ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND RÉSUMÉ CRITIQUE EXPERIENCE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Résumé critiques are one of the most popular services offered by career services at post-secondary institutions. Researchers wanted to know if using an artificial intelligence-based ("AI") résumé critique tool prior to an in-person critique would influence the student's critique experience and learning outcomes. Results show that while the AI tool did help with aspects of the student's writing (like spelling, formatting, and word choice), it didn't influence the time spent on more strategic and impactful aspects of developing a résumé during the in-person critique. Using an AI tool also didn't influence the students experience of the in-person résumé critique. Students preferred the in-person critique and would be more likely recommend it over an AI tool.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

Short in-person résumé critiques are commonly offered in post-secondary career service departments. They are one of the most popular services, and students look for help on spelling, formatting, and word choice (tactical feedback), as well as help on how best to communicate their skills and previous experience to a potential employer (strategic feedback). Since these résumé critiques are around fifteen minutes, there is usually not enough time to review both the tactical and strategic aspects of a résumé. The researchers wanted to know if using an AI tool before an in-person critique would influence students' experience of the in-person critique and their learning outcomes. Specifically, they wanted to know if the career services staff could provide more strategic feedback during the in-person critique if the AI tool could provide feedback on the tactical aspects.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers did a study with 60 undergraduate engineering students at the University of Waterloo. The students were in a co-operative education program where they alternate academic and work terms, and often use career services for résumé critiques to help with their co-op job search.

The students in the study were assigned to one of two groups. The first group used the AI tool before their in-person critique. The second group only had an in-person critique. The researchers then asked both groups and the career services staff about their experience. The researchers looked at different measures to assess the experience among the two groups and the staff, including:

- Whether the in-person critique feedback was tactical or strategic
- What learning outcomes were reported by students in both groups
- How knowledgeable and motivated were the students about their résumés before and after the critique—and did the staff feel there was a change in student knowledge and motivation before and after the critiques
- How the staff rated the in-person critique conversation—what is surface conversation or deep conversation?
- Would the students be willing to recommend the AI tool or the in-person critique, or both?

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The AI tool mostly helped students with their résumé writing—things like spelling, formatting, and word choice. Results showed that using the AI tool before an in-person critique did not influence whether there was more time for strategic feedback in the in-person critique. The AI tool did influence students' reported learning outcomes (it helped them with writing), but not enough to increase the amount of strategic feedback in the in-person critique. In fact, using the AI tool before the in-person critique seem to make the students more focussed on things like spelling and grammar, rather than communicating their skills and reflecting on strategic aspects of the résumé, which is more impactful in finding a job.

The researchers found clear evidence that the in-person résumé critiques were helpful. Both knowledge and motivation were reported to be higher by students after the in-person critique, and staff perceptions of the student's knowledge and motivation were higher too.

Students seemed to respond more positively to the in-person critique, highlighting the support that career services staff can offer. Students were not more likely to recommend the résumé critique experience if it included the AI tool, and students were more likely to recommend the in-person critique over the AI tool.

While the AI tool may be appealing since it doesn't require staff's time and offers quick feedback, this study did not find evidence that it improved the students' experience, nor did it increase the amount of time spent on strategic improvements to the résumé.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

You can use this research to consider whether an AI-based résumé critique product would be beneficial to your career service department.

KEYWORDS

Career services, knowledge and skills, co-operative education, experiment

CITATION

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The Work-Learn Institute at the University of Waterloo is the only institute in the world dedicated to research on co-operative education and other forms of work-integrated learning.

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