The Unseen Force: How AI Anxiety Shapes Career Decisions

Nazrin Gurbanli

Abstract

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping industries and raising concerns about job displacement, a phenomenon known as AI anxiety(Johnson & Verdicchio, 2017; Waltz, 2006). As AI evolves, many individuals, especially students, are uncertain about their future roles in the labor market (Chui, Manyika, & Miremadi, 2016; Makarius et al., 2020). This study aims to explore how AI anxiety impacts career decision-making, focusing on the influence of automation and technological change on career choices.

The main objective is to examine the psychological aspects of AI anxiety and its effects on career decisions. The research will focus on how fears of job loss and automation shape career aspirations and explore how demographic factors such as age, gender, and academic background influence these anxieties (Wang & Wang, 2022).

The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1. AI anxiety negatively impacts career decision-making.
2. The "learning" dimension of AI anxiety affects career choices.
3. The "job transition" dimension of AI anxiety hinders career decisions.
4. Cultural differences moderate the relationship between AI anxiety and career decisions.
5. Prior experience with AI tools encourages enrollment in AI-related courses.
6. Demographic factors influence AI anxiety levels and career decisions.

This research has practical significance, as it could inform educational institutions, policymakers, and career advisors on how to better prepare students for AI-driven career changes. Understanding the psychological impact of AI anxiety can help design interventions that foster career adaptability and encourage the development of AI-related skills.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. A sample of 150–250 students from undergraduate and graduate programs will be selected using convenience and stratified sampling. Surveys will assess AI anxiety (modified AI Anxiety Scale, Wang & Wang, 2019), career decision-making, and psychological traits such as tolerance for uncertainty. Semi-structured interviews will provide in-depth insights into students' experiences with AI and its impact on their careers. Quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS and R, while qualitative data will be coded and analyzed thematically with NVivo.

The study is structured over a 10-month timeline:

- Months 1-2: A literature review will be conducted, and the theoretical framework will be developed.
- Months 3-4: Surveys and interview guides will be designed and piloted.
- Months 5-6: Data will be collected via surveys and interviews.
- Months 7-8: Data will be analyzed, and the AI Anxiety Index will be developed.
- Months 9-10: Findings will be synthesized, and the final report with recommendations will be prepared.

Potential risks include participant bias and difficulties reaching underrepresented groups. To mitigate these risks, strategies such as ensuring participant confidentiality and using snowball sampling will be employed.

In conclusion, this study aims to offer actionable recommendations for mitigating AI-related anxiety, fostering career adaptability, and helping students see AI as a positive force

in their professional lives. By addressing these concerns, the research will contribute to the development of policies and practices that support individuals in adapting to an AI-driven world, ultimately enhancing their career prospects and job satisfaction.

References

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