Crowdsourced People Finder

Introduction:

"Where Are They?" is a startup company that uses crowdsourcing and artificial intelligence to locate criminals and terrorists. Initially, an AI chatbot will start conversations with people who are distant from the person in search to minimize suspicion. With the collected data, the AI can make predictions about where the person might be found. The company then depends on users to confirm/deny whether the person is present at that location. The company might expand the app to allow people to search for their lost family and friends. This would require the company to integrate the system with various genealogy sites. This company can help the government in finding criminals and terrorists, and help reunite many families and friends.

Ethical Background:

"Where Are They?" uses the ethical theory of utilitarianism for making its decisions. The app will be responsible for the exposure of many criminals, ultimately leading to their arrest. This will not only remove convicts from the streets which would prevent them from committing crimes in the future but also reduce overall crimes as one would be scared to commit them. This would be beneficial for the people as they will be safer. On the other hand, the app will also help lost family and friends reunite. This will yield the greatest benefit for the families and friends.

Some ethical issues are raised by this app such as lack of privacy, chances of data leaks, risk of safety, and misinformation. The private chats between the AI chatbot and someone related to the person in search can be viewed by employees which is a violation of privacy. If there is a data leak from the system, there is a chance that the person who identified a criminal might have their lives in danger if they want revenge. This also allows for risk of safety for the users. The app also requires the users to capture the image of the person which might compromise the users' intentions. There is also a chance that misinformation is spread through the app which would cause a waste of time for the police.

Facts of the Case:

To find a criminal, the app uses an AI chatbot posing as a long-lost friend to update the profile of the criminal. Extracting new information can be the reason for a criminal getting caught. When the AI chatbot can predict the location of the criminal, a message will be sent to all users of the app in the location to look for the criminal. If the criminal has this app installed, they can use this information to escape before the arrival of the police. This is a loophole in the app that needs to be fixed. One way to fix this would be to verify an account using government documentation.

Crowdsourcing is a great way to find criminals and lost family members as this increases the number of people looking for a person. There are apps like Nextdoor that allow neighbors to report anything suspicious in the neighborhood. This is also a way to let the police know about any suspicious activity happening in the neighborhood. According to Chief Sam Somers, the California Police Chief, "the crimes in the city (Sacramento) has gone down almost 24%." [1]

Using apps like "Where Are They?", the companies need to make sure that they are following codes of ethics. The following codes of ethics are the most relevant to this application:
1.1 Contribute to society and human well-being, acknowledging that all people are stakeholders in computing.[2]
1.7 Honor Confidentiality.[2]
2.8 Access computing and communication resources only when authorized or when compelled by the public good.[2]
3.1 Ensure that the public good is the central concern during all professional computing work.[2]

Stakeholders:

The stakeholders in this situation can be divided into decision-makers and indirect stakeholders. The decision-makers include government officials, the company CEO, company employees, and users of the app installed. Government officials have the duty of making sure that the privacy of individuals is maintained, no rules are broken, and criminals are caught if they are found. The officials have a perspective that includes emotional and functional values.[3] The CEO and employees must make sure that everything is working as it is supposed to and there are no data leaks regarding private information. The CEO has the right to shut down the application if the company and government officials deem it fit. The perspective of the company's employees is that of financial value. The duty of the users is to report any criminals if seen. They have the right to make decisions autonomously and ensure their safety first. The perspectives of the users are functional values.

The indirect stakeholders include criminals, lost family/friends, and citizens of the country. If someone can identify a criminal, there is a high chance that the criminal will be imprisoned. The perspectives of the criminals are that of emotional values. The lost family member or friend will be reunited with their loved ones. The perspectives of the lost family are emotional values. The citizens of the country are also a stakeholder in the app because the reduction in the number of criminals with ultimately lead to reduced crime rates making the country safer to live in. The perspectives of the decision-makers include emotional and functional values.

Comparative analysis of values, rights, and duties:

The app uses the principle of utilitarianism as it benefits the most people. To further describe it, the app uses act utilitarianism in which a person performs the acts that benefit the most people, regardless of personal feelings or societal constraints such as laws.[4] The stakeholders have values that include emotional, financial, and functional values. The government has emotional and functional values as they are responsible to provide security and increase stakeholders' productivity. The employees have financial value as they need to earn money to keep the company running and give their employees income. The users of the app have functional values as they have the choice to provide the image of any person. The criminals have emotional values as they provide a sense of security to other stakeholders. The lost family/friends have emotional values as it stimulates a feel-good factor. The citizens of the country experience emotional values as they have more security.

Principles and Virtues:

The app follows principles such as Beneficence, Respect for Autonomy, Justice, Deontology, and Casuist.[4] Using the app to report criminals and reunite loved ones will increase well over evil hence using the principle of beneficence. The users do not have to report a crime if their life can be at risk, hence using the principle of respect for autonomy. The criminals that will be imprisoned will be tried for their charges. This will result in fair actions being taken against the criminal using the principle of justice. It is the duty of a user to report a fugitive to local authorities using the principles of deontology. If we look at the previous examples of known criminals, they have continued to commit crimes until they are caught. This prompts the users to report them to the police which uses the principle of casuist.

Alternatives:

One of the ways a solution can be reached is by finding other means to gather information without using AI chatbots. Using this option would maintain the privacy of the users as their private conversations will not be read by others. There is a flaw in this solution as developing another way to gather information could take a long time while not being as effective. The developers could also create a new app for finding lost friends/family. This will allow there to be no confusion for users as one app is for criminals and the other is for lost friends and family. Another solution would be to go ahead with the project and use the same app for finding criminals and lost loved ones. This will prove to be easy for users as it will allow them to help more people.

The first solution would slow down the process of finding a criminal and hence would negatively impact the stakeholders like government, company, and citizens. The second solution would be better for the company as they would not have to change the app for finding criminals while creating a new app for finding lost ones. This way, they only have to integrate the system of one

app with various genealogy sites. They would still have to write an app which would take a lot of money and effort. However, for the users, it wouldn't be a good solution as they would have to download two apps each with only one feature. The last option would be better for the users as they would be able to submit reports of their findings on the same app. The government would be able to catch criminals at a quicker rate. The company would not have to write another application as they could just change the existing app.

The best solution that the company should go ahead with is to incorporate both functionalities in the same app. This is because no one would be willing to download two apps with only one functionality. There should be unique features that the app would have to differentiate between criminals and lost loved ones. Another feature that the app can incorporate in their app is to identify the people who were kidnapped. If a user sees someone who was kidnapped, they can report their finding and allow the police to help the captive.

Reflection and Conclusion:

The app "Where Are They?" is a great way to reduce the number of criminals in the country. It also allows users to reunite with a loved one. If the app becomes popular and used by most of the population, it would be very easy to imprison criminals. This would also introduce fear in someone who is thinking of committing a crime as it would be easy to find them.

The reason for the company being in an ethical dilemma is the fact that there is an increase in the number of crimes every year. It would be difficult for police officials to catch everyone on their own. Using the public allows them to catch criminals easily. The marketing executive brought up the idea of adding functionality to find lost loved ones. This was criticized by the CEO due to the risks of integrating the system with genealogy sites. The addition of this functionality to find lost family/friends would result in having more options for the future. Even if the information about criminals is not coming at the pace it is supposed to, the app will still keep working on looking for lost friends/family.

To minimize the dilemma, the company should make sure that the AI chatbot is working as it is supposed to and there are no data leaks. This would not only protect the users but also help catch more criminals. The new functionality should be added in the new update and should not change the previous functionality. There should be clear distinguishing factors between the two functionalities which would allow the users to pick the correct option.

References:

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