

A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of The Guardian's Coverage of AI and Its Impact on Employment

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Abstract

This study investigates how The Guardian newspaper discursively constructs the relationship between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its impact on the job market in the 21st century, focusing on the specific linguistic choices. Drawing on the integrated framework of Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA), the research combines corpus linguistics, frame semantics, and critical discourse analysis to analyse data. A specialised corpus of 60 Guardian news articles was compiled and analysed using Sketch Engine software. The findings show that AI is often portrayed as a powerful technological force, both an opportunity and a source of disruption. Human workers are mainly framed as vulnerable, with discourse changing between cautious optimism and concern about insecurity and inequality. While collective and policy-driven solutions occasionally appear, the coverage more often highlights market-centered responses such as innovation, reskilling, and adaptation. This study demonstrates how journalistic language contributes to the construction of broader ideological narratives about automation and the future of employment in the AI era.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Jobs, The Guardian, Media Framing, Collocations, Discourse.

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Introduction

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has greatly transformed many aspects of contemporary life, reshaping how we operate, communicate, and solve problems. AI systems have evolved from early expert systems to advanced deep neural and creative AI architectures, and they are now integrated into routine applications and platforms, ranging from digital assistants and smart residential devices to medical analysis and mobility networks (Mesfin, 2024; Zemmouchi-Ghomari, 2025). One major advantage of AI remains its capacity to analyse vast quantities of information rapidly and precisely, thereby supporting better decision-making in areas like healthcare, education, and security, customising learning experiences for learners, and streamlining traffic and coordination. For instance, AI-powered models can identify illnesses earlier, enhance patient safety, customise instructional experiences for learners, and streamline traffic and movement in intelligent environments (Shah, 2024; Hardaker & Glenn, 2025; Mohsen, 2024). These advances not only raise productivity but also improve living standards for populations and societies. These patterns demonstrate how AI improves daily life by boosting productivity, enhancing service performance, and providing smarter answers to everyday issues (Khan & Hassan, 2025).

Despite its many advantages, Artificial Intelligence (AI) also poses significant risks and concerns across various domains of life. AI systems have developed a wide range of concepts and digital applications that have demonstrated notable success in solving complex and demanding societal issues. However, the discipline also faces several limitations and weaknesses that have led some to doubt AI (Groumpos, 2023). There are also ethical and privacy concerns: AI systems may misuse personal data, reinforce biases, or perpetrate discrimination (Slattery et al., 2024). Trust issues further intensify fear when AI acts unpredictably, malfunctions, or shows limited awareness; people become anxious and less willing to embrace it (Mannes, 2020). Moreover, there remains growing concern about misinformation, abuse by malicious actors, and existential dangers if advanced AI platforms behave in ways that are misaligned with humans.

These concerns, whether grounded in practical risks or speculative possibilities, shape public perceptions, policy expectations, and regulatory pressures, and, if left unaddressed, may obstruct beneficial progress and adoption. Automation and AI systems are widely perceived as threats to employment, particularly in routine and low-skill sectors, with potential consequences for inequality and social security (Bullock et al., 2025).

The expansion of AI adoption has intensified concerns about labour displacement and long-term effects (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Susskind, 2020). Media discourse strongly shapes public interpretation of these technological shifts by framing AI as a risk (Chakravartty & Roy, 2017). Similarly, the current study is of utmost importance because it examines how the issue of AI integration in job markets is represented in print media. By analysing data on AI-related job displacement in *The Guardian*, the research seeks to understand how media discourse shapes public perception and reflects broader societal concerns about AI and employment.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines the quantitative strengths of corpus linguistics with the qualitative insights of critical discourse analysis. On the quantitative side, Sketch Engine tools, such as keywords, concordance lines, collocation, and word sketches, were used to generate statistical evidence of recurring lexical and grammatical patterns in the corpus. These outputs provided a systematic and replicable foundation for the

study. The qualitative approach then extended this analysis by drawing on critical discourse analysis and frame semantics to interpret semantic roles and underlying ideological indicators such as metaphors, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, and adverbs in the texts. Combining corpus tools with discourse analysis revealed dominant narratives and underlying assumptions about AI and jobs, moving beyond statistical interpretation to examine narrative construction (Baker, 2006; Fairclough, 1995).

Corpus Design

The dataset consisted of approximately 60 news articles from *The Guardian* that discuss the intersection of Artificial Intelligence and job replacement. Articles were selected through purposive sampling to ensure thematic relevance. Key search terms included: *AI*, *artificial intelligence*, *automation*, *robots*, *job loss*, *job displacement*, and *workforce*. All selected articles were retrieved directly from *The Guardian*'s official online archive. The articles were then compiled into plain-text (txt, Unicode UTF-8) format to ensure compatibility with corpus analysis software.

Corpus Analysis

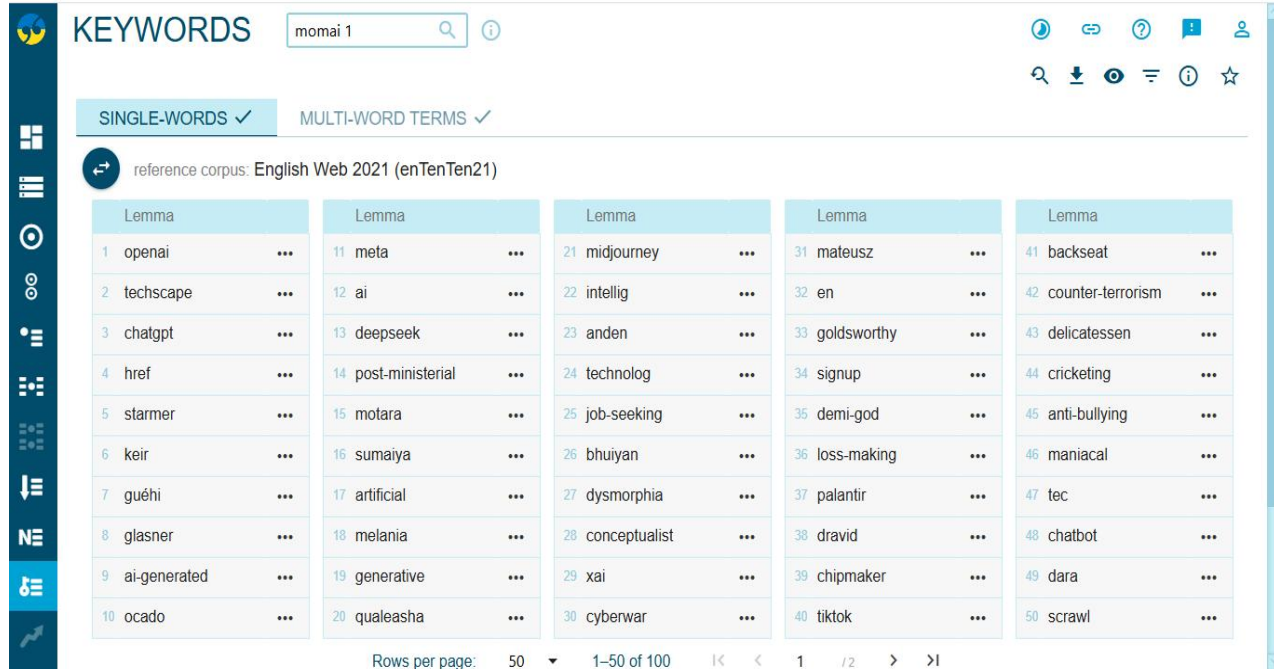
The compiled corpus was analysed using Sketch Engine software (Kilgariff et al., 2014). Key features included *Concordances* for examining terms in context, allowing detailed observation of AI-related concepts. The *Word Sketch* and *Word Sketch Difference* tools identified collocational patterns and grammatical relations among terms such as *AI* and *automation*. The *wordlist* feature provided insights into common lexical items, while the *keyword* tool highlighted frequent words, revealing topical focuses. The analytical process followed a three-stage CACDA framework (Filmore, 1982; Baker, 2006). The first stage involved collocational and keyword analysis to identify frequent terms linked to *AI*, *automation*, and *job loss*, and to see how these terms are framed as a threat, an opportunity, or an evolution. Informed by Frame Semantics, the roles of agent and victim were also analysed. The final stage focused on ideological cues, analysing modality, pronouns, adjectives, and metaphors. Concordance lines helped analyse contextual meanings. Reflexivity was maintained throughout, with awareness of potential interpretive biases.

Results and Discussion

Keywords Analysis

Keyword analysis of Guardian coverage of AI and job displacement highlights a strong emphasis on AI technologies and major industry actors, reflected in frequent terms such as *OpenAI* (39), *ChatGPT* (27), *Meta* (23), and *generative* (21). References to tools such as *Techspace* (19), *DeepSeek* (17), and *Midjourney* (9) indicate a broader technological framing. Overall, the collocation pattern frames AI as both a technological innovation and a disruptive force in employment structures.

Figure 1: Keywords list in the corpus



KEYWORDS momai 1

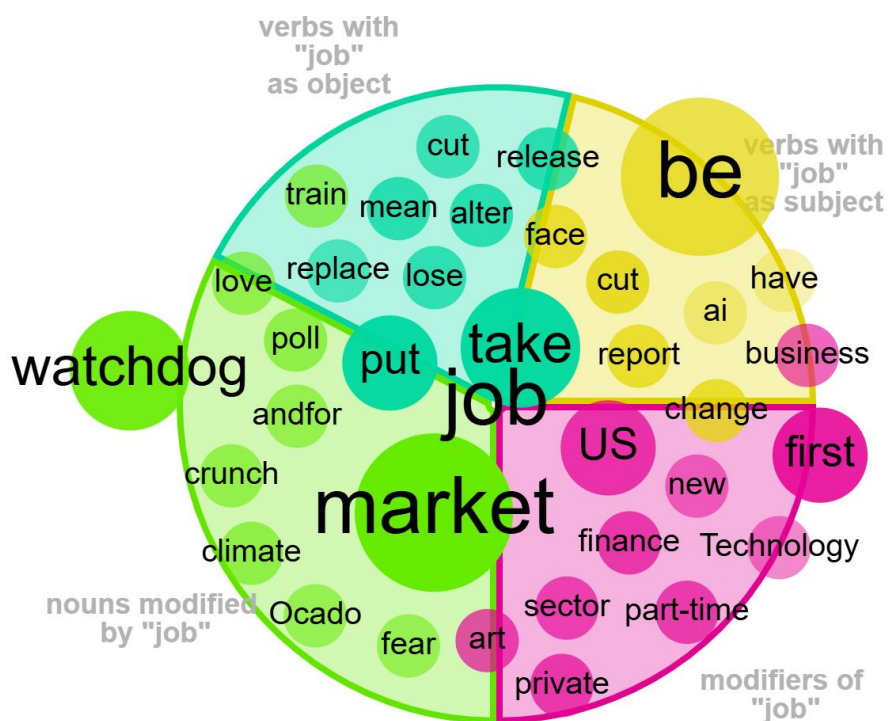
SINGLE-WORDS ✓ MULTI-WORD TERMS ✓

reference corpus: English Web 2021 (enTenTen21)

Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma
1 openai ...	11 meta ...	21 midjourney ...	31 mateusz ...	41 backseat ...
2 techscape ...	12 ai ...	22 intellig ...	32 en ...	42 counter-terrorism ...
3 chatgpt ...	13 deepseek ...	23 anden ...	33 goldsworthy ...	43 delicatessen ...
4 href ...	14 post-ministerial ...	24 technolog ...	34 signup ...	44 cricketing ...
5 starmer ...	15 motara ...	25 job-seeking ...	35 demi-god ...	45 anti-bullying ...
6 keir ...	16 sumaiya ...	26 bhuiyan ...	36 loss-making ...	46 maniacal ...
7 guéhi ...	17 artificial ...	27 dysmorphia ...	37 palantir ...	47 tec ...
8 glasner ...	18 melania ...	28 conceptualist ...	38 dravid ...	48 chatbot ...
9 ai-generated ...	19 generative ...	29 xai ...	39 chipmaker ...	49 dara ...
10 ocado ...	20 qualeasha ...	30 cyberwar ...	40 tiktok ...	50 scrawl ...

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Figure 3: Word Sketch of the lemma "job."



visualization by  SKETCH ENGINE

The word-sketch visualisation of the lemma *job* in The Guardian headlines demonstrates the multidimensional media discourse on employment and labour. The visualization organises key collocates by grammatical function, revealing how the lemma *job* has semantically and ideologically been framed. The collocations cluster into four categories: verbs with the lemma *job* as subject or object, nouns modified by *job*, and their modifiers, showing how grammatical patterns shape the media construction of employment. In the top-left quadrant, which shows verbs with the lemma *job* as the object, verbs like *take*, *put*, *lose*, *replace*, and *train* imply that the job is something acted upon, something that can be gained, lost, or manipulated. This collocational pattern reflects a discourse of instability and transition, echoing broader socio-economic concerns over employment precarity and workforce transformation.

Conversely, the top-right quadrant of verbs with the lemma *job* as the subject features terms like *be*, *report*, *cut*, and *have*, indicating a more agentive construction in which jobs perform actions or are subjects of change. This dual positioning of the lemma *job* as both an actor and an actant aligns with a broader discursive strategy that presents employment not only as an economic object but also as a dynamic force within labour markets. The bottom-left quadrant of nouns modified by the lemma *job* includes terms like *market*, *watchdog*, *climate*, and *fear*, suggesting thematic groupings that frame the job as embedded in broader institutional and systemic contexts. The frequent mention of the *market* underscores the

commodification of labour and the neoliberal framing of work within economic structures. Words like *fear* and *crunch* suggest semantic prosody of anxiety and crisis, further highlighting the emotional and social dimensions of job discourse. The bottom-right quadrant shows modifiers of the lemma *job*, such as *part-time*, *private*, *new*, and *first*. These modifiers signal how job discourse is filtered through identity and temporality, emphasising aspects such as job status, ownership, and hierarchy. This quadrant also contains references to sectors such as *technology* and *finance*, implying that employment is contextually linked to specific economic and industrial domains. Taken together, this word sketch reveals a multifaceted framing of the lemma *job* in *The Guardian*: jobs are positioned within a web of institutional power, market forces, individual experience, and societal anxieties. The collocational network highlights both the personal and structural dimensions of labour discourse, allowing readers to understand how language shapes perceptions of employment in a rapidly shifting economic landscape.

Word Sketch Difference of keywords AI and Job

Figure 4: Word Sketch difference of “AI” and “Job.”



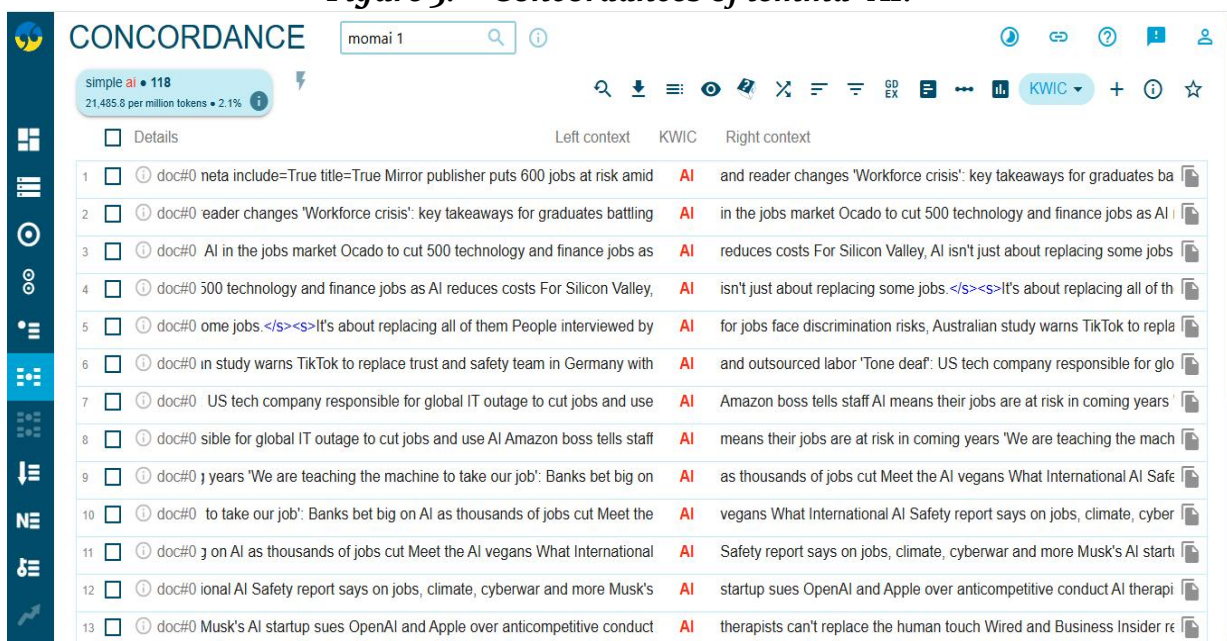
The Word Sketch Difference visualisation, shown in the figure above and generated in Sketch Engine, compares the collocational patterns of *AI* and *job* in *The Guardian* corpus, revealing distinct linguistic framings of technology and employment. Organised by grammatical relations, noun co-occurrence, verb-object, subject-verb, and adjective predicates, the tool highlights both shared and contrasting discourse patterns through colour coding (AI-dominant vs job-dominant terms). Results show that lemma *AI* is typically framed as an active agent of transformation, with collocates such as *takeover*, *expert*, *plan*, *labour*, and *change*, and with dynamic subject-verb pairings like *accelerate* and *de-accelerate*. In contrast, the lemma *job* is more often associated with verbs like *lose*, *release*, *alter*, and *face*, as well as the adjective *vulnerable*, thereby constructing employment as exposed to risk. Overall, the contrast supports a discourse pattern in which *AI* is portrayed as a disruptive force while jobs are framed as potential casualties of technological change.

Socio-Discursive Framing. The visualisations in figures 2, 3, and 4 offer insight into the ideological undercurrents in employment and technology discourse. The contrast between *AI* as an active agent and jobs as passive entities demonstrates how linguistic choices reinforce power and relations. In this framing, *AI* is anthropomorphised through action-oriented verbs, which enhances its perceived agency while deflecting responsibility from institutional decision-makers toward technological inevitability. In contrast, the lemma *job* is repeatedly

linked to terms such as *lose* and to adjectives such as *vulnerable*, thereby constructing a discourse of economic precarity. This pattern aligns with wider socio-political narratives that frame automation as uncontrollable and normalise job displacement as progress-driven rather than policy-mediated. Thus, the *Word Sketch Difference* in figure 4 reveals not only collocational trends but also ideological framing that promotes technological determinism while obscuring human and regulatory agency in labour change.

Concordance-Based Analysis of Keywords “AI” and “Job”

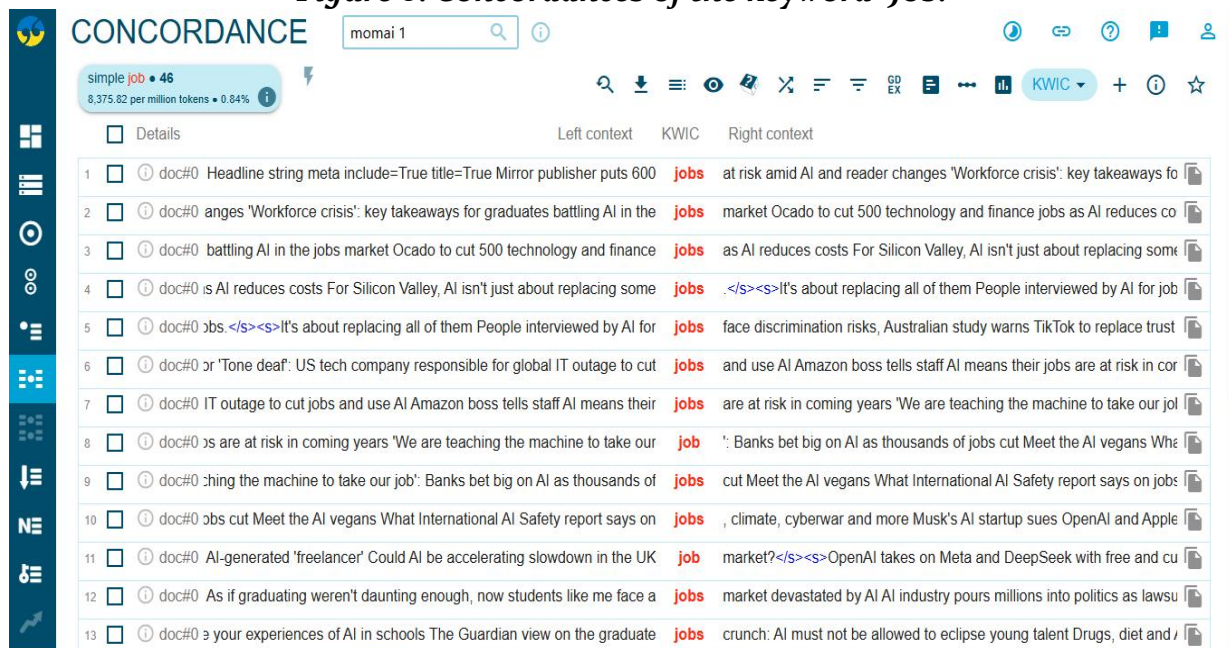
Figure 5: Concordances of lemma "AI."



The KWIC concordance of AI in Guardian articles, generated through Sketch Engine, highlights its discursive framing in labour and technology reporting. *Left-linguistic context* positions AI within institutional and corporate narratives (e.g., *Safety report says, job market, Ocado cuts, and Amazon boss tells staff*), emphasising business strategy, innovation, and risk. *Right-linguistic context* links AI to actions or impacts, including cost reduction, labour, implications, and legal disputes (*reduces costs, is not just about replacing jobs, puts staff at risk, report says on jobs, climate, cyberwar, and startup sues OpenAI*). Overall, AI is linguistically constructed as a transformative force embedded in private-sector discourse, simultaneously associated with innovation and potential disruption.

Discursive and Semantic Framing. Figure 5 above depicts AI as an autonomous, powerful actor, a trend reinforced by verbs such as *reduces, replaces, puts at risk, and sues*. This language grants AI active agency, often obscuring the human and institutional decision-makers behind technological implementations. Such representations participate in what CACDA identifies as anthropomorphising or agentivising discourse, in which non-human entities (in this case, AI) are framed as subjects of action and responsibility. The concordance evidence shows that AI is linguistically framed in Guardian articles through themes of efficiency, disruption, risk, and transformation, reflecting narratives of technological determinism. Worker perspectives are largely absent, thereby depersonalising the discourse and framing labour displacement as a technical or economic issue. This framing positions AI as an autonomous, system-shaping force, emphasising the need to critically assess how media language constructs AI as both a technological and social actor.

Figure 6: Concordances of the keyword "Job."



A close reading of the concordance lines reveals that the lemma *jobs* repeatedly co-occur with expressions of risk, displacement, and automation. On the left, phrases such as *puts 600 jobs at risk*, *cut jobs*, *AI reduces costs*, and *AI is replacing some jobs* frame AI as a disruptive force, often linked to economic restructuring or efficiency-driven decisions by corporations. Meanwhile, the right-hand context includes collocates like *at risk*, *being taken*, *report says on jobs*, and *must not be allowed to eclipse*, reinforcing a tone of concern and instability. These patterns show that the discourse around AI and jobs is heavily marked by semantic prosody, in which neutral words like *jobs* acquire negative connotations through their proximity to verbs such as *cut*, *risk*, *replace*, or *disrupt*.

Discursive and Semantic Framing. The concordances of the lemma *job*, as shown in Figure 6, demonstrate that AI is linguistically framed as an autonomous actor with agency, performing actions often attributed to humans or institutions. At the same time, responsibility for technological adoption is largely obscured. In contrast, the lemma *job* is constructed around themes of precarity, technological determinism, and institutional power, with labour loss depicted as inevitable and worker perspectives largely absent. Semantic associations link *jobs* to risk, producing a cautiously pessimistic discourse. Corporate actors (e.g., *OpenAI*, *Amazon*, *Meta*, *Ocado*) foreground AI as a structural force, highlighting its framing as a system-shaping rather than a policy-mediated one.

Semantic Roles (Agent and Victim in the Corpus)

The analysis of the collected corpus indicates a structured narrative pattern around the semantic roles assigned to different entities in media coverage. AI is consistently positioned as the primary agent of disruption, described as an active force reshaping the labour system. Workers are framed as vulnerable recipients of technological impact, often depicted as victims of displacement with limited agency. Institutions such as governments and corporations are constructed as responsible solution providers, with innovation and policy reform emphasised as key responses. Overall, this role distribution frames AI-driven job changes as a systematic challenge governed by structural actors rather than individual control.

Ideological Construction of AI Impacts on Jobs in Pakistan

Ideological Indicator: Adjectives

Figure 7: Adjectives List in the Corpus

Adjective	Frequency ? ↓	Frequency Per Million ? ↓	Adjective	Frequency ? ↓	Frequency Per Million ? ↓
1 artificial	59	10,742.90 ...	26 late	3	546.25 ...
2 new	14	2,549.16 ...	27 global	3	546.25 ...
3 human	12	2,185.00 ...	28 clear	3	546.25 ...
4 many	8	1,456.66 ...	29 000-a-year	2	364.17 ...
5 big	7	1,274.58 ...	30 nationwide	2	364.17 ...
6 digital	6	1,092.50 ...	31 available	2	364.17 ...
7 young	5	910.42 ...	32 own	2	364.17 ...
8 more	5	910.42 ...	33 [number]	2	364.17 ...
9 generative	5	910.42 ...	34 interested	2	364.17 ...
10 first	5	910.42 ...	35 anti-bullying	2	364.17 ...
11 small	4	728.33 ...	36 right	2	364.17 ...
12 good	4	728.33 ...	37 rival	2	364.17 ...
13 tough	4	728.33 ...	38 internal	2	364.17 ...

The adjective list in the figure above shows the most frequent adjectives in the *The Guardian* article corpus. Ranked by raw and normalised frequency, the list supports quantitative analysis of linguistic and ideological framing. *Artificial* is the dominant adjective, which appeared 59 times with a normalised frequency of 10,742.9 per million. This high frequency not only reflects the centrality of the term *artificial intelligence* but also reinforces a framing of AI as distinct from the natural or human, suggesting a conceptual separation between machine and human labour. The prominence of adjectives such as *new*, *human*, *digital*, *generative*, and *young* further underscores a discourse focused on technological novelty, human identity, and the emergent nature of AI systems. These adjectives are not just descriptors; they are ideological indicators. For example, the frequent use of *new* and *digital* aligns with a progress-oriented narrative, suggesting innovation, growth, and future-facing change. However, the presence of adjectives like *tough*, *small*, and *big* indicates a contrasting framing in which AI's impacts are measured by challenges, limitations, or scale, suggesting a tension between opportunity and disruption.

Discursive and Ideological Framing. The repeated use of human signals of anxiety over the erosion of traditionally human attributes and the construction of workers within a *Victim Frame*, shaped by systemic forces rather than individual failure. Adjectives such as artificial, generative, and digital agentive AI portray it as a powerful institutional actor rather than a neutral tool. Although the term *tough* introduces a *Responsibility Frame* emphasising resilience, which aligns with conservative discourse, its lower frequency renders this perspective secondary. In contrast, frequent references to *new* and *first* reinforce a *Solution Frame* rooted in technological determinism, presenting innovation as both inevitable and desirable. Collectively, these patterns suggest that *The Guardian's* coverage predominantly reflects a progressive ideological orientation, emphasising systemic accountability while marginalising individual blame, though limited conservative elements remain present.

Discussion

The Guardian's coverage of AI and job displacement reflects a progressive ideological orientation. Frequent adjectives such as *artificial*, *digital*, *generative*, *new*, and *human* frame AI as part of a broader structural transformation rather than as a neutral technological tool. The

emphasis on terms like *human* and *young* foregrounds group vulnerability, constructing a victim Frame rooted in systemic forces rather than individual failure. References to innovation (*new, first*) reinforce a forward-looking perspective that prioritises institutional and collective responses over personal responsibility. Technological systems and governing institutions are positioned as key actors shaping outcomes and addressing inequality.

In contrast to conservative narratives centred on individual resilience, this discourse presents job displacement as a structural issue embedded within political and economic systems. Overall, the coverage reflects a progressive ideology emphasising systemic accountability, collective vulnerability, and institutional responsibility.

Conclusion

This study has analysed how job displacement in the AI era is framed in *The Guardian* using a Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA) approach. The study's findings highlight that new digital technologies are portrayed as powerful forces reshaping job markets, with workers depicted as vulnerable and powerless. This representation can normalise power imbalances by framing technological advancement as inevitable and placing the burden of adaptation on individuals rather than institutions (individuals must take the initiative to reskill and stay up to date with modern world trends). Metaphorical language, such as references to threats or revolutions, heightens urgency, while discussions on collective policy responses are often minimal. Although regulatory measures are mentioned, the focus is primarily on innovation and personal responsibility. Additionally, the findings also suggest that *The Guardian's* discourse on AI and employment is ideologically progressive. Terms like *artificial, digital, and human* frame AI as part of a larger structural change rather than just a tool. By emphasising categories such as *human* and *young*, it highlights collective vulnerability and frames job displacement as a systemic issue shaped by economic and political factors. The analysis points out that media language shapes perceptions of AI-driven job loss as a structural challenge, underscoring the need for institutional accountability and collective action to address the societal impacts of technological change. Further research is needed to analyse public perception regarding the impact of AI on their daily lives and the job-related issues they face due to the emergence of AI in the 21st century.

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