AI, JOB SECURITY AND THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the latest technological innovations that has come to stay side by side with human population in dealing with almost all human activities. As much as this development is hailed as making a huge impact in efficiency and massive output in production and service delivery, there is palpable fear that it is going to impede on human job security. This paper therefore examines the relationship between AI and job security, specifying the role that media plays in shaping public perception and policy decisions. The study anchors on media priming theory and utilizes a qualitative research method, including literature review and analysis of media coverage on AI and job security. The findings suggests that the media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion on the potential impact of AI on job security, and in turn, influencing policy decisions. The paper also discusses the limitations of current media coverage of this topic and proposes further research areas to better understand the role of the media in shaping public perception of AI and its impact on job security.

Key Words: AI, Job Security, Role, Media

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming various sectors by enhancing efficiency, enabling new functionalities, and optimizing operations. However, this rapid integration of AI technologies also raises significant concerns regarding job security. AI technologies, including machine learning, robotics, and natural language processing, are automating tasks previously performed by humans. Industries such as manufacturing, logistics, finance, and even creative fields are experiencing shifts due to AI-driven automation. In understudying AI and skilled employment in South Africa, Giwa and Ngepah (2024) noted that while AI technologies may generate employment opportunities and promote efficiency, they also introduce challenges and disruptions to the existing employment frameworks. This is relative to the uproar at the inception of computer when people feared that some clerical works among others, usually assigned manually would be done by one computer in less time. While the fear persisted, the quest to remain relevant grew, thereby forcing people to pursue the knowledge of computer and it's operations. It became a nececity since the world did not wait for those caught within the web of digital divide, thus the computer literacy enjoyed by all now. The pursuit for learning enhanced human capacity, competence and increased knowledge base, enabling people not only to be relevant but also to create jobs on different capacities and levels as well as become employers. Like a trend, the narrative continued to develope to laptop, to mini computer and to this point where we have the world in the palm of our hands. If we separate the computer mechanism we already know from AI, it becomes more confusing since there may not be a thin line between the two. One would not conveniently say that AI has not been with us for more than a

decade now if we were once overwhelmed by the mechanism of Fax machine. Considering how the fax took over the delivery of mails from postal agencies, it can only be appreciated than questioned. The email caped it all and here we can send mails to distant locations within split of seconds. Now we also meet virtually and interact with as many people as desired, as though physically, all thanks to zoom and google meet. Obviously it is artificial intelligence in action helping us to meet up with those seemingly impossible engagements, schedules and tasks. In the creative industries and arts, other sectors like engineering, health, mass media and even music industries one can attest that all is withnessing a turn around.

The eyebrows raised against AI in connection to job security increased when humanlike AI's were seen. The consciousness was arroused that human has got a replacement; if not, human beings have been working with AI which has been all encompassing, helping us everyday and delivering services for us. It only kept improving on capacities and facets.

The mass media has always been in the business of mediation and has through it's prowess profered alleviation in societal challenges thus this paper explores the impact of AI on job security and also examines the critical role the press plays in informing the public, shaping perceptions, and influencing policy debates in respect to AI and the envisaged 'menace' against Job security as well as it's resultant effects on the members of the society.

The health implications of fear can not be over emphasised. There are recorded cases of health hazards and even deaths caused by extreme fear. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as "scared to death" and is often linked to a sudden and severe physiological response to fear. In the words of Lyon and Bossone (2022), stress-Induced Cardiomyopathy (Takotsubo Syndrome) also known as "broken heart syndrome," is a health condition that can be triggered by extreme emotional stress, including fear. It mimics the symptoms of a heart attack and can be life-threatening. Fatal Arrhythmia is a case in the medical field where intense fear can lead to a sudden surge of adrenaline, which can cause the heart to beat erratically in susceptible individuals. (Myerburg & Castellans, 2008). While such cases are rare, they highlight the powerful impact that fear and psychological stress can have on the human body. These have necessitated the enquiry into this topic considering the level of fear already in the air over the emergence of AI.

In Africa, as observed by Nsude (2022), the arrival of AI carries with it that fear of falling further behind the developed economies, rather than the usual hopes and anticipation that herald new technology. This is because the fear that it will lead to loss of jobs by millions of people is strong.

Objective

The objective of this work therefore, is to create an environment where the people, through the intervention of the media, will not out of fear, lose their lives before they lose the said job which eventually may not be lost if the necessary measures are taken.

Method

This work hinges on a secondary research method. It is an empirical study based on the use of existing literature on AI, media and job related works.

Theoretical application

The media priming theory. this theory suggests that exposure to media content influences how people think and react to subsequent information. Essentially, the theory posits that media can prime certain ideas, issues, or frames of reference in the minds of the audience. (Scheufele, et all. 2007). When individuals are exposed to specific media messages, these messages activate related thoughts, feelings, and knowledge, making them more salient in the individual's memory. As a result, these primed concepts are more likely to influence their attitudes, judgments, and behaviors in future situations. This theory is often used to understand the short-term effects of media on public opinion and behavior. It is therefore not out of place that the media sensitizes the society about AI in relation to job security by raising hopes through intentionally packaged programmes targeted towards assuring the people that there is a way out in an AI overtaken environment. This on its own is an intervention in stamping out the fear against AI and safeguarding lives.

Connecting the Reports

Agunbiade and Onyekwena (2021) observed that although AI might cause job losses in some industries, it also has the potential to generate new employment opportunities and boost efficiency in fields like healthcare, education, and digital services. In the manufacturing sector, AI and robotics have significantly increased efficiency but also led to job displacement. For instance, automotive factories employing robots for assembly tasks have reduced the need for human labor. The press has covered these changes extensively, with stories ranging from technological advancements to the plight of displaced workers, influencing public opinion and policy discussions on workforce retraining programs.

AI in finance has revolutionized the fiance sector by improving operational efficiency, enhancing security and expanding financial services. While these AI assisted services have improved profitability and transactional convenience, it also reduced the demand for certain roles, such as data entry clerks and customer service representatives. Media coverage has highlighted the dual aspects of innovation and job displacement, prompting debates on the future of work and the necessity of reskilling initiatives.

Research on the impact of AI on job security has been conducted in various regions, including Nigeria and Africa at large and it explored how AI is reshaping the job landscape, both in terms of potential job displacement and the creation of new opportunities. The Congressional Research Service Report of 2020, in Nsude (2022) affirmed that Artificial intelligence (AI) is speedly developing the field of technology. It is attracting the attention of commercial investors, defense intellectuals, policymakers, and international competitors alike; this is evidenced by a number of recent initiatives. The International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science discusses the complex relationship between AI and employment in Africa. The study suggests that while AI may lead to job displacement in certain sectors, it also holds the potential to create new job opportunities and enhance productivity in others, such as healthcare, education, and digital services.

A report by Turkish Radio and Television Corporations, Africa edition (TRT Afrika) highlights sector-specific impacts in South Africa, noting that while jobs in retail, administrative support, and manufacturing are at risk, sectors like healthcare, construction, and education are expected to see significant job growth due to AI and technological advancements. This report also underscores the potential for AI to drive agricultural productivity through precision farming techniques, which could be critical for economies heavily reliant on agriculture.

In Nigeria, the role of AI in addressing security challenges has been a particular focus. AI technologies are being evaluated for their effectiveness in combating insurgencies and enhancing security (Open Edition Journals, 2021). The media's role in raising awareness about AI applications in security is also emphasized, suggesting that effective communication can help mitigate fears and promote the adoption of AI technologies.

Nigeria has the potentials for harnessing AI for economic growth, therefore, emphasizing the need for strategic investments in AI education and infrastructure to ensure that the country can leverage these technologies for development is paramount.

These studies indicate that while AI poses certain risks to job security, especially in routine and repetitive tasks, it also offers opportunities for creating new roles and enhancing efficiency in various sectors. Policymakers are encouraged to develop strategies that support workforce adaptation through education and training, ensuring that the benefits of AI can be broadly shared.

Positive Impacts of AI on Employment

Job creation. AI is creating new job categories, such as AI specialists, data scientists, and AI ethicists. These roles demand new skill sets, fostering educational and professional development. For instance, the rise of AI has led to increased demand for experts who can develop, implement, and maintain AI systems.

Additionally, entirely new industries and business models are emerging around AI technologies, offering fresh employment opportunities. The growth of AI startups is one example of how new economic ecosystems can develop, creating jobs in tech hubs worldwide

Efficiency and productivity. AI can enhance productivity by automating repetitive tasks, allowing human workers to focus on more complex and creative aspects of their jobs. For example, in healthcare, AI algorithms can analyze medical images faster and with greater accuracy than humans, freeing up doctors to spend more time with patients. In the agricultural sector, AI-driven technologies like precision farming are improving yields and reducing labor costs, which can lead to increased job opportunities in agricultural technology.

Economic growth. The integration of AI can lead to economic growth, potentially generating new employment opportunities across different sectors. Increased productivity and innovation can drive economic expansion, leading to the creation of jobs not directly related to AI. For instance, AI advancements in logistics can lead to more efficient supply chains, benefiting retailers and consumers alike, thereby boosting overall economic activity.

Negative Impacts of AI on Employment

Job Displacement. Routine and manual jobs are particularly vulnerable to automation, leading to significant job losses in certain industries. For example, in manufacturing, robots can perform repetitive tasks like assembly and packaging more efficiently than humans, reducing the need for human labor. The retail sector is also witnessing significant changes, with AI-driven systems like automated checkouts reducing the need for cashiers.

Skills Gap. There is a growing demand for workers with advanced technical skills, while many current workers may lack the necessary training, exacerbating unemployment and underemployment. This mismatch between the skills of the current workforce and the needs of an AI-driven economy is a significant challenge. For instance, many traditional manufacturing workers may not have the coding or data analysis skills required for new roles in AI-enhanced environments.

Economic Inequality. The benefits of AI might be unevenly distributed, leading to greater economic inequality. High-skilled workers in AI-related fields may see substantial income gains, while low-skilled workers face job insecurity. This disparity can lead to social and economic tensions, as those displaced by AI may struggle to find equivalent employment. For instance, tech giants like Google and Amazon are reaping substantial profits from AI, while low-wage workers in sectors like retail and transport face job insecurity.

The Role of the Press

The press plays a crucial role in how society perceives and responds to the impact of AI on job security. Through delibrate campaigns the press can engage in such roles categorized into these key functions as:

Informing the public.

Awareness and Education. The press educates the public about AI technologies and their implications for the job market. Accurate reporting can help individuals understand potential risks and opportunities. For instance, articles that explain how AI algorithms work and their applications in various industries can demystify the technology for the general public. The press can also highlight the importance of reskilling and upskilling, guiding workers towards educational resources and programs that can help them adapt to the changing job market.

Highlighting Trends. Journalists can identify and report on employment trends related to AI, providing valuable insights for workers, educators, and policymakers. Regular updates on how different industries are adopting AI and the resulting employment patterns can help stakeholders make informed decisions. For example, trend reports on the rise of remote work due to AI-enabled collaboration tools can prepare the workforce for future changes.

Shaping public perception

Balanced reporting. The press has a responsibility to present balanced views, highlighting both the potential benefits and drawbacks of AI. Sensationalism can lead to undue panic or unrealistic optimism. For instance, while it is important to report on job losses due to AI, it is equally crucial to cover stories of successful transitions and new job creation. Balanced reporting helps the public form a nuanced understanding of AI, avoiding extremes of technophobia or unchecked enthusiasm.

Human Stories. By sharing personal stories of workers affected by AI, the press can humanize the issue, making it more relatable and urgent for the public and policymakers. For example, profiles of workers who have successfully transitioned to new careers with the help of AI can provide inspiration and practical insights. Highlighting the challenges faced by displaced workers can generate empathy and support for policies aimed at helping these individuals.

Influencing policy debate.

Policy Advocacy. Investigative journalism can uncover the need for regulatory frameworks to manage the impact of AI on employment, advocating for policies that protect workers and promote fair economic growth. For instance, reports on the exploitation of gig economy workers can prompt discussions on labor rights and protections in an AI-driven job market. The press can also play a watchdog role, holding companies and governments accountable for their use of AI technologies and their impact on workers.

Platform for Discussion. The press provides a platform for diverse stakeholders, including experts, policymakers, and the public, to discuss and debate the implications of AI, fostering a more informed and democratic decision-making process. Opinion pieces, panel discussions, and interviews with key figures in AI and labor can facilitate a comprehensive dialogue on the future of work. Above all, the media should reach out to government bodieito create affordable and enabling environment for people to improve their skills and knowledge in order to be relevant.

By presenting different perspectives, the press can help build a consensus on the best ways to address the challenges and opportunities presented by AI.

Conclusion

AI's impact on job security is multifaceted, presenting both opportunities and challenges. The press plays a pivotal role in navigating this complex landscape by informing the public, shaping perceptions, and influencing policy debates. As AI continues to evolve, responsible journalism will be essential in ensuring a balanced discourse that prepares society for the future of work.

The collaboration between technologists, policymakers, educators, and the press will be crucial in addressing the challenges and maximizing the benefits of AI for all members of society. Through informed reporting and advocacy, the press can help steer the transition towards an inclusive and equitable AI-driven economy. By highlighting success stories, advocating for necessary policy changes, and ensuring a balanced and informed public discourse, the press can play a central role in shaping a future where AI contributes to widespread economic and social well-being.

Recommendations

The mass media should brace up to create awareness targeted at liberating the populace from the fear associated with the emergence of AI in connection with job security. This the media should do through educating and sensitisation programmes.

The media should also advocate for the government and policy makers to create enabling environment for further studies, skill acquisition that keeps people relevant and productivite as well as proper equipping of our tirtiary institutions with technological and robotic facilities to enhance not only competence but also creation of AI.

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