

Forum: Human Rights Council

Issue: Fostering Job Security in an Era of Automation

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Introduction:

Automation, such as bots, computers, or machine learning, has been rising for years. When computers were first invented, for example, they flourished, gaining income and money for the people who owned them and even more income for those who created them. They were able to do something that had never been done before--do things with a click of a button or as fast as a swipe on a screen.

However, with the spike in the development of more creative artificial intelligence(AI) and technology over the years, many people are becoming increasingly worried about the sake of their jobs. Technology has gotten so advanced that it has been known to easily take care of people or do their jobs independently. They were first intended to do exactly that, which was to make the lives of so many people so much easier. However, many fear that what first seemed like a way to revolutionise human development may now be the downfall, replacing jobs of manual workers, thus leading to mass unemployment. Additionally, a decrease in employment could affect the economies of many countries in numerous ways such as increasing the GDP of more economically developed countries, since they would have resources to invest, but also ensuring that GDPs of countries that don't invest in artificial intelligence, such as less economically developed countries, stay the same.

Definition of Key Terms:

1. **Artificial Intelligence(AI):** Artificial Intelligence is a newly developed technology that mimics human processes usually in the forms of computers or machines.

2. **Job Security:** Job security refers to the securing of jobs around the world which, in this situation, are being lost to increased automation.
3. **Tech Layoffs:** Tech layoffs refer to the release of employees working in the technology industry.
4. **Blue-Collar:** Blue-collar workers are manual workers, particularly in industry. They are different from white-collared workers, which is a term that refers to those who work desk jobs.
5. **Automation:** Automation is a form of technology that is meant to limit human interference or work for tasks.

Background Information

Historical Context

Although automation and artificial intelligence are relatively new concepts and products, the global reaction is similar to that of when computers were first globalised. One of the most famous examples is Arthur Samuel, who created the world's first chess-playing machine in 1952, who learned the game independently. However, the sharp increase in automation was during the Industrial Revolution in the 1700s. In this period of time, new and revolutionary machines were being developed, quickly taking over the roles of many manual workers. In that period of time, many believed that these machines increased the productivity and efficiency of manual processes. In this era, however, machines have gotten to a point where they could be so efficient, that the need for human assistance in many manual processes would no longer be needed.

Opportunity, Risk or Both?

Many countries believe that technology could help the economy. They believe that having machines in major industries could help grow and expand those industries, leaving less room for human error. When these major industries advance, countries can advance their economies on a major scale. The Canadian government alone, for example, spent \$125 million on research and development of AI.

However, the increase of advanced technology working in major industries also promotes many risks. To start, many plans for the incorporation of automation in modern jobs did not account for the huge funds needed to promote and develop such projects. Additionally, programming and functions could go wrong at any point, which, unlike human error, could continue over time and could majorly affect those job sectors. Incorporating advanced technology into job sectors also presents a huge risk for lower-income countries. Many lower-income countries cannot provide funding for this research, and having automation help the economy grow may not help the economy. By limiting jobs in major industries for humans, people are denied the right to gain their income. If fewer and fewer people can gain income, that affects taxes and government funds. This, in turn, ensures that the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer.

Current Situation

Big Tech Layoffs

Technology is an industry that has been known to lay off lots of employees, but this is usually due to failed start-ups or ideas. In this generation, tech companies are firing employees simply because they believe that they would rather have assistance from a machine doing the job than a human. The widespread decline in employees working at major tech companies these days prevents tech workers from easily being picked up by another company or office. Another example presents itself with Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of many social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. He plans to lay off thousands of employees in the coming year, saying that the company will focus on “building AI tools to help engineers write better code faster, enabling us to automate workloads over time”.

The Race to Machine Development

As previously mentioned, many believe that machines have the capabilities to grow economies and many believe that they can only do economic damage. Most of the countries investing in technological development are more economically developed, such as China, the United States, and Canada. They provide funding and resources for the development of machines. However, in recent years, with the growing popularity and advancement of artificial intelligence, it has quickly become a competition of sorts, where each economically developed country is trying to produce better, more advanced automation.

Both China and the United States are leading in artificial intelligence development producing hundreds of millions of dollars in the research and development of automation and technology. While the U.S. has contributed to many popular and revolutionary technology sources, China has led the world in innovative automation such as face recognition. Both countries have high and strong economies and have been major contributors to the race in development, especially over the course of recent years.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The United States of America

The United States of America is one of the leading nations in the development of automation and technology around the world. The USA has a strong economy so it is easily able to support the development and research on AI and automation, but this in turn also leads to the laying off of many employees, especially in the technology industry. The US in particular is known for their large amounts of tech layoffs from companies such as Silicon Valley or Amazon. There have also been numerous loads of blue-collar workers being unemployed, especially those who work in factories and industries due to the rise in machinery over the years.

The People's Republic of China

China is also one of the leading nations in the development of technology, producing innovative automation such as face recognition. According to Bloomberg, China accounted for 40% of global AI automation over the past year, making them truly committed to these new projects. This, however, also means that China's population is more likely to be affected (negatively or positively) by technology than any other nation. Similar to the USA, China also has lots of blue-collar workers that have lost jobs due to technology taking over many manual processes. This includes mostly factory workers.

The European Union

The EU has also led the world in automation development as well as creating realistic and beneficial plans for the responsible and safe use of automation and artificial intelligence. Countries like France and Germany have created said plans already to ensure that AI's impact on society and populations in the respective countries is limited. However, not many countries in the EU react favourably to new technology. For example, Italy has banned the use of certain artificial intelligence, thus preventing mass unemployment in many technology sectors.

India

India, along with China and the US, has also been known for revolutionary technology and assistance in projects. However, with their large population and economy, they may be the most heavily affected by new automation. While technology may bring the country lots of income and GDP increases, it may also heavily affect living and working populations, and many manual workers there would be at risk of losing their jobs.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

For years, the United Nations General Assembly and the International Labour Organisation(ILO) have been having meetings and discussing the regulation of artificial intelligence in the workplace and have discussed the future of work and job security in light of recent technological advancements. Many of these resolutions have been vetoed, however, the UNHRC and the UN General Assembly as well as the OHCHR(Office of the Human Rights Commissioner for Human Rights) will undergo many more meetings as well as discussions on the matter of the right of work and job security within an era of emerging technologies.

- [UN HRC New and emerging digital technologies and human rights, 11 July 2019\(A/HRC/41/11\)](#)
 - This resolution is very helpful on how to approach new technologies quickly being introduced into the workplace while still maintaining the human right to work, such as crafting reports and holding discussions.
- [UN HRC Business and Human Rights, 12 July 2023\(A/HRC/RES/53/3\)](#)
 - This resolution outlines several general human rights in the workplace related to businesses, as well as mentions several ways to maintain current human rights in the workplace.
- [HRC Civil Society Space, 19 June–14 July 2023\(A/HRC/RES/53/13\)](#)
 - This resolution provides general guidelines for safe work environments and also helps to eliminate some of the common problems in workplaces today, thus reducing the need for automation and machinery. This in turn fosters job security.
- [UN HRC New and emerging digital technologies and human rights, 14 July 2023\(A/HRC/RES/53/29\)](#)
 - This resolution is a more thorough extension of the resolution with the same title mentioned above. While that resolution provides a good starting point, this resolution goes more in-depth on how emerging tech may affect industries and

how to use this technology while simultaneously eliminating common issues of work environments.

Possible Solutions

Despite the fact that the development of automation has quickly become something countries aspire to do, the responsible and secure use of automation would help foster job security and adapt to the new era of technology.

Collaborating and Reaching Out to Youth

The youth is a community that will be most affected by the use of automation and artificial intelligence. According to a study conducted by the UN Office of Information and Communication Technology, “the risk that youth are most concerned with is unemployment.” We can foster new ways to maintain job security through the future of automation and make sure these methods are set in stone for the next generation. We can do this by conducting school talks or reaching out in the best and most impactful ways possible.

Peaceful Coexistence Between Humans and Machines

On the other hand, we can stop people from seeing the threat of automation and technology altogether by ensuring peaceful coexistence and acknowledging that automation can be a very useful tool in promoting job security. If companies and governments can collaborate with artificial intelligence without laying off any technology-related jobs, many people can adapt to the quickly-moving pace of automation today.

More AI-Related Funding

Countries can help change the state and direction of automation so that more people have secure jobs by employing workers to specialise in AI-related technology. This will give them a competitive edge that is nonexistent in AI. Acknowledging that the AI revolution will only grow, having employees work on AI research can ensure they have secure jobs.

Outreaches for Blue-Collar Workers

Reaching out to workers of blue-collar jobs can help foster job security in many ways. While it would be more helpful to stop the problem at its root, this solution can ensure that workers are specialised in their domain of work. Additionally, it can ensure that they become assets to their work and are thus hard to replace by the use of machines.

Bibliography

Useful Links

- https://unite.un.org/sites/unite.un.org/files/a_future_with_ai-final_report.pdf

This source provides a perspective from the youth on advancing technology and the future of the workplace. Connecting with future generations is a good way to foster job security in an era of automation.

- <https://www.un.org/pga/73/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2019/05/Presidential-Summary-of-the-HLM-on-the-Future-of-Work-FINAL-13-May-Final-revkod.pdf>

This report by the ILO and UN General Assembly provides a summary of what work and the labour industry may look like for future generations given current technological advancements. Albeit a little bit long, it does mention many key concepts such as reaching out to the youth.

- <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/weird-ai-understanding-what-nations-include-in-their-artificial-intelligence-plans/>

This article provides some examples from other countries on current plans on handling the rise in technology, particularly from members of the EU.

- <https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/working-life/layoffs-and-ai-are-changing-techs-once-inevitable-job-market>

This article simply highlights in depth the effect of automation in the workplace and provides real-life examples from technology workers discussing common problems regarding the situation.

Works Cited

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