

Ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence and HR analytics in human resource decision-making: A quantitative systematic literature review using PRISMA

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Abstract: Ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) and human resources (HR) in decision-making has been a topical issue. However, there remains a limited systematic literature review on this. Hence, this study conducted a quantitative systematic review guided by PRISMA 2020 to develop an understanding of trends in publications in this area. 70 empirical studies conducted between 2022 and 2026, published in journals indexed by Scopus and Web of Science, were deemed eligible for the study. The results show that research on ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics is on an upward trajectory. The research also found that most of these studies have been conducted in Asia and Europe. The study also established that the primary HR function studied is recruitment and selection, while the main ethical issue is privacy and surveillance. This study suggests that HR practitioners, managers, and policymakers should develop robust governance mechanisms to ensure the ethical use of AI and HR analytics.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Ethics, Decision-making, Human resource analytics, Human resource management, Surveillance.

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) and human resources (HR) analytics have transformed decision-making in human resources management. Studies have indicated that artificial intelligence improves the quality and speed of decision-making [1]. Researchers have also indicated that implementing HR analytics is essential for decision-making [2]. Artificial intelligence is the use of chatbots, machines, and/or computer systems to perform functions and tasks that require human intelligence, such as reasoning and problem-solving [3]. HR professionals are using artificial intelligence in recruitment, selection, performance management, and training and development [4]. Studies have shown that the greater the use of artificial intelligence in human resources management practices, the better the human resources outcome [5].

On the other hand, human resources analytics refers to the use of quantitative methods in human resources interventions [6]. Human resources analytics involves using historical data to inform interventions that enhance employee performance [7]. This is divided into four equally important types: descriptive analytics, diagnostic analytics, predictive analytics, and prescriptive analytics. Research suggests that proper implementation of HR analytics improves decision-making [8].

Despite empirical research demonstrating the significance of both artificial intelligence and HR analytics in decision-making, researchers have also highlighted the need for ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics [9]. This is because employee data in HR analytics and artificial intelligence are sensitive. Second, the use of HR analytics and artificial intelligence involves software that may exhibit algorithmic bias [10, 11]. This bias can be racial and gender-based [12]. Third, the implementation of HR analytics and artificial intelligence can raise privacy concerns when there is excessive surveillance of

employees. Furthermore, data used in decision-making may be inaccurate [13]. Hence, there is a need to conduct a quantitative systematic literature review on the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence and HR analytics in human resource decision-making. The following objectives guide the research:

1. To establish the annual publication trends of research on the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence and HR analytics in human resource decision-making from 2022 to 2026.
2. To examine the methodologies used by the empirical studies from 2022 to 2026.
3. To determine the geographical distribution of the empirical studies from 2022 to 2026.
4. To identify the frequently studied ethical issues in AI and HR analytics-based human resource decision-making from 2022 to 2026.
5. To establish the distribution of empirical studies across different HR functions from 2022 to 2026.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ethical and Responsible Use of AI and HR Analytics

The continuous use of AI and HR analytics in human resources management has enhanced evidence-driven decision-making [14]. However, research recommends that technological advancement be accompanied by ethical and responsible implementation. When AI and HR analytics are used responsibly, there is minimal harm, and ethical principles such as fairness, transparency, privacy, and accountability are promoted [15]. In a systematic literature review by Bujold, et al. [16] on responsible AI in HRM, bias and discrimination, perceived justice and trust, privacy, explainability and transparency, and the human role are identified as key dimensions for ethical and responsible use of AI. However, 63 of the 107 empirical studies reviewed by Bujold, et al. [16] did not directly address the responsible use of AI in HRM, suggesting that empirical research on AI in human resources management has not received adequate attention. There have been similar ethical concerns about HR analytics. For example, Tursunbayeva, et al. [17] observe that research in HR analytics remains underdeveloped, despite increased adoption. Seminal work by Tursunbayeva, et al. [17] elucidates that ethical concerns such as transparency, security, privacy, stakeholder involvement, and legal compliance are critical in the implementation of HR analytics.

2.3. Fairness and Algorithmic Bias

One of the major ethical concerns in implementing AI in HR decision-making is fairness [18]. It has been argued that algorithms are objective because they produce data-driven, computational decisions [4]. However, this may not be accurate because they are trained using historical data, which can reproduce biases [6]. This may result in errors in recruitment, promotion, and other decisions that affect employee productivity. In an experimental study by Ochmann, et al. [19], various dimensions of organizational justice were found to influence employees' perceptions of algorithmic fairness. They indicate that the more transparent the algorithm, the fairer the perceptions. Kekez, et al. [20], in a systematic literature review of 64 studies, conclude that bias and discrimination were not clearly defined and demonstrate that AI bias and discrimination were related to gender and race.

2.4. Transparency

Another key dimension in responsible and ethical AI and HR analytics implementation is transparency [12]. Transparency is the degree to which employees and other stakeholders understand how AI and HR analytics are used in decision-making [2]. Without transparency, it is difficult for stakeholders to understand why decisions have been made Agwu [8]. Bujold, et al. [16] establish that there is a need for the responsible use of AI to ensure explainability and transparency. This is supported by Tursunbayeva, et al. [17], who demonstrate the need for transparency in people analytics. Ochmann et al. [19] buttress this by indicating the need for transparency in recruitment decisions.

2.5. Privacy

In addition, privacy is essential in HR analytics [13]. This is because HR analytics involves the collection and analysis of employee data [2]. Firms have access to information on performance, attendance, productivity, and other important employee data [12]. Since this information is key to decision-making, its inappropriate use may raise privacy and surveillance concerns Scaf and Vasconcellos [3]. Chatterjee, et al. [21] investigated the negative consequences of HR analytics from a privacy perspective and found that increased use of employee data may heighten privacy and data security concerns. This is also noted by Tursunbayeva, et al. [17], who demonstrate the need to respect employee privacy in people analytics.

2.6. Current Systematic Review Evidence

Available systematic reviews indicate growing scholarly interest in AI and HR analytics [10]. However, different researchers approach AI and HR analytics from different angles. For example, Bujold, et al. [16] reviewed 107 empirical studies on responsible AI in human resources management. Their focus was on AI applications, ethical principles, methodologies, countries, and HR functions. On the other hand, Tursunbayeva, et al. [17] conducted a scoping review on people analytics. In contrast, Espegren and Hugosson [22] conducted a systematic review of 100 publications on HR analytics, focusing on its implementation without considering ethical and responsible HR decision-making. Kekez, et al. [20] utilized PRISMA to review 64 research papers. They focused only on bias and discrimination in the implementation of AI in human resources management, without investigating the broader range of ethical issues in AI and HR analytics.

2.7. Gap Analysis

Despite the growth in research on AI, HR analytics, and their ethical implications, gaps remain in the existing literature. First, there is a temporal gap, as systematic literature reviews need to be updated. For example, Bujold, et al. [16] included only literature up to June 2022. Given the rapid expansion of HR analytics and the use of AI, there is a need for an updated analysis. Second, an integration gap exists in the research on AI and HR analytics. Available reviews examine these two areas separately. For example, Bujold, et al. [16] focus on AI in human resources management, while Espegren and Hugosson [22] focus on HR analytics. Thus, there is a lack of reviews that combine AI and HR analytics, particularly in investigating their ethical concerns.

Third, there is an ethical coverage gap. For example, some reviews focus on individual ethical issues. Kekez, et al. [20] focus solely on bias and discrimination. In contrast, ethical concerns in HR analytics and AI in HR decision-making are broad and may include fairness, bias, transparency, privacy, trust, and other ethical issues. Fourth, there is a quantitative evidence-mapping gap. Existing reviews provide conceptual, thematic, and systematic syntheses, leaving a gap for an updated review that includes descriptive quantitative analysis. Thus, the study addresses this gap by utilizing PRISMA to identify eligible empirical studies published between 2022 and 2026.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research adopts a quantitative systematic literature review based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework. The basis for using a quantitative systematic literature review was that the research aimed to identify trends and patterns in the available literature. A quantitative systematic literature review would address publication trends, geographical distribution, ethical issues examined, human resource management functions investigated, methodological approaches used, citation patterns, and the tools and applications used in implementing AI and HR analytics, as observed by various researchers. PRISMA 2020 was utilized because it enhances rigor, transparency, and reproducibility in the processes of identifying, screening, assessing eligibility, and including empirical studies.

3.2. Search Period and Information Sources

The literature search for this study was conducted using the Web of Science and Scopus databases because they have wide coverage of peer-reviewed scholarly literature. In addition, the databases were selected because they allow easy identification of journals together with their indexing and quality indicators. This literature review was limited to empirical research articles published between 01 January 2022 and 31 July 2026 (5 years). These five years were preferred because they allowed for the assessment of recent trends and studies on AI and HR analytics within human resource decision-making. In addition, only journals ranked from Quartile 1 (Q1) to Quartile 4 (Q4) in the Web of Science and Scopus databases were considered for inclusion. This restriction allowed the review to focus only on established, high-quality research articles.

3.3. Search Strategy

The literature search strategy was based on the concepts addressed by the research: artificial intelligence (AI), HR analytics, human resource management, decision-making, and ethical and/or responsible use. During the literature search, Boolean operators, which were 'AND' and 'OR,' were used to search and retrieve relevant literature. In addition, the search strings were adapted to the search functions and syntax of Scopus and Web of Science databases. The bibliographic data for the retrieved research articles were documented to facilitate the identification of duplicates and subsequent screening.

3.4. PRISMA Process

The research followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, which include identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The first stage involved identifying research articles. Research articles were retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science using predetermined search terms. The aggregate number of articles obtained from each database was recorded. Then, the records were combined to identify and remove duplicates. Furthermore, records published outside the publication period from 01 January 2022 – 31 July 2026 were ineligible and removed. Furthermore, publications not based on primary data were removed. The second phase involved screening. Screening was based on the articles' titles and abstracts. These were measured against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Empirical research articles that did not relate to AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making were removed. In addition, empirical research that did not cover the ethical and responsible use of AI and/or HR analytics was also removed. Furthermore, articles published in journals that were not indexed as Q1 or Q2 in Scopus and/or Web of Science were also excluded. The records that remained after screening based on titles and abstracts had their full texts assessed. At this stage, the research articles were assessed to ensure that they met the research objectives. In addition, articles whose full texts could not be accessed were excluded. All articles that satisfied the eligibility criteria were included. The final sample consisted of articles based on empirical reviews. The total number of records identified, duplicates removed, records screened, full-text research articles assessed, full-text articles excluded, and articles included were reported using the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram.

3.5. Inclusion Criteria

Only studies that satisfied the following criteria were included:

1. The studies were published between 01 January 2022 and 31 July 2026.
2. The research article was peer-reviewed.
3. The research article was published in a Q1 to Q4-ranked journal.
4. The journal must be indexed in Scopus and Web of Science.
5. The research article was available and was accessed in full text.
6. The research article was on artificial intelligence, HR analytics, people analytics, and/or workforce analytics for human resource decision-making within a human resource management context.
7. The article addressed the ethical and responsible use of AI or HR analytics.

8. The research was based on empirical evidence.

3.6. *Exclusion Criteria*

Studies that met the following conditions were excluded:

1. Articles published before 01 January 2022 or after 31 July 2026.
2. Articles that were unranked.
3. Articles not indexed by Scopus and Web of Science.
4. Book chapters, conference papers and/or proceedings, dissertations, editorials, working papers, magazine articles, commentaries, opinion pieces, reports, and preprints.
5. Articles whose full text could not be accessed.
6. Articles published in a language other than English.
7. Research articles that do not connect AI and HR analytics to human resource decision-making.
8. Articles not addressing ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics.
9. Duplicates appearing in both databases.

3.7. *Data Extraction*

In this research, a standardized data extraction form was developed. This form enhanced the consistency of recording information from the eligible research articles. The information extracted included: author(s), year of publication, journal name, journal quartile, database indexing, country, geographical context, methodology used, sample size, HR function, AI or HR analytics application, ethical issue(s) researched, and citation information.

3.8. *Data Analysis*

After data extraction, descriptive quantitative techniques such as distributions, frequencies, and percentages were used to analyze the final records. This was important because it allowed for the identification of research trends and patterns. The findings are presented in frequency tables, percentages, charts, and other descriptive visualizations.

3.9. *Rigor and Reliability*

Numerous measures were implemented to ensure the rigor of the research. The first stage involved using predetermined search terms, publication dates, databases, and inclusion criteria before conducting the study. The second measure was to ensure that the inclusion and exclusion criteria were adhered to throughout the process, particularly during screening of titles, abstracts, and full texts. Third, all duplicates were removed before the final analysis. Fourth, a standardized data-extraction form was used during the research.

4. **Results and Discussion**

Figure 1 below shows the systematic literature review process.

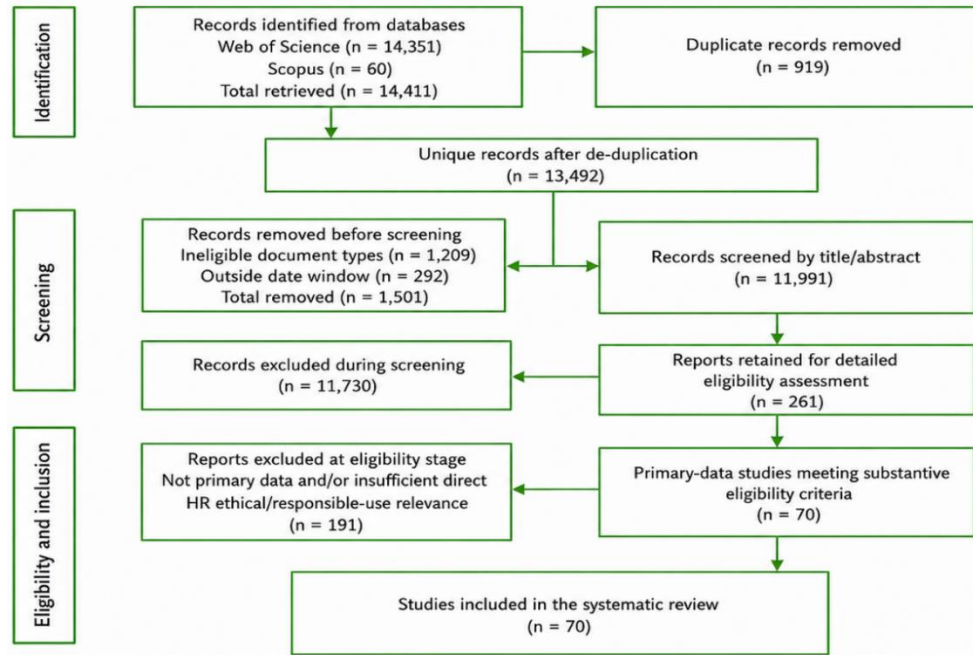


Figure 1.
Systematic literature review using PRISMA (2020).

A total of 14,411 records were identified from the two database searches. Web of Science results were excessive, with more than 24,000 records, and were therefore limited to records in two areas: Computer Science and Business and Economics. 14,315 were obtained from Web of Science, while 60 records were from Scopus. After this, 919 duplicates were removed based on DOI and title, leaving only 13,492 records. Before screening, 1,501 records were removed, including 1,209 ineligible records and 292 outside the specified period. This resulted in 11,991 records remaining and available for abstract screening. Furthermore, 11,730 of these records were excluded because they did not address ethical concerns related to the implementation of AI or HR analytics. This resulted in 261 records proceeding to a detailed eligibility assessment. After the eligibility assessment, 191 records were excluded because they were not based on primary and empirical data. This resulted in 70 studies remaining and meeting the eligibility criteria.

4.1. Annual Publication Trends

Figure 2 below shows annual publication trends.

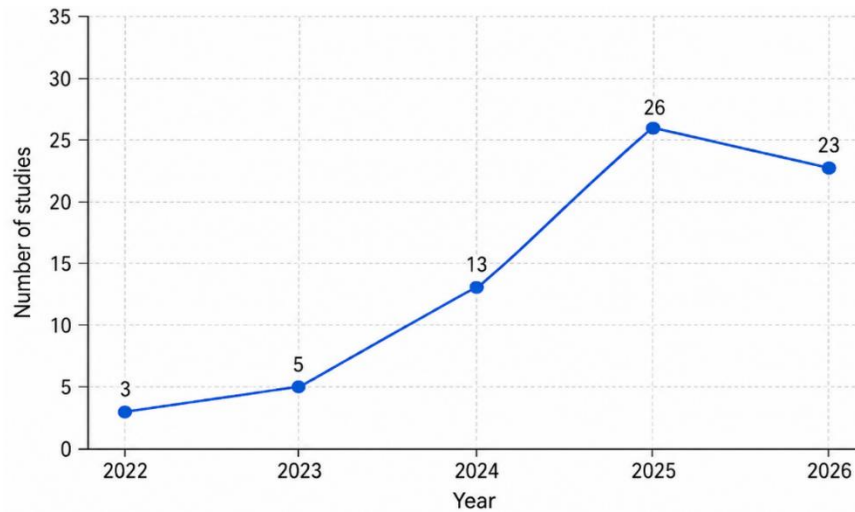


Figure 2.
Annual publication trends.

The results demonstrate a clear upward trajectory in research on the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making. This may be because the field of ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making is recent and expanding. Output in 2022 and 2023 was low because the field was in its infancy. This resonates with Scaf and Vasconcellos [3], who state that the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics remained steady and slow during this period. Then, in 2024 and 2025, this field grew as more and more organizations adopted AI and HR analytics in their HR decision-making, and concerns about the ethical and responsible implementation of these tools were on the rise. This is in agreement with Agwu [8], who reports that more organizations are adopting AI and HR analytics. In 2026, the number of publications was lower than in 2025. This is because publications recorded for 2026 were up to 31 July. Therefore, 2026 is projected to have more output on the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making than in 2025.

4.2. Methodologies Used

Figure 3 below shows the methodologies used by researchers studying the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making.

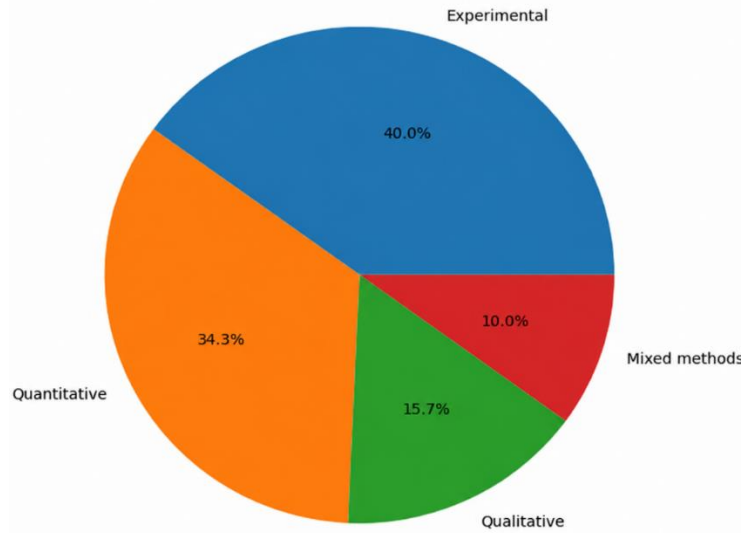


Figure 3.
Methodologies used.

Figure 3 shows that the main methodology used is experimental. This indicates that ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making is a practical field that requires experimentation. This was followed by quantitative research, in which the researchers sought objective truths about the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making. Qualitative research and mixed-methods studies on the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making have been relatively limited. Hence, there is a need for more studies that use these methods to generate further insights into the experiences of employees, managers, and stakeholders regarding the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making.

4.3. Quartiles

Figure 4 below shows the journal ranking trends for publications on the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making.

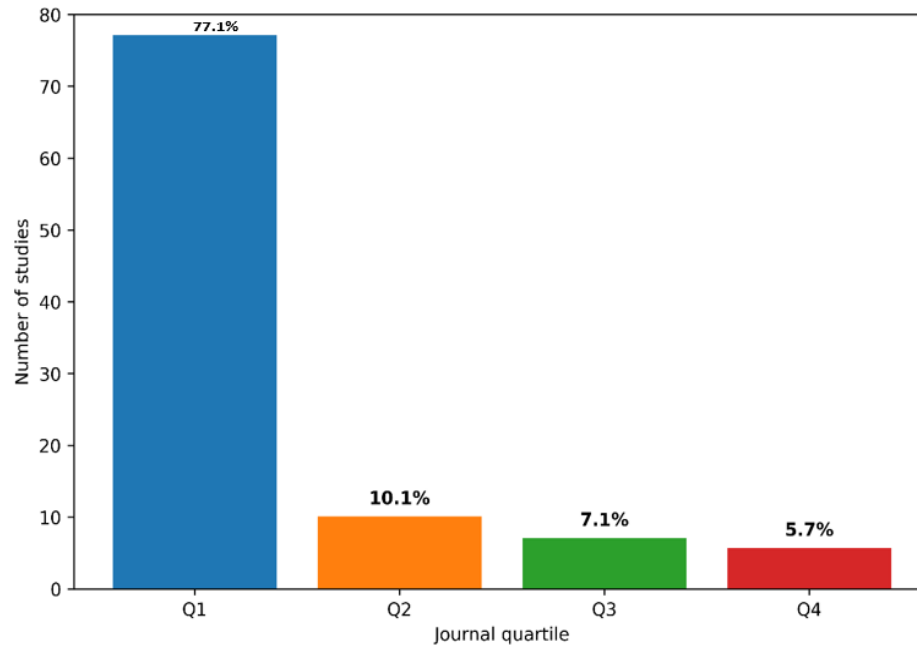


Figure 4.
Journal ranking trends.

Figure 4 above indicates that studies on the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making are being published in high-impact journals (Q1-77.1%). This indicates that the topic of ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making has received substantial scholarship, characterized by serious inquiry [4].

4.4. Geographical Trends

Figure 5 shows the geographic distribution of research publications on ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making.

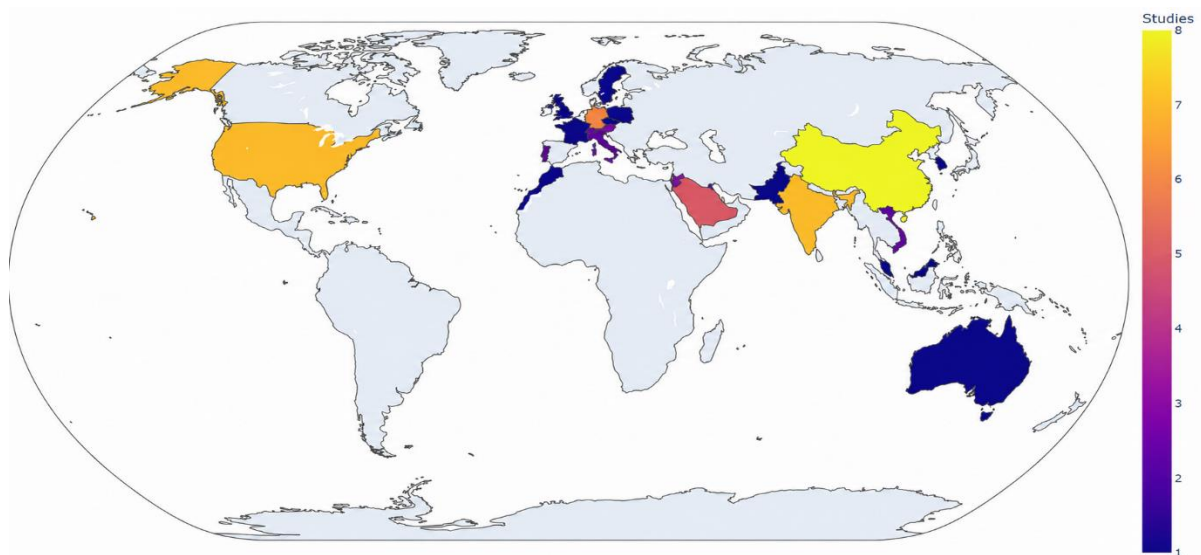


Figure 5.
Geographic distribution of publications.

Figure 5 shows the geographic distribution of publications on ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making. Research on ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making is global but is unevenly distributed. Asia has the most studies (30), followed by Europe (20) and North America (6). Both Africa and North America had 1 study; 10 studies focused on 2 or more continents, and 2 studies were unspecified. It can therefore be deduced that research on the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in human resource decision-making is strong in Asia and Europe, but there is a need for more studies on North America, Africa, and Oceania [6].

4.5. Ethical Issues

Figure 6 below shows the ethical issues researched.

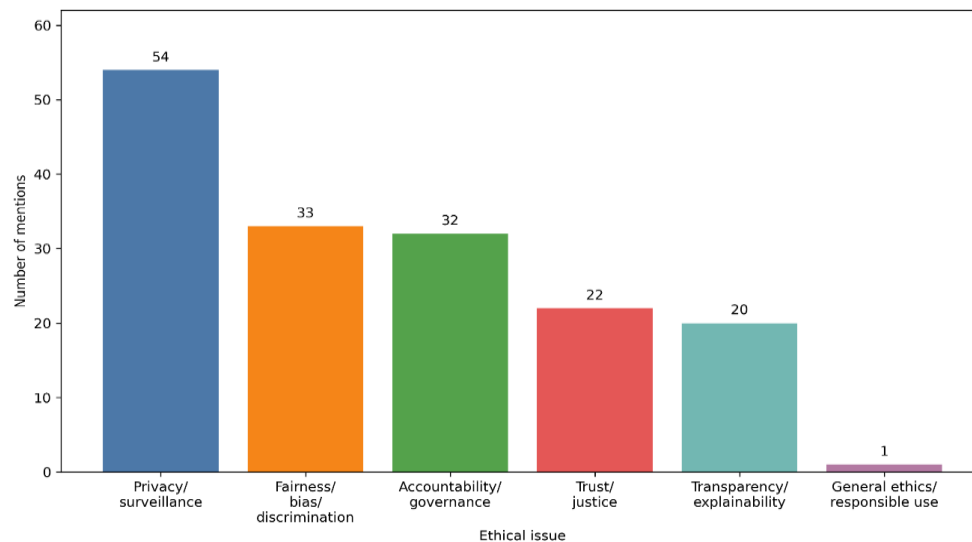


Figure 6.
Frequency of ethical issues.

The most frequently studied ethical issues are privacy and surveillance, which have been mentioned 54 times. This resonates with existing literature indicating that employees and other stakeholders are concerned about the use of HR analytics and AI, particularly regarding excessive surveillance and privacy issues [4]. This issue was followed by fairness, bias, and discrimination, which were mentioned 33 times. This is in line with existing studies by Muchowe, et al. [6] and Agwu [8] that HR analytics and AI result in discrimination and a lack of fairness. Accountability and governance were mentioned 32 times; trust and justice, 22 times; transparency and explainability, 20 times; and general ethics was researched once. This corroborates the existing body of literature that AI and HR analytics should be used responsibly in decision-making, as they may raise governance, justice, and transparency issues [2].

4.6. Distribution of Studies Across HR Functions

Table 1.

Distribution of studies across HR functions.

HR function	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Recruitment and selection	54	77.1
General HRM	7	10.0
Workforce planning	6	8.6
Performance management	2	2.9
Retention and turnover	1	1.4
Total	70	100.0

Table 1 above shows that the largest concentration of studies on ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in decision-making is in recruitment and selection. This resonates with studies by Naoum, et al. [1], which indicate that AI is becoming a topic of concern in recruitment and selection due to issues of diversity and exclusion. However, 10% of the studies have focused on general human resources management, 8.6% on workforce planning, and a minority on performance management, retention, and turnover. HR analytics and AI affect recruitment and selection [8]. There is a need for growth in scholarship on the ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in decision-making, as well as in other HR functions such as career management, training and development, and reward management.

5. Contributions

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to theory by blending the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence and HR analytics in human resource decision-making. Existing scholarship has studied the two separately. By combining the two, the research consolidates the ethical dimensions of surveillance, privacy, fairness, and governance. This, in turn, provides a broader understanding of publication trends on ethical issues in HR analytics and AI.

5.2. Methodological Contributions

Methodologically, this research employs a quantitative systematic literature review that follows PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The research screened and analyzed 70 eligible empirical studies retrieved from the Scopus and Web of Science databases and ultimately provided quantitative evidence on the ethical issues and HR functions examined.

5.3. Practical Implications

The practical implications of this research are that it provides HR professionals, managers, and policymakers with guidance on ethical risks involved in using AI and HR analytics in decision-making. For example, they need to pay attention to privacy and surveillance and to fairness and transparency when implementing AI and HR analytics. Organizations should develop governance mechanisms to ensure transparency, accountability, and the protection of employee data.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The research has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its results. First, the research was limited to peer-reviewed, English-language empirical studies published between January 2022 and July 2026 in journals indexed by Scopus and Web of Science. Second, the search in Web of Science was limited to Computer Science, Business, and Economics due to the high number of records. This may have excluded key interdisciplinary studies. Third, the research employed a quantitative, systematic literature review focused solely on trends. Future studies must extend the

search to additional databases, such as DOAJ, and use a qualitative systematic study to generate deeper insights.

6. Conclusion

Research on ethical and responsible use of AI and HR analytics in HR decision-making has grown rapidly between 2022 and 2026. Despite this, the evidence shows that the methodologies used remain uneven, with existing scholarship relying on quantitative and experimental approaches. In addition, more research has been conducted in Asia and Europe, and most of these studies have focused on decision-making in recruitment and selection, as well as ethical issues such as privacy and surveillance. Future scholarship should use approaches such as qualitative research, be conducted in underrepresented geographical regions, and incorporate other HR functions such as training and development, career management, and reward management.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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