

# ***Analysis of the Causes and Mitigation Paths of Artificial Intelligence Anxiety among Journalism Practitioners***

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**Abstract:** The transformation of news media into intelligent media is in the ascendant, and artificial intelligence (AI) technology has brought news practitioners into the era of intelligent production, but also brought them the psychological worry of AI anxiety. The study analyses the causes of AI anxiety among news practitioners from three aspects: the dissolution of their professional concepts, the prevalence of professional substitution, and the polarisation of professional skill requirements, and proposes a path to alleviate the problem by balancing self-efficacy and psychological expectations through scientific cognition, promoting the human-machine symbiosis model in the field of journalism through multi-party collaboration, and providing special support to improve the protection of news practitioners' profession.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, journalists, psychological anxiety, media convergence.

## **1. Introduction**

Since the 21st century, data, algorithms and arithmetic power, as the three basic elements for the development of artificial intelligence, have been developed unprecedentedly, and artificial intelligence technology has become an important intermediary between human beings and the environment. In the field of news dissemination, the coupling of technology and media has laid the foundation for the realisation of "Smart Media", which is a form of intelligent matching of information and user needs. Artificial intelligence technology is constantly involved in all stages of the news dissemination process, promoting the transformation and reshaping of news media organisations, but also exacerbating the AI anxiety of news practitioners. Artificial Intelligence Anxiety (AI Anxiety) in the overall emotional manifestation of anxiety or fear, can inhibit the individual interaction with artificial intelligence[1].

Technological change creates stimuli to human emotions and cognition, and when individuals are exposed to positive (negative) stimuli, their emotions will rise (fall) rapidly[2]. Among them, in the short term, due to the lack of clear understanding and cognition, individuals are more likely to develop negative resistance behaviours towards new technologies[3]. Compared to the speed of technological development, human beings are relatively slow to adapt, making it difficult for them to keep up with the technology at all times, which can easily lead to anxiety. Under the market requirements of "new" and "fast", the journalism industry relies heavily on AI technology for the convenience of material collection, automatic generation and personalised distribution, but it also creates a paradox in the use of technology[4]. The rapid iteration and diverse forms of AI technologies have caused a decline in the emotions of journalists and increased the AI anxiety of journalists.

The psychological impact of artificial intelligence on employees has received increasing attention, but it is mostly gathered in the fields of human resource management and pedagogy. In the field of journalism and communication, the research on the impact of AI technology on news practitioners is mainly centred on the adjustment of the news production process, professional role adjustment and other levels, and the research from the micro level of psychology is relatively weak. As the communicators, recorders, promoters and watchmen of the society, news practitioners need to solve the contradiction between the application of AI and self-adaptation. Based on this, this paper focuses on analysing the psychological causes of AI anxiety among news practitioners and exploring the path to alleviate their AI anxiety, with a view to achieving human-machine symbiosis and promoting the harmonious progress of news media and AI.

## **2. The causes of AI anxiety among journalists**

The impact of previous technological revolutions on journalists can be compensated for by the creation of new jobs, most of which can be filled by journalists with skills training and education. However, the impact of the development of artificial intelligence technology presents new features that are different from those of the past, which fundamentally and significantly reduce the demand for jobs and personnel in the field of journalism. In the process of the rapid development of AI, through the mapping of the phenomenon of AI anxiety among journalists, the essence behind the phenomenon of anxiety can be analysed in terms of the dissolution of professional concepts, the prevalence of professional substitutes, and the polarization of the requirements for professional skills, so as to better "prescribe the right medicine".

### **2.1. Dissolution of career philosophy**

#### **2.1.1. Lack of self-efficacy and dilution of professional identity**

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's perception of self-confidence or ability to perform a task, and can influence an individual's cognition, emotion, and motivation[5]. The intelligent transformation of media is being carried out in an orderly manner, and the depth of human-computer interaction has weakened the self-efficacy of news practitioners to a certain extent. On the one hand, the application of AI technology in the news industry has brought new challenges to news practitioners, resulting in a decrease in their work control, a decrease in the recognition of their self-competence, and a weakening of their sense of self-efficacy. On the other hand, the "human-like" ability of AI technology also makes journalists feel less self-worth, and their emotions tend to be negative, further reducing their self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy affects an individual's choice of environment and his or her sense of value in that environment, which can trigger anxiety[6]. The higher the self-efficacy of journalists, the more confident they are in their own professional value and work ability, and the stronger their professional identity. In the AI news production environment, journalists with low self-efficacy tend to be more self-doubtful and feel highly nervous, easy to underestimate their own ability and constantly presuppose potential difficulties, and are more likely to produce negative avoidance psychology in the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural levels of professional identity. Self-doubt caused by self-efficacy loss and avoidance caused by professional identity dilution form a vicious circle, causing journalists' perception of self-worth to plummet and generating serious anxiety.

#### **2.1.2. Floating psychological expectations and a sense of professional belonging**

Anticipation, or "advance mental preparation for a potentially negative event," is effective in reducing the emotional impact of a negative event, but the anticipation process itself can lead to the activation

of emotionally relevant neural circuits and the subjective experience of anxiety, and overly negative anticipation can also affect the subject's emotional cognition. towards things, thus creating anxiety[7]. The development of digital media has led to the "liquefaction" of journalistic identity and the journalistic community[8]. The professional boundaries of journalists have been lost, and the journalistic community and the public have become intertwined. Artificial intelligence technology not only accelerates the process of "liquefaction" of journalism, but also makes the human-computer relationship undergo a fundamental transformation from instrumental parasitism to competitive symbiosis[9]. The subjectivity of journalists has been unprecedentedly challenged, and under the influence of negative psychological expectations, the sense of professional belonging is weakened, and the anxiety is formed.

On the one hand, AI technology makes it more difficult for journalists to adapt in the workplace and makes them lose their autonomy. The "liquid" journalism in the AI environment requires members of the journalism profession to have the ability to adjust their behaviours parallel to or even beyond the technological updates, however, the competition for journalists' careers has become more intense in the midst of the dramatic changes in the media, and journalists are facing "obsolescence" because they have difficulty in adapting to the speed of the technological updates in the human domain. "However, the competition for journalists' careers has become more intense in the media's dramatic changes. On the other hand, anxiety is often born from the unknown. In the highly mobile AI environment, the intervention of AI technology has increased the unknown factors and working difficulty of the working environment, which makes news practitioners begin to change and unknown mental overload to bear the work pressure, always in a "suspended" state.

## **2.2. Occupational substitution for universal**

### **2.2.1. "Pervasive communication" is all over the place, and attention is being diverted away from its resources.**

"Ubiquitous communication" refers to ubiquitous network-based, personalised communication for all, many-to-many and one-to-one at the same time, both "with" and "without" the crowd. It is both "crowded" and "crowdless", both from everyone to everyone and on a one-to-one basis[10]. In the Internet, which is the largest news distribution centre nowadays, the public can not only divide the communication power of professional news practitioners, but also further weaken the advantages of professional news practitioners under the production assisted by AI technology, so as to realise double innovation in terms of "quantity" and "quality". Innovation.

On the one hand, the coupling of the Internet environment and artificial intelligence technology has simplified the production and dissemination of information, and the "right" of the general public to disseminate information has been transformed into "power". With the development of mobile terminal equipment and intelligent media platforms, ordinary users can obtain information on the Internet with high density, focused topics, and a wide range of information sources, and information superiority is no longer the exclusive right of news practitioners. With the superposition of rich information resources and AI-assisted content production tools, the main body of content production in the news field is expanding in a honeycomb fashion, and "pan-crowd communication" can be realised. On the other hand, AI can improve the quality of content production by ordinary users. Compared with professional news practitioners, the general public has the advantage of "first scene", but it is difficult to compare the quality of information production, but in the artificial intelligence technical support for pictures, videos, text, posters and other "one-click generation" software can make up for the quality of content production to a certain extent. With the technical support of AI, "one-click generation" software for pictures, videos, texts and posters can, to a certain extent, make up for the shortcomings of the general public in the quality of content production.

### 2.2.2. Frequency of "skilled unemployment" and expansion of the jobs crisis

"Technological unemployment" refers to the phenomenon of unemployment brought about by the impact of technological progress, in which technology becomes more and more advanced and gradually replaces human labour, reducing the demand for labour in society and leading to an increase in the number of unemployed people. The rapid development of artificial intelligence technology has once again aroused social anxiety and anxiety about "technological unemployment". In the news production stage, AI software platforms and natural language generation technology are combined to generate news by converting raw data into comprehensible language[11]. In the news distribution stage, AI conducts large-scale retrieval of Internet data based on user behavioural labels and matches user profiles and information clustering to form personalized distribution, greatly enhancing the arrival rate and dissemination effect of news information and forming a highly personalized "My Daily". At the news gatekeeping stage, AI carries out statistical analysis of news authenticity based on accuracy, certainty and other indicators on the basis of data mining technology through image recognition, voice recognition and other technologies[12]. At the same time, the accuracy of the AI system audit is further improved through the establishment of relevant databases, which is not only able to identify and deal with existing information risks, but also facilitates early warning through big data analysis. Artificial intelligence machines involved in the field of news dissemination, the logic of news work with algorithmic technology changes[13], more and more common to news practitioners to form a labour force replacement.

In 2020 Microsoft had a strategic restructuring of its staff with journalists and editors as the main targets for layoffs, and said it would increase its efforts to replace human news editors with AI technology in the future[14]. As the media continues to interface with AI technology, the replaceability of journalists continues to increase, the uniqueness and legitimacy of their previous work philosophies and modes of practice in the industry continue to diminish, and journalists in AI machine-produced environments are exposed to professional shortcomings. Artificial Intelligence increases unemployment until a certain level of inflation is reached, and then its effect will diminish[15]. The current development of AI is still in the period of inflated expectations of technological development and is far from reaching maturity. The participation of AI machines in the field of journalism has exacerbated the situation of technological unemployment among journalists, whose job and life stability is threatened and whose anxiety has skyrocketed.

## 2.3. Polarisation of occupational skill requirements

### 2.3.1. "Data-only" appraisal, burnout is a common occurrence

Artificial intelligence and related technologies in the news production process not only as the news practitioners of the "competitor" to participate in the job "competition", but also incarnated as the "assessor" hostage to the news practitioners of the performance appraisal. performance assessment. Various traffic indicators are tightly controlled, from the platform to the news organisation, and then dispersed to each news practitioner. Quantitative data such as the number of reads, likes, comments, retweets, and followers gradually occupy an important position in the media's assessment, and traffic indicators such as "100,000+" have become an important criterion for the success of news products. Although news practitioners are able to fight for a larger living space under the refined digital directives through self-fighting, most practitioners are neither able to fight nor escape[16], and low work efficiency, negative work attitude, and burnout have emerged under the prolonged high-pressure work, which has sowed the seeds of increased AI anxiety among news practitioners.

Firstly, highly accurate quantitative indicators seem to be fair, but in fact they can only reflect the quality of news products to a limited extent. A series of external factors, such as news categories and

topics, significantly affect the assessment results of news products, and news practitioners have limited control over the data assessment of news products, so it is difficult to fully reflect the contribution of news practitioners to news products and their personal value, which is easy to discourage news practitioners in the long run. Secondly, under the traffic data assessment, even if the same cost of socially necessary labour time, the user's preference will still lead to the difference in traffic data, which is directly projected to the performance appraisal and salary income, journalists are more inclined to choose those topics and contents that attract traffic[17], which not only damages the quality of news products, but also strikes the professional beliefs and aspirations of news practitioners, and impacts the "imagination of fame" of news practitioners. This not only damages the quality of news products, but also strikes the professional beliefs and ambitions of news practitioners, affecting their "imagination of fame" and reducing them to "digital workers".

### **2.3.2. "Competition intensifies as 'all-round journalists' battle it out**

With the development of the times, the connotation of the concept of "all-round reporter" is also changing, from the traditional core skills of "gathering, writing, editing and commenting" to the current technological, intelligent and digital skills are constantly changing and superimposed. The news industry's demand for practitioners to be "all-rounded" has spread from the journalism profession to news practitioners in various positions. The new skills in the field of journalism in the artificial intelligence environment are not only difficult to master, but also fast iterative and highly replaceable, so journalists are in a long time in the professional skills dilemma, with serious mental and emotional wear and tear, and the de-personalisation is accompanied by a sudden drop in the sense of personal achievement. In the face of ever-changing technology and white-hot competition, journalism practitioners' professional anxiety is deepening.

On the one hand, the development of artificial intelligence technology promotes the progress of the media industry, and at the same time, it also puts forward higher requirements for the skills of news practitioners. Nowadays, journalists not only need to use a variety of devices to obtain graphic and video news materials, but also need to produce text, pictures, videos and other corresponding forms of news content according to a variety of communication channels. In addition, with the rise of self-media and short-video platforms, journalists are also required to master skills such as planning, management, distribution and live broadcasting in order to adapt to the development and demand[18], and the competition among journalists is further intensified by significant layoffs in the journalism industry under the process of intelligentisation. However, journalists are required to have comprehensive skills, but with limited energy, most of them are in the embarrassing situation of "being good at everything, but not good at anything", and are caught in a skills dilemma. On the other hand, despite the fact that journalists put a lot of effort into learning various skills in order to fulfil the requirement of being "all-rounded", the skills of journalists often appear to be "weak" with the involvement of AI technology. NewsGPT, the world's first platform to generate news stories entirely by AI, does not involve any journalists, claims to be "unbiased", and is able to provide viewers with accurate and reliable news 24 hours a day, 7 days a week[19], which is virtually impossible for human journalists to match in terms of efficiency.

## **3. A path to alleviating AI anxiety among journalists**

In the era of smart media, traditional journalists are frequently threatened and challenged by AI technology, and the phenomenon of AI anxiety is widespread. To adhere to human subjectivity in the wave of AI development and reduce the "side effects" brought by AI, it is necessary to put forward targeted suggestions from three aspects: scientific cognition, promotion of human-computer

symbiosis mode, and sound industry protection, so as to help news practitioners better adapt to the new environment of AI intervention.

### **3.1. "Heart Strengtheners": Scientific Cognition Balances Self-Efficacy and Psychological Expectations**

Emotional factors are the subjective causes of anxiety, and the first cognition of news practitioners on AI technology obtained through their feelings has strong subjective colours, and is inevitably susceptible to the influence of emotional factors and priority effects, which makes it difficult to comprehensively and objectively view things. Therefore, in the process of coping with AI anxiety, news practitioners should set up a scientific cognitive model and psychological guidance mode, overcome the influence of stereotypes and fear, enhance the ability to comprehensively and objectively view things, and comprehensively view the application of human intelligence technology in the field of journalism with scientific and systematic thinking, so as to alleviate the source of AI anxiety by injecting a "cardiotonic agent".

On the one hand, news practitioners should establish a scientific knowledge of AI technology and the professional field of news communication. First of all, news practitioners can increase their understanding of career-related AI technology, in addition to using search engines to obtain authoritative AI information for knowledge accumulation, but also by participating in online and offline discussion groups, expert consultation and other ways of learning to form a scientific and technological view of AI. Secondly, rationally recognise the limitations of AI technology in the field of news dissemination and establish a correct professional cognition. Although with the birth of the super artificial intelligence ChatGPT, artificial intelligence technology has been transitioned to "strong intelligence", but the overall situation is still in the category of "weak intelligence", news practitioners in the field of innovation, abstraction, value judgement, humanistic care, still have irreplaceable advantages. Journalists still have irreplaceable advantages in the fields of innovation, abstraction, value judgement and humanistic care. Therefore, journalists should consolidate their professional skills to avoid the short board effect, and at the same time, they should also outline their own strengths and avoid their shortcomings. In this way, self-efficacy can be enhanced through the optimisation of self-confidence and competence.

On the other hand, news practitioners should also take the initiative to adopt psychological counselling modes to cope with the psychological pressure brought by AI. First, they can seek professional psychologists to practice psychological methods to alleviate the anxiety brought by AI technology with a defensive psychological model, such as positive imagination method and cost-benefit analysis, to mitigate the impact of negative emotions. Secondly, communication and exchange with fellow news practitioners can improve the understanding of the industry and environmental perception under the application of AI, and balance the gap between reality and psychological expectations; thirdly, news practitioners can reduce cognitive dissonance by adjusting their long-term and stage-by-stage career planning to cope with the distress brought about by AI technology in a positively confrontational way. Thus, the impact of negative expectations can be reduced and the sense of professional identity and industry belonging can be strengthened.

### **3.2. "Power Needle": a multi-party effort to advance the human-computer symbiosis model in journalism**

At this stage of the intelligent revolution wave, the deep integration of artificial intelligence and news media field has been unstoppable, the deep integration of media is inevitably inseparable from the symbiosis of human and artificial intelligence technology. Relying only on the news practitioners unilateral psychological adjustment is far from enough, but also from the industry, organisations,

departments, multi-party linkage initiative to deal with artificial intelligence technology, multi-level construction of artificial intelligence symbiosis mode in the field of news, news practitioners and artificial intelligence technology mutual empowerment to play the "power needle".

Firstly, at the macro level of the news industry, the construction of the institutional system for promoting AI media should be strengthened. Through deepening exchanges and cooperation with government departments, new media organisations, Internet enterprises and user groups, a more open and inclusive ecological environment for AI in the news media field should be constructed to guide AI towards good development and create a good macro environment for news practitioners to adapt to the development of AI. At the same time, it should also strengthen the collaboration between the news media and artificial intelligence technology platforms, and leverage each other's strengths to achieve mutual benefit. Commercial attributes of the AI platform enterprises to empower the news media, to bring technology-related talent, management and other assistance, and social attributes of the news media can also amplify the positive social impact of intelligent technology for the AI platform enterprises, to achieve mutually beneficial development of the two sides, and to enhance the ability and willingness of news practitioners to collaborate with man-machine in their work.

Secondly, at the meso-organisational level, news media organisations can introduce advanced equipment and regularly carry out training courses on AI topics to provide professional advice and practical opportunities for news practitioners, so as to gradually accumulate experience in assisting with AI. Exchange sessions can also be held between media organisations to increase exchanges between journalists from different organisations, thus enhancing their mastery of and adaptation to AI technology, and activating the motivation and competitiveness of journalists in the application of AI technology.

Finally, at the micro level of internal departmental management, emphasis should be placed on the construction of an environment of humanistic care within the department, to enhance journalists' sense of professional belonging and sense of work value, so that they can have more positive expectations and confidence in the unknown work challenges in the future, and to facilitate journalists' anxiety relief in the complex environment invaded by AI. In addition, departmental managers should also actively explore the advantages of talents, flexibly arrange the division of labour and duties of departmental personnel, let those who are quicker to adapt to AI technology share their experiences, and give those who are slower to adapt to AI time to learn in work arrangements, so as to assist the department as a whole in gradually increasing its adaptability to AI technology.

### **3.3. "A Piece of Mind": Specialised Support for Sound Industry Protection for Journalists**

Journalists' artificial intelligence anxiety is interdependent with their economic and social status anxiety. With the development of social economy, news practitioners in the "olive" society gradually showed a trend of transferring from the upper middle level to the middle or even the lower middle level[20], AI is involved in the formation of a new round of impact on the economic income of news practitioners. At the same time, under the background of AI news production, "news useless theory" has emerged, and the social status of news practitioners as "uncrowned king" has faded, and the anxiety of social status has deepened. Therefore, in order to cope with the increasing economic and social status anxiety of journalists under the trend of artificial intelligence, the Government and the industry should join hands to further improve and perfect the system of protection for journalists, and implement both negative and positive protection measures.

On the one hand, news as an important force for social development, the negative protection of the unemployed in the news industry is indispensable. The government should increase unemployment insurance and social support for the news industry, under the premise of solving their basic living problems, the unemployed news professional support for secondary employment, business start-ups, reduce the waste of professional journalism resources, and refine the negative security system for the

unemployed news practitioners. Secondly, medical assistance and related medical protection should be provided to those journalists who are suffering from occupational anxiety and have developed psychological illnesses as a result, so as to provide them with dual protection at both the material and spiritual levels. Negative security for the industry not only provides effective protection and support for the unemployed in the journalism industry, but also gives working journalists a shot in the arm, easing their potential occupational anxiety.

On the other hand, the integration of the journalism industry with the field of artificial intelligence is a general trend, and from the perspective of long-term development, the State has assumed the responsibility for universal skills training and guidance between journalism practitioners and AI technology, and has practised positive safeguards to improve journalism practitioners' anxiety about AI and their living environment. The state can set up special training support funds for journalists' training on AI reform and increase spending on journalists' employment security, which will help journalists better adapt to the working environment of AI technology and indirectly reduce their anxiety by easing the economic pressure on the news media.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the context of the era of artificial intelligence, the integration and transformation of news media has entered a deep-water period, and it is urgent for news practitioners to actively transform to fit the new environment of news media in the era of artificial intelligence. Among them, psychological adjustment is a crucial part of news practitioners in the transformation of media intelligence. The psychological health of journalists is not only related to their own career development, but also to the development of the news communication industry and the construction of social spiritual civilisation. Therefore, paying attention to the anxiety of news practitioners in the critical period of media intelligent transformation is a proper way to positively face the changes and challenges brought by new technologies to the news field, and also a realistic requirement to help the transmission of the socialist core value system.

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