



ECOSOC TOPIC 2 CHAIR REPORT

International Labour Organisation
CHAIR: Jessica Knauss
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Chair Introduction

Dear All,

My name is Jessica Knauss and I am honored to be your head chair for this year's ECOSOC committee for the 2024 MUNISS conference. I am fifteen years old and currently attending Frankfurt International School. I am originally from Italy, but I have been living in Frankfurt, Germany since 2020. This will be my first experience at MUNISS. However, I have attended several conferences you might recognize, such as RRSMUN or THIMUN. This will be my second time participating in a conference as a Chair. My previous experience in this role was when I Chaired the Environmental Committee at FISMUN. I am very excited to meet you all and I hope that MUNISS 2024 will turn out to be a wonderful experience. Fingers crossed this research report will provide you with the useful information you need. Good luck and see you soon!

Best wishes,
Jessica Knauss



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Introduction

The use of technology is changing rapidly in today's world, not only in the job industry but also in our daily lives. With the further development of technology comes more automation which can have a very damaging effect on the job industry. This means machines are executing more and more tasks than people used to do. While this can make things faster and more efficient, it also means some people might lose their jobs. This is called job displacement. It's not just about losing jobs; it's also about how this affects society, who sustains the most damage, and how, on the other hand, we can make sure everyone benefits.

The topic can be broken down into different areas such as economics, sociology, and policy to further understand technology's impact. By doing this, we can figure out how to make sure everyone can thrive in a world where technology is changing how we work.

An article by Stefan Calimanu perfectly summarizes the effect of technology on economics when he says: "To stay competitive and thrive in the evolving economy, industries have had to adapt to these technological advancements, causing shifts in the way many industries function. Technology-driven impacts such as automation and digitalization have revolutionized processes, disrupted traditional industries, and caused significant job displacement. While the growing importance of data and analytics has demonstrated the key role technology now plays in decision-making and reshaping the business landscape." (Calimanu)

In addition to technology's economic impact, it also affects the social life of human beings and ultimately how we live our lives. "Technology has not spared the social institutions of its effects. The institutions of family, religion, morality, marriage, state, and property have been altered. Modern technology in taking away industry from the household has radically changed the family organization." Implementing technology into our day-to-day lives can drastically change our bodies, how we think, how we behave, how we interact with other people, and so much more. Technology can affect us positively, but also negatively in our environment. ("Technology and Society, Impact of Technology Change in Society")

"Digital transformation in public policy is not merely a shift in tools or methodology. Instead, it represents a cultural change that pushes governments towards constant innovation and adaptation in response to rapid societal changes," says Kumar Vivek in an article published by Medium titled Digital Transformation in Public Policy: A Journey of Progress and Challenges. In this article, Vivek discusses how technology can be used as an aid to help create and bring policies to action. Integrating different technologies into policy-making can further improve our problem-solving, thus diminishing public problems. (Vivek)



Glossary

Automation - when automatic equipment is used to facilitate making different tasks easier

Job displacement - job loss due to economic factors such as economic downturns or structural change

Technological disruption - when disruptive technology, changes the way consumers, businesses, and industries operate.

Workforce transformation - the process that occurs when organizations empower their employees to adapt and succeed while the organization itself changes and grows

Skill polarization - refers to the polarization of the labor force, when middle-class jobs seem to disappear relative to those at the bottom, requiring few skills, and those at the top, requiring greater skill levels.

Labor market dynamics - This is a system that allows people to join the workforce at a very low position and progressively climb up the ladder

Technological unemployment - when people are put in a situation where they are without work or not able to find work due to innovative production processes and labor-saving organizational solutions.

Reskilling/upskilling - when people learn new skills so that they can do a different job, or train others to do a different job



Issue Explanation

The constant advancements over the years up until the advent of automation, highlighted by advances in artificial intelligence, robotics, and machine learning, leads to a revolutionary shift in the labor market, promising efficiency and innovation but also raising concerns about job displacement but also economic and sociological impacts. As industries from manufacturing to services utilize more and more automation, the ripple effects on employment patterns, income distribution, and social inequality become consistently more significant, which calls for an deeper exploration of this double-edged sword.

Economic Impacts: On one hand, automation can lead to large gains in production. It can reduce errors, and lower costs, which in turn could potentially boost economic growth and create new types of jobs. However, the flip side of this is that workers, mostly those who occupy routine or manual jobs, face job displacement. The uneven distribution of automation's benefits within the work market could make income inequality even worse, as high-skill workers gain more skills with these new technologies, low-skill workers face redundancy. According to a 2017 report conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute by 2030, up to 800 million jobs could be lost worldwide to automation, which highlights the urgent need for economies to adapt to these changes.

Sociological Impacts: The sociological impacts of automation go far beyond the economic consequences. Job displacement can lead to social unrest, affect mental health, and widen the gap between the skilled and unskilled, which could lead to major changes in the current organization of societies. The loss of employment not only affects individual livelihoods but also has profound effects on communities, as jobs provide a sense of purpose and belonging. Furthermore, the transition could worsen current social inequalities, affecting groups that are already heavily disadvantaged and leading to greater marginalization.

The impact of automation varies significantly across world regions and sectors. For example, a study by the Oxford Martin School and Citibank estimated that 47% of jobs in the United States are at risk of automation, compared to 77% in China, and 57% in the OECD countries (2016). These statistics emphasize the fact that the challenge is global and highlights the need for coordinated international efforts to manage the transition, including retraining programs, education reforms, and policies to support displaced workers.

It is ever more clear that while automation offers the promise of a future of extraordinary efficiency and technological advancements, it also brings significant risks and consequences for job displacement. There are economic benefits but also challenges in this scenario, including increased income inequality and potential job losses in vulnerable sectors. Sociologically, the impacts affect identity, mental health, and community stability. To address these issues stakeholders should use a multifaceted approach, including policy intervention, educational reforms, and international cooperation to ensure that the benefits of automation are shared by all and challenges are managed effectively.



Historical Background

Concerns about job displacement due to the increase development and usage of machinery into the workforce have been growing for centuries. Historically, with every technological advancement, there have been those facing the possibility of their livelihoods and quality of life being changed significantly, some in better ways other in worse. From the textile workers called the Luddites of the early 19th century, who destroyed weaving machines to protest, to modern-day factory workers trying their best to adapt to automation and robotics, this pattern of concerns has been a constant. These fears reflect not only the potential loss of employment but also the consequences on social identity and community stability, which highlights the strong human response to technological change and its impact on work.

Some examples of advancements of automation and robotics in the job market and impacts and consequences:

Time Period / Year	Description of the Event
16th century	When all labor was manual labor “Until a clergyman named William Lee hit upon an idea to mechanize – at least in part – the production of stockings. He adapted looms that were used in the manufacture of rugs to make a long sheet of stocking material, which could then be cut and stitched into stockings. It was far quicker and cheaper than the traditional method.”(Fleming)
19th century	As the Industrial Revolution began to pick up speed many people moved from rural communities into the new, fast-growing cities. Following this they began to find work in more technologically advanced mills and factories and found themselves now operating machines rather than making items by hand.
20th century	Robots started to become more common in vehicle manufacturing by the late 20th century. Additionally, they allowed the employees to put in less effort as the machines could now perform simple repetitive tasks that previously increased labor costs.
1979	In 1979, “the Fiat motor company ran a TV ad showing the production of its Strada hatchback complete with the tagline “hand built by robots”(Fleming)



1950s - today

Artificial Intelligence - Modern AI began in the 1950s with the view to solving complex mathematical problems and creating 'thinking machines'. From the start, there were two competing approaches to AI. One used formal rules to manipulate symbols, a logic-based approach not at all based on biology. The other side took inspiration from how the brain works and created 'artificial neural networks' somewhat inspired by our brains. These still had to be trained using certain procedures to solve problems. Research continued throughout the 1990s but it was not constant and depended on funding. In 2015, the company OpenAI was founded with the intent to explore and advance artificial intelligence in a way that benefits humanity. In November of 2022, OpenAI released an early demo of ChatGPT. The chatbot went viral. Its capabilities have proven to be extensive and the tool is now widely used within the workplace at all levels and fields and shows no signs of slowing down or going away.



Previous Attempts To Solve This Issue

There are many different methods used by companies to reduce the effect of automation on job displacement such as job retraining or upskilling and reskilling programs for the workforce and social safety nets. Although these initiatives have been effective within certain sectors of employment, it would be more beneficial for a more robust and carefully outlined and regularly monitored program and approach to be developed and implemented across the board, for all levels of employment to be better prepared and evolve together with these new automated systems.

Job retraining or upskilling and reskilling programs are initiatives in which employers help bridge potential gaps by training employees so they acquire the new skills needed to utilize these new automated tools. Not taking these steps and at the same pace as new automated tools become available, could result in the increase of unemployed people who would be replaced by technology which in turn would result in a constantly growing number of those without jobs and key skills. The purpose of these programs is to ensure that employees have the necessary skills to meet the requirements of working at their jobs. (Davey) Additionally, social safety nets have been developed to “act as a buffer against the adverse effects of poverty, unemployment, disability, natural disasters, and other hardships that can destabilize individuals and families” (“Social Safety Net: Essential Support System for Vulnerable Populations”) These nets were created to protect families from the effects of potential unemployment that could be a result, in this case, of the effects of automation.

Efforts to mitigate the impact of automation on the workplace and address fears of job displacement have been a focus for several international organizations, to include but not limited to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These entities have undertaken initiatives to soften the blow of technological advancements on workers and to find strategies to ensure economic stability and worker reintegration.

World Bank’s Social Protection and Labor Strategy 2012-2022

The World Bank’s Social Protection and Labor Strategy is an initiative launched in 2012 and aimed to provide a detailed framework for assisting countries in managing the risks linked to technological change and other challenges. The strategy focused on three main points: protecting against risk, promoting employment, and ensuring equity. Supporting countries by developing strong social protection systems, this initiative attempted to equip workers with the necessary tools to adapt to the changing labor market dynamics, including those displaced by automation. Efforts included promoting skills development, enhancing access to unemployment benefits, and facilitating labor market mobility. The goal was to ensure that workers could transition to new opportunities which in turn mitigated the adverse effects of job displacement due to automation.



The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Engagement on Social Safety Nets (SSN)

The IMF has also engaged in addressing the challenges caused by automation through its Social Safety Nets (SSNs). While the IMF's approach focuses mostly on macroeconomic stability, it has increasingly recognized the importance of SSNs in protecting the most vulnerable populations from the shocks of economic transformation. The work involves advising countries on how to design and implement effective SSN programs that can act as a buffer for those affected by job losses due to automation. This includes cash transfers, unemployment insurance, and retraining programs. The IMF's work in this area aims to support economic adjustment by ensuring that they are inclusive and do not worsen social inequalities or lead to economic instability.

Both the World Bank and the IMF recognize the dual challenge of leveraging the benefits of automation for economic growth while also addressing the resultant job displacement and social disruption. Their strategies and recommendations reflect an understanding that a multi-faceted approach, involving social protection, labor market policies, and education and training systems, is key to prepare societies for the impacts of technological progress. Through these efforts, the international community aims to create a more resilient and adaptable workforce capable of navigating the complexities of the modern economy.

In addition to these, several other global attempts have been made to lower the negative impacts of the issue of job displacement due to automation and its consequences. These efforts are carried out by governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental organizations and focus on new policies and procedures to support the workforce against the shocks of rapid technological advancements.

OECD's Future of Work Initiative

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been at the forefront with its Future of Work initiative. This program focuses on understanding how technological changes, and other factors, are transforming jobs and the implications for skills and education. The OECD advocates for policy reforms in education, training, social protection, and job search support to help workers adapt to and benefit from the digital economy. Key recommendations include focusing on lifelong learning systems, ensuring adequate social protection for all forms of employment, and fostering greater collaboration between governments, employers, and workers to manage the transition.

European Union's Digital Agenda and Pillar of Social Rights

The European Union (EU) has launched several strategies to address the challenges and opportunities of the digital age, including the Digital Agenda and the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Digital Agenda seeks to harness digital technologies for innovation, economic growth, and job creation, while ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital transformation. The Pillar of Social Rights, on the other hand, outlines 20 key principles and rights that are necessary for fair and efficient labor markets and welfare systems in the 21st century. This



includes the right to social protection, access to lifelong learning, and a supportive environment for job transition.

ILO's Future of Work Initiative

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also launched a Future of Work initiative, focusing on the challenges that innovations in the workplace create for employment, work conditions, and social justice. Through global dialogues and research, the ILO seeks to develop a human-centered agenda for the future of work that emphasizes the importance of decent work, encourages investments in people's capabilities and the jobs of the future, and supports social dialogue as a means to reach progress that is sustainable.

National Strategies for Technology and Employment

Various countries have implemented their strategies to prepare their workforces for the impact of automation. For example, Singapore's SkillsFuture initiative focuses on lifelong learning and skills mastery to ensure Singaporeans remain competitive in the global economy.

Also, Germany's Industry 4.0 plan aims to integrate digital technology into manufacturing, promoting smart factories while also investing in the workforce's skills development to adapt to these changes.

These global and national efforts highlight the recognition of the need for proactive solutions to face the challenges caused by automation and digital transformation. By focusing on education, skills development, social protection, and inclusive policymaking, these initiatives aim to ensure that the benefits of technological advancements are widely shared and that workers are equipped to navigate the changes in the labor market.!!!



Relevant Countries

Country	Contribution/relevance
South Korea	<p>South Korea is currently facing a large job displacement issue due to automation."South Korea is facing a seismic shift in its job market as AI technology rapidly evolves. According to a report from the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade (KIET), over 3.27 million jobs, representing 13.1% of all jobs in the country, are at risk of being replaced by AI." This disruption in the workmarket due to the arrival of AI is farreaching and has had impacts in may sectors to include finance</p>
Germany	<p>According to a study <i>German Robots - The Impact of Industrail Robots on Workers</i> conducted in 2017, "We find no evidence that robots cause total job losses, but they do affect the composition of aggregate employment. Every robot destroys two manufacturing jobs.This accounts for almost 23 percent of the overall decline of manufacturing employment in Germany over the period 1994–2014, roughly 275,000 jobs. (Dauth et al.) This illustrates that in order to thoroughly investigate the impacts on jobs caused by automation, one should consider multiple aspects of workforce makeup.</p>
Japan	<p>"Prior to the pandemic, Japan was on track to automate 27 percent of existing work tasks by 2030. While that could replace the jobs of 16.6 million people, it would still leave the country with a shortfall of 1.5 million workers in ten years." Although this may have helped Japan in their goal towards automation, it would have caused a severe increase in unemployment. (Horii and Sakurai)</p>
At risk countries	<p>There are many countries such as Mexico, Vietnam, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Colombia, and Indonesia that could potentially suffer greatly if they were to improve their preparedness in terms of skills to face the rapid increase in automation and automated-based jobs in their country. As</p>



they are poorer countries it would be more difficult for them to create alternate job opportunities unless they are able to invest in programs (such as STEM) that teach skills that will support transitions to jobs that are more in sync with the advent of automation.(Koetsier)



Media Contribution

The general public's opinion on the topic can be grouped into three categories: Those who believe that automation has increased the number of job opportunities, those who state that automation is the major cause of job displacement and there is a portion of the public that is completely unaware of this issue and therefore has no opinion on the subject.

The media has covered the topic of job displacement due to automation in depth, highlighting both the challenges and potential solutions from various perspectives.

The Tech Report provides a thorough look at the statistics regarding job displacement due to automation, underlining both the potential for job loss and creation. It points out that while automation could lead to significant job losses, it is also projected to create millions of new jobs. However, the impact varies significantly by region, age, gender, and education level, suggesting that some groups are at higher risk of displacement than others. (Beckman)

MIT News discusses research that shows firms that adopt robots become more productive and tend to hire more workers, although this often results in job reductions overall. This highlights a nuanced view of automation's impact, suggesting that while some industries benefit from increased productivity and job creation, others see a net loss in employment. (Dizikes)

ITU (International Telecommunication Union) offers insights into steps governments can take to mitigate the risks associated with job displacement due to automation. These include adapting education systems to provide skills that are less likely to be automated and exploring alternative income and taxation models to ensure fair wealth distribution. This perspective emphasizes the importance of policy interventions in shaping the outcomes of automation on employment.

Brookings explores the dual nature of automation's impact on the labor market. While automation can create jobs and enhance productivity, it often leads to labor market inequality. The report notes that automation tends to benefit workers who can complement new technologies while displacing those in roles that machines can perform, shifting compensation from workers to business owners. (Holzer)

Jacobin discusses the broader economic implications of labor-saving technology like large language models (LLMs) and suggests a robust welfare state as a solution to mitigate the adverse effects of job displacement. It advocates for unemployment benefits, wage insurance, job training and reskilling programs, education subsidies, and career counseling as measures to support workers affected by technological shifts. (Bruenig)

The media's role in analyzing and debating the complex issue of job displacement due to automation has been fundamental in raising awareness so the public can form an opinion. The media, via newspapers, online forums, TV channels provides a platform for debate, where success stories can be shared, where agency and institutions can share their responses to the issue and be critiqued by the public. Furthermore, ethical implications are discussed, and



international perspectives shared. The media has and continues to provide a mix of statistical insights, research findings, policy recommendations, and socio-economic commentary, offering a multifaceted view of the challenges and potential pathways forward.



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