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The History and Workplace Implications of Artificial Intelligence

Samin Asif[1] *

[1]Seven Lakes High School, Katy, TX, USA
*Corresponding Author: samin.asif@icloud.com

Advisor: Sophia Asif, sophia.asif@gmail.com

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Abstract

The history of artificial intelligence is expansive, spanning multiple decades and culminating with the creation of neural networks and the founding of OpenAI. ChatGPT has many prominent uses, including education and computer science. However, it has also seen increased use within the workplace, a development that has sparked controversy and fear for the future. Previous literature has corroborated these effects on workers and the possible implications of automated chatbots. 52 studies were first checked for rigor, accuracy, appropriate methodology, and meaningful interpretation. Then, these studies were categorized into major themes in the workplace (e.g. employment, productivity, work experience). Within each theme, studies were evaluated for strength in contributions to the body of literature in terms of conclusions. Analysis of the sources indicates that the market remains stable despite fears of demand erosion across the country. However, 75 to 375 million workers may have to switch occupations in order to adapt to the rise of artificial intelligence in the workplace. Despite this, workers and employers are still largely supportive of the use of ChatGPT and other forms of artificial intelligence, even with worries that they may be replaced in the near future. Overall, while uncertainty remains about the potential of artificial intelligence, it is clear that it will continue to grow rapidly in scale and that it is ultimately up to its managerial users to control its effects in the workplace.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Workplace, Unemployment, Employment, Job market, Job demand

1. Introduction

When he had finished, he could only lean back and admire his creation as any sculptor would. Post-antiquity sources would name his creation “Galatea”; she was endowed with such beauty, such imperfection. Out of ivory alabaster, Pygmalion had carved his masterpiece. However, he had begun to take an interest in Galatea. He kissed it, touched its body repeatedly, bought it gifts, and even brought it a bed for it to recline on. Pygmalion had not sculpted Galatea for the viewing of others, but rather, for his own personal enjoyment. Eventually, Pygmalion made offerings at the altar of Aphrodite and prayed to receive a bride with the likeness of his Galatea sculpture. When he returned to his sculpture and kissed it again, he discovered that its lips were warm and that his wish had been granted; the inhuman had become human. It is in this self-satisfaction that the peril lies - the story of Pygmalion has been retold and adapted into many new media, but it has now taken a new incarnation in the form of artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence is defined as the capability of computational systems to perform tasks associated with human intelligence. Over the past two decades, this definition has been adjusted to specifically target cognitive tasks as part of the field of deep learning. Using neuroscience, computer scientists have been able to unlock the potential of “deep learning” through the employment of transformers, which can further be adopted for the training of large language models (LLMs) (Chellapilla et al., 2006). Through LLMs, multinational corporations have been able to develop generative chatbots whose inherent intelligence exceeds that of their user. Artificial intelligence is slowly becoming more prevalent in daily life; the use of ChatGPT has become regular for

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Americans, whether it comes to cheating on a quiz or generating a "Ghiblified" image of a family. It would not be an overstatement to say that artificial intelligence is the most prevalent topic in modern society. However, the use of artificial intelligence grows more by the day, and now, it is stepping into the workplace (McKinsey Global Institute, 2024). The main objective of this paper is to review the use of artificial intelligence as a stand-in for human labor and how such a development is and will be shaping society in the future. From a narrative synthesis of previous literature, it is becoming increasingly clear that ChatGPT and other contingents of artificial intelligence will not only contribute to growing competition in the job market, but will also likely yield a significant shift in professions over the next few years.

2. History

There are numerous events that one can attribute the beginning of artificial intelligence to, but in this case, it will be marked at the 1950 publication of Alan Turing's paper "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." In this paper, Turing introduced his namesake test, which asks the question "Can machines think?" (Turing, 1950). Later in the test, this question changes to "Can machines do what we (as thinking entities) can do?" in order to draw the line between the physical and intellectual capabilities of man. To conduct this test, one must play what Turing calls the "imitation game," where one has to convince someone else that they are another person. However, one of these two players is a computer, given the question "What will happen when a machine takes the part of A in this game?" (Turing, 1950). Ultimately, the test is focused on if a human can control an automaton. It is the affirmative of this inquiry that gives birth to artificial intelligence. The question "Can machines think?" is reflected by the creation of the Logic Theorist in 1955 by Allen Newell and Herbert A. Simon. Using expressions and processes, the Logic Theorist was able to prove 38 of 52 theorems in the second chapter of Whitehead and Russell's *Principia Mathematica* (McCorduck, 2004). Just a mere 5 years after Turing's inquiry, he had been answered with stunning results. However, a question on the purpose of artificial intelligence would soon arise: would artificial intelligence be used to emulate real-life human tasks or to imitate, or even surpass human cognition?

The second "AI winter" occurred following the rise and subsequent fall of expert systems in the 1980s. Expert systems, which used a collection of if-then rules to simulate human decision-making, were initially regarded as the path forward for artificial intelligence. Early systems like MYCIN, used for medical diagnosis, and XCON, developed to configure computer systems at Digital Equipment Corporation, demonstrated that machines could solve real-world problems with apparent intelligence (Newquist, 1994). Their success led to widespread optimism and significant investment. By the mid-1980s, AI funding surged from both government and private sectors, and expectations ran high that expert systems would soon match or exceed human experts in a wide range of tasks. However, the limitations of these systems became increasingly evident. Expert systems were expensive to maintain, required constant human input to update their rules, and failed to scale to complex or changing environments (Crevier, 1993).

As companies realized that expert systems did not live up to their promise, funding began to disappear (NRC, 1999). Research groups were shut down, corporate AI labs closed, and interest in artificial intelligence declined. This "AI winter" marked a turning point in how artificial intelligence was approached. In the first winter, failure to make progress in fields like machine translation and neural networks caused similar pessimism. But in the second, it was the very success of early expert systems and the belief that their performance could be extended indefinitely that led to disillusionment. The disappointment came not because AI had failed entirely, but because the version of AI that was being funded, based on rule-based, top-down reasoning, was not solid enough to solve broader problems that humans could solve with ease. In response, researchers began to explore alternatives, including statistical approaches, neural networks, and machine learning. These methods did not rely on rules, but rather on data and learning algorithms that could generalize from their trained experience. The same way the Logic Theorist answered Turing's question "Can machines think?" with deductive reasoning, expert systems had answered it with human-like decision-making. This new era of artificial intelligence would be born with the development of deep learning, which uses numerous neural networks in order to perform statistical tasks. The revolution behind deep learning would begin with the creation of CNNs and GPU-based computer vision

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(Chellapilla et al., 2006). Instead of focusing on imitating human tasks, artificial intelligence was now focused on imitating human cognition. What furthered this prospect of breaking human boundaries was the creation of deep neural networks. These deep neural networks work with multiple layers between input and output layers and still carry the same components as a regular neural network. In this way, deep neural networks can effectively serve as a model of the human brain that remains unaffected by worldly influences. However, with the development of a model of the human brain, would companies need human laborers? This is when industries began to embrace artificial intelligence.

3. The Use of ChatGPT in the Workplace

Until this point, artificial intelligence had only been restricted in use to its developers and adjacent scientists. As a result, the general public was not familiar with the capabilities of artificial intelligence and saw it as quite distant. This changed with the open release of ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot, in November 2022. ChatGPT is based on foundation models of generative pre-trained transformers, which were then altered in order to generate text in the form of a conversation. ChatGPT runs on a system of preferences; testers of ChatGPT were originally asked to rank the responses that they were given, allowing for reinforcement learning (Douglas, 2023). In doing so, the chatbot would then continue to give similar responses that it perceives as being desired by the user. Most appropriate content will be relayed back to the user by ChatGPT, as OpenAI introduced safeguards to reduce explicit content in a response. When prompted to respond with a pejorative, the chatbot declines and replies often with "If you're interested in the history of a word, its impact, or how language evolves, I'd be glad to help in a respectful and thoughtful way." When prompted to respond with a pejorative with the use of apostrophes, periods, and dashes, the chatbot provides the same: "If you're interested in the history of a word, its impact, or how language evolves, I'd be glad to help in a respectful and thoughtful way." Asking for explicit content such as gore would yield a similar response from ChatGPT. In order to generate these responses, however, ChatGPT must go off of training data. How did OpenAI train ChatGPT to restrict responses to explicit prompts?

It is not unusual for a company to engage in outsourcing. Outsourcing is a business practice that entails the usage of external providers to carry out business processes that would otherwise be handled by internal employees. OpenAI generally uses outsourcing in order to train its models, as outsourcing is far cheaper than having internal employees train the data themselves. However, this led to the abuse of workers; *Time* reported that OpenAI used outsourced Kenyan workers who were paid between only $1 to $2 to label harmful content (Perrigo, 2023). Examples of the harmful content that the workers were exposed to include gore, sexual content, racist content, etc. One worker who was subject to this training of data described having to complete the assignment as "torture" (Perrigo, 2023). Generally, the content that was shown to the workers could be described as traumatic. A similar article from *The Guardian* describes a Kenyan worker's experience as having to view 700 passages per day depicting sexual violence, including rape (Rowe, 2023). All of these workers were employed by Sama, an outsourcing company that focuses on training data for artificial intelligence algorithms. Sama operates centers in Kenya, Uganda, Pakistan, India, Haiti, South Africa, Ghana, etc. It is possible that Sama, and by extension, OpenAI, has committed similar abuses in countries other than Kenya. In March 2022, the Kenyan law firm Nzili and Sumbi Advocates filed a lawsuit against Sama and OpenAI for abuses relating to the coerced viewing of content labelled as traumatic. Apparently, it was found that the hired "content moderators" did not have the slightest idea of what employees were engaging in (Perrigo, 2022). According to *Times*, it was only when moderators moved to the center in Nairobi that they found out what their employees were engaging in (Perrigo, 2022). A newer lawsuit from Montaung focused more on the payment of the employees, citing payments as low as $1.50 per hour and claiming that these constituted numerous constitutional violations. Additionally, this lawsuit alleges that Sama and OpenAI were engaging in blatant union busting and were promoting an unsafe working environment. Given the workload that is put on ChatGPT daily by its millions upon millions of users, it would be incredibly expensive for OpenAI to maintain its system. However, with business practices that defy ethics, OpenAI is able to retain its monopoly on artificial intelligence at the cost of basic human rights. Even with these abuses, artificial intelligence is still expanding within the workplace. How will such advances affect the future?

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4. Methodology

This study consists of a narrative synthesis surrounding previous literature on the workplace uses of artificial intelligence. While a meta-analysis was initially considered, ultimately, sources were too heterogeneous to allow for meaningful quantitative interpretation. Even with its subjectivity, the narrative synthesis methodology appeared to be sound for capturing the complexity behind the workplace implications of artificial intelligence. Only publications from January 2018 to February 2025 were considered for this study. This period best represents the explosion in artificial intelligence usage, especially among major companies. Previous literature was identified with the following key terms and phrases:

"artificial intelligence," "AI," "machine learning," "automation," "generative AI," "employment," "jobs," "labor market," "workforce," "workers," "productivity," "displacement," "adoption," "transformation," "skills," "wages," "manufacturing," "professional services," "healthcare," "software engineering"

Multiple inclusion criteria were established for this study. As stated before, only publications from January 2018 to February 2025 were considered. Second, all sources must be written in English or have an English version available for viewing. Third, these sources must be from a peer-reviewed journal, a research institution, a governmental agency, or another reputable industry sources. Exclusion criteria included opinionated or editorialized sources, duplicate publications, and marketing materials on artificial intelligence.

Through a systematic database search, 147 qualifying sources were identified. After the removal of duplicates, 92 sources were identified. Then, upon a thorough review of the content, quality, and relevance of these sources, only 52 sources remained. Sources were assessed based on a version of the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) that is outlined below:

For quantitative studies:

- Sample size and representativeness (0-3 points)
- Control for confounding variables (0-3 points)
- Appropriate statistical methods (0-2 points)
- Clear outcome measurement (0-2 points)

For qualitative studies:

- Data collection methodology (0-3 points)
- Analysis rigor and transparency (0-3 points)
- Interpretation supported by data (0-2 points)
- Reflexivity and context consideration (0-2 points)

For reports:

- Sample size and methodology transparency (0-3 points)
- Independence and potential conflicts of interest (0-3 points)
- Peer review or expert validation (0-2 points)
- Replicability of findings (0-2 points)

Total quality scores ranged from 4 to 10, with a median score of 7.5. Only sources scoring 6 or above were included in the final group.

Standardized data extraction forms captured:

- Study characteristics: authors, year, geography, sector, sample size
- Methodology: study design, data sources, analytical approach
- Key findings: employment effects, productivity impacts, skill requirements, worker experiences
- Effect sizes: where quantitative estimates were provided
- Study limitations and author-identified caveats

As for the narrative synthesis methodology itself, I grouped major findings from the used sources together into

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major themes (e.g. employment, productivity, work experience). Within each of these themes, I prioritized the consistency of findings across the studies selected, robustness of supporting evidence, contextual factors explaining variations between findings, and methodological limitations outlined. Specifically, for rating the robustness of evidence:

- Strong = Multiple high-quality studies with very consistent findings.
- Moderate = Several studies with generally consistent findings but some methodological limitations.
- Limited = Few studies or generally inconsistent findings.
- Insufficient = Inadequate research for drawing conclusions.

There are some methodological limitations within this study itself. There may be significant publication bias, as studies that report positive or "important" conclusions are more likely to be published than those that report negative conclusions. Additionally, a majority of the employers studied are large employers, meaning that small and medium enterprises are underrepresented. Causation may not be implied for a large proportion of the studied sources because many are observational rather than experimental.

5. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Employment Effect.

Study	Geography	Sample Size	Time Period	Key Finding	Effect Direction	Quality Score
Brynjolfsson et al. (2025)	USA	Millions	2022-2025	Early-career employment down 6-20% in AI-exposed roles	Negative (young workers)	9.0
Babina et al. (2024)	USA	Thousands of firms	2010-2024	+2% annual employment growth per SD increase in AI investment	Positive (firm-level)	9.5
McKinsey (2023)	USA	Occupational analysis	Projection to 2030	Up to 30% of work hours could be automated	Mixed	8.5
World Economic Forum (2025b)	Global	1,000+ employers	2023-2027 projection	69M jobs created, 83M displaced (net -14M)	Mixed	8.0

Initial analysis of the 33-month period following ChatGPT's release indicates that the broader labor market has not experienced discernible disruption (Yale Budget Lab, 2025). This directly undercuts common fears that AI automation is currently eroding human demand for labor across the economy. This is only corroborated by the fact that AI adoption is associated with firm growth, increased employment, and heightened innovation (Babina et al., 2024). This supports the possibility of strong short-term growth in the global economy due to the development of AI. However, historically, widespread technological disruption in workplaces tends to occur over decades rather than months (MIT Task Force, 2020). Disruption does not appear to be major; however, employment growth begins to show up approximately two to three years after AI investments and remains elevated thereafter, with an extra 2% per year per one-standard-deviation increase in AI investment (Babina et al., 2024). Overall,

Table 2. Productivity Effect.

Study	Measure	Finding	Quality Score
Babina et al. (2024)	Sales growth	+9.5% over 5 years with high AI use	9.5
Babina et al. (2024)	Sales per worker	No significant aggregate change	9.5
Goldman Sachs (2023)	GDP impact	+7% annually over 10 years (projection)	8.5
McKinsey (2025)	Economic value	$2.9T potential in US by 2030	8.5
Microsoft (2024)	Worker-reported	66% report productivity gains	7.0

Table 3. Skills Disruption.

Study	Timeframe	Scope	Key Metric	Finding
World Economic Forum (2025a)	By 2027	Core skills	Disruption rate	44% of skills disrupted
McKinsey (2024)	By 2030	All skills	Change rate	39% of skills will change
McKinsey (2024)	By 2030	Worker population	Training need	59 of 100 workers need training
McKinsey (2024)	2022-2024	Job postings	Demand growth	AI fluency up 7x

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artificial intelligence is poised to provide an effective boost to the economy and have a relatively tame impact on employment solely in terms of figures.

For jobs with high AI exposure, employment for 22- to 25-year-olds fell 6 percent between late 2022 and July 2025, while employment among workers 30 and older grew between 6 percent and 13 percent in that same category (Brynjolfsson et al., 2025; ADP Research, 2025). Additionally, in July 2025, employment for the youngest software developers was 20 percent below its late fall 2022 peak, and early career customer service workers' employment had fallen nearly 11 percent from its peak (Schmidt et al., 2025). During this time period, employment in both occupations was mostly flat for workers aged 26 to 30 and grew for those aged 31 and older (Schmidt et al., 2025). This suggests that entry-level jobs are increasingly becoming more competitive with the introduction of AI into the workplace. It is clear that if this pattern continues, unemployment among younger contingents of the labor pool will only grow in magnitude. Given the fact that the demand for AI-aligned jobs is ever increasing, the selectivity and exclusivity of such jobs will inevitably explode, thus spiraling applicants into joblessness.

Roughly two-thirds of U.S. occupations are exposed to some degree of AI automation, and up to a quarter of all work could be done by AI completely (Briggs & Kodnani, 2023). Around the world, as many as 300 million jobs could be affected (Goldman Sachs, 2023; CNN Business, 2023). Administrative workers and lawyers are expected to be most affected, compared to the little effect seen on physically demanding or outdoor occupations such as construction and repair work (Briggs & Kodnani, 2023). Administration and law, professions that are historically safe from fluctuation, are made susceptible by the introduction of AI into the workforce. While these effects are negative, AI will likely boost the construction industry, an industry that *needs* workers. Demand for construction workers is higher than ever, and an influx of labor driven by competition at the top of the traditional job market will help advance lagging projects. Additionally, the construction industry is an aging industry, so younger workers are a necessity for future success.

Currently demonstrated technologies could, in theory, automate activities accounting for about 57 percent of US work hours today (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017). Again, industries that appear to carry more grueling physical labor will benefit from this discovery, as menial computer work can easily be handled by AI. However, technical automation potential is not a forecast of job losses but an indication of how profoundly work could change (BLS, 2025). It is important to remember that this only represents a shift in industry concentration. Human labor centered around repeatable tasks will be replaced by AI, while trades that cannot be practiced safely with AI (e.g. mining, construction, plumbing) will only grow in popularity amongst the young workforce as a result of insurmountable demand.

David Autor's research found that 60% of today's workers are employed in occupations that didn't exist in 1940, implying that more than 85% of employment growth over the last 80 years is explained by technology-driven creation of new professions (MIT Task Force, 2020; Davenport & Miller, 2021). An estimated 69 million new roles are expected to be created globally between 2023 and 2027, while 83 million could be displaced, suggesting that the global workforce could shrink by 14 million people between 2023 and 2027 (World Economic Forum, 2025b). While the creation of new professions would certainly aid with ailing job availability in the near future, the displacement of jobs is likely to exceed satisfactory levels. Given the fact that these new professions would have great demand, it is reasonable to conclude that these findings would only result in the previously described industrial shift.

Demand for occupations such as health professionals and other STEM-related professionals would grow by 17 to 30 percent between 2022 and 2030 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2024). Younger workers seek STEM-aligned jobs as an escape from increasing AI demand. Medicine, being a historically secure field, will only grow with AI. By contrast, demand for workers in food services, production work, customer services, sales, and office support would continue to decline until 2030 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2024). These professions can be replaced by AI with ease, spurring the shift in industry concentration described earlier.

75 million to 375 million people may need to switch occupational categories and learn new skills by 2030 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017; Technology Magazine, 2020). McKinsey expects an additional 12 million occupational shifts by 2030 in the United States, representing 25% more than projected just two years earlier (Fortune, 2023). It is vital to remember that the workplace implications are not a future issue, but rather a present

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one. At least 14% of employees globally could need to change their careers due to digitization, robotics, and AI advancements (World Economic Forum, 2024). By 2030, Europe could require up to 12 million occupational transitions, double the prepandemic pace, while in the United States, required transitions could reach almost 12 million (McKinsey Global Institute, 2024).

By 2027, businesses predict that almost half of workers' core skills will be disrupted (World Economic Forum, 2025a). About 39 percent of workers' skills will change by 2030, with 59 of 100 workers needing training (McKinsey Global Institute, 2024). In order to accommodate the workforce of the future, education will need to shift towards more desired skills. Nearly every occupation will experience skill shifts by 2030, with highly specialized, automatable skills such as accounting and coding facing the greatest disruption, while interpersonal skills like negotiation and coaching may change the least; demand for AI fluency, or the ability to use and manage AI tools, has grown sevenfold in two years, faster than for any other skill in US job postings across all industries (McKinsey Global Institute, 2024). While computer science classes are prevalent in many schools, it is imperative that economically disadvantaged communities receive proper education on AI. A lack of secure and consistent access to computers will only restrict students who aim to make a living in the future. Therefore, in order to combat this, initiatives promoting AI fluency for all students should be promoted.

Even though the demand for AI fluency is booming, demand for social and emotional skills could also rise by 11% in Europe and 14% in the United States by 2030 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2024). For the sales industry, social and emotional skills are essentially prerequisites for success, implying that despite the theoretical efficacy of AI, customers will almost always prefer human salespeople. Employers generally estimate that 59% of workers need training (McKinsey Global Institute, 2024). Employers say the biggest barrier to AI adoption is a lack of skills, with 50% of respondents citing this as an issue (World Economic Forum, 2025b). This is to be expected, as AI is a rapidly advancing field of technology whose capabilities are being amended each day. 77% of employers surveyed are committed to reskilling and upskilling employees to work alongside AI, with upskilling remaining the top employer response at 85% planning to prioritize it (World Economic Forum, 2025b; AIPRM, 2024). The concentration on reskilling and upskilling only reflects the competition behind the job market of the future, as entry-level applicants will have their desired roles filled by experienced and trained workers.

Both workers and their employers are generally very positive about the impact of AI on performance and working conditions (Lane et al., 2023). However, this does not mean that workers are not concerned about AI and the security of their own jobs. More than half of workers claimed they were worried that using AI for work tasks would make them look replaceable to their employers, with 52% expressing reluctance to admit using AI for important tasks; similarly, just under half of workers are considering quitting their jobs in the year ahead, with 45% expressing worry about AI replacing them at work (Microsoft, 2024). Nearly 4 out of 10 U.S. workers were worried AI may make some or all of their job duties obsolete in the future (AIPRM, 2024). The impact of generative AI depends on how the technology is designed, implemented, and regulated, with recent research emphasizing the importance of management and engineering decisions for achieving "positive-sum automation" (MIT IPC, 2024). While many workers trust their employers when it comes to the implementation of AI in the workplace, more can be done to improve trust (Lane et al., 2023). For example, HR and other managerial staff could prioritize consultations with their employees in order to foster a sense of belonging, especially with a rise in competition across the industry and the pertinent risk of lay-offs.

It should be stated that a key limitation of exposure data is that it is not based on actual usage and should be interpreted as theoretical estimates of jobs and sectors that could be impacted (BLS, 2025). The future is still uncertain, and only time will tell if all industries will face some shift in terms of concentration and demand. While much uncertainty remains around both the capability and adoption timeline of generative AI, the aforementioned developments suggest that AI is well-positioned to advance rapidly and grow in scale. Technological change is simultaneously replacing existing work and creating new work, with no particularly significant evidence suggesting technological advances are driving us toward a jobless future. The future is not destined by technology but will be determined by the decisions we make about how to use it.

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