engagement and retention. When you are looking into employee engagement and retention, we see that artificial intelligence helps monitor and improve employee engagement through sentiment analysis and through predictive analytics.

So by assessing data from surveys, chat messages or feedback, Artificial intelligence can identify the trends such as, let's say, disengagement or high turnover risk, prompting timely intervention. An example could be AI tools which can analyze, let's say, employee feedback and suggest engagement strategies, enabling human resource to improve retention through initiatives like, let's say, personalized development plans or recognition programs, all informed by data-driven insights. Another such significant factor would be augmentation of decision making. Talk about AI.

It offers HR teams data-driven insights into workforce trends, enabling strategic decision-making. So it certainly helps predict outcomes of HR interventions, supports workforce planning, and to a certain extent, aligns HR efforts with broader business objectives. So if you look into people analytics platforms, like something we have discussed previously, such as Visya, it analyzes turnover rates, skill gaps, or employee performance, empowering HR to proactively manage talent and succession planning. Another significant factor that acts as a boon in HR management is the possibility it brings to learning and development.

Please note that we will introduce a different course altogether next semester regarding learning and development on the Swayam and PTL platform. But when you look into the

integration of AI in HR management, specifically, it acts as a boon. AI customizes learning pathways based on individual employee needs, enhancing the effectiveness of training programs. So certainly, it can identify skill gaps and recommend relevant training modules, fostering a culture of continuous learning. and supports employee growth.

So AI-driven platforms, like those used in Coursera for Business, suggest courses to employees based on their learning styles, career goals, and performance data, making learning more engaging and relevant, as we have already seen. Now let's take a diametrically opposite view to understand it better. Let's be the devil's advocate and see AI as a curse—challenges of integration in HR. The first one I can think of would be job displacement and role transformation. The imminent threat that is always narrated in all print and published media.

Now, when you are looking into AI's impact on HR roles, it can lead to job displacement as AI takes over tasks traditionally performed by humans. So employees, particularly those in, let's say, administrative roles, may feel their roles are at risk. Causing anxiety and resistance to AI adoption. Furthermore, if you think about it in greater detail, some roles may evolve, requiring HR professionals to develop new technical skills to work alongside AI effectively. That could be something that comes up very soon, and nobody is talking about it. You know, let's take an example: HR administrators who previously handled data entry. They may need to upskill in areas like data analysis to work with AI tools, fundamentally changing the scope of their role itself. So this could be the paradigm shift, which otherwise we are not looking into.

The second possibility of AI manifesting as a curse would be ethical and privacy concerns. You look into AI's use of employee data. For monitoring and typical analysis, it raises some ethical questions, specifically, let's say, questions regarding privacy. Now, continuous monitoring can create a surveillance culture, undermining the trust between employees and management. So striking a balance between data insights and respecting employee privacy is vital.

Let's take an example to understand this. You know, when you're looking into sentiment analysis tools that monitor employee emails or messages for tone and mood, it can feel

invasive if not transparently communicated. So clear guidelines on how this data will be used are vital to maintain employee trust. Now, let's understand another point, which is resistance and reluctance to change, which we have seen as a major barrier, but it can definitely be treated as a curse also specific to the challenge of integration in HR. Now, when you're looking into resistance and reluctance to change, we see that employees may resist AI, viewing it as a threat to their job security or as a tool that devalues their expertise.

So, this cultural resistance can hinder AI adoption and can create a divide between tech savvy employees and those less comfortable with AI tools. Now, the problem with this is that when you are looking into those people who have spent years of their service in particular organization, suddenly will feel threatened that This is beyond their scope or they cannot actually understand this or learn the tools or how it operates or they are not at an age where they can actually imbibe the required nuances of the AI technology and tools. So that would be a threat that would actually elicit the resistance and reluctance to change that would also actually trigger the possible repercussions or possible way to fight against AI.

So let's take an example. Traditional HR staff may feel alienated also if AI implementation isn't accompanied by adequate training. So we are talking about a situation where even they are skeptical about About the training that can come in and and it might be the case that they might not be able to actually learn something Because they are not open to it. So this can lead to disconnect within HR departments affecting the overall team dynamics and Productivity and we can also see this from a increased dependence on technology you know when you are looking into over reliance

On AI, it may reduce the role of the human judgment in HR, especially in areas which actually, you know, if you ask me, requires empathy, such as conflict resolution and counseling for that matter. So AI lacks the emotional intelligence and context understanding crucial in these areas. So when you are looking into AI specifically and context understanding, Specifically, these two are very critical in case of an HR department. So many a time what would happen is that this could be a problem where you are, you know, overly relying on technology and things like.

You know, situations that warrant the need for empathy would be, you know, just an oversight. So, AI lacks the emotional intelligence and context understanding crucial in these areas. When you are using AI, let's understand this again with an example. When you are using AI to assess performance through quantitative metrics, it may overlook the individual circumstances affecting the employee's performance. You know, many times what happens is that, and this, I think, would warrant a certain discussion.

Many times what happens is that there are some situations which actually warrant a human touch. There might be situations where an individual is not able to perform maybe one task. He is not trained well. Two, maybe he is having a bad day altogether. Three, maybe there are situations in which, you know, he might be going through a different phase in his life altogether.

Or four, maybe there are situations which are certainly oppressive in the working conditions. So, there are conditions or there are situations or contexts where AI, which lacks emotional intelligence, may not be able to cope with this particular thing. So, this is where the human touch is essential. This is where AI has a certain level of limitation, and many times when we look into the over-dependence on technology for the sake of objectivity, there are some instances where the subjective measures are discarded, and those subjective measures actually make a difference.

Many a time in the research methodology course also I used to tell this as an example. You have to find out let's say about a strategic decision Made by a company, an organization to expand to another country. Let's say Indian organization is trying to expand to Sri Lanka. Now, whom should you actually, you know, ask about this?

Let's say if you're conducting a research study with respect to this subject. looking into the strategic initiatives of organization ABC then whom should you actually ask should you ask inquire all the 10,000 workers who are working you should should you actually survey all the 10,000 workers or should you actually ask The board of governors or the chosen directors who are actually in charge or are responsible for that particular decision. The answer is simple. You have to ask only the board of directors in this particular case.

So here you need to know whom to ask. Similarly, there is a question or a query related to working conditions. You know, people are complaining that the working conditions are not good in an organization. Whom should you ask? Whom should you survey?

Should you ask the board of governors in that case, or should you actually go for a survey of most of the people? In fact, the entire population if possible, otherwise a sample of those who are actually going through this or the workers in general. So, many a time, the answer would be to ask the workers because that is where the actual data lies. So, this is the problem exactly with AI, or I would say, rather in a general way, over-dependence on technology. We lose the emotional touch, and as a human resource management professional,

That would be the dead end for you. Human resource management professional, whatever the problems the organization is facing, whatever the issues the organization is raising with you or maybe creating for you. But as a human resource management professional, you cannot—you simply cannot lose the human touch. And that is sometimes seen as a curse for AI. Now, let's look into some of the practical implementations, as we are in the last part of our course.

Let's look into some.