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THE IMPACTS OF COLLABORATIVE ROBOTS (COBOTS) ON EMPLOYEE ROLES AND SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

In the Industry 5.0 era, collaborative robots, or cobots, which work alongside human employees, have dramatically changed the workplace. The paper addresses the impact of cobots on employee roles and satisfaction, using an analysis that looked into the recent developments and current research. Cobots have the potential to increase productivity and enrich the workforce, but they also create issues with job displacement and the requirement for new skill sets. Thus, understanding this relationship is vital for organizations looking to take advantage of the benefits of cobots while guaranteeing the well-being and satisfaction of their workforce.

Keywords: Collaborative Robots, Cobots, Employee Satisfaction, Industry 5.0

INTRODUCTION

In Industry 5.0, automation is becoming more human-centric, with cobots serving as essential tools to enhance human capabilities rather than taking their place. Cobots are made to collaborate with humans on jobs regarded as dangerous, repetitive, or requiring a high degree of precision. This collaboration aims to increase productivity and safety at work. However, the incorporation of cobots also raises concerns about how it might affect employee roles and satisfaction.

IMPACTS OF COBOTS ON EMPLOYEE ROLES AND SATISFACTION

Cobots have the power to drastically change the roles that employees play in organizations. Nowadays, cobots can be responsible for handling manual and repetitive jobs previously performed by humans, freeing up human workers to perform more sophisticated, innovative, and important tasks. The introduction of cobots in production settings has resulted in the reallocation of tasks, with employees taking on positions involving decision-making, problem-solving, and oversight of robotic operations (Villani et al., 2018). Additionally, by taking over physically demanding jobs, cobots improve workplace ergonomics by lowering the risk of

workplace injuries. According to a study by Kadir and Broberg (2020), cobots can increase workers' job satisfaction by lessening their physical strain, freeing them up, and allowing them to concentrate on mentally and physically demanding operations.

Cobots have a number of impacts on employees' levels of satisfaction. Firstly, cobots allow employees to perform higher-order operations, which can enrich their jobs. As their work becomes more significant and varied when they collaborate with cobots, employees report higher levels of job satisfaction, as seen in Eimontaite et al. (2019) and Gervasi et al. (2019). Their ability to learn new skills and work together with cutting-edge technology also enhances their professional development and sense of fulfillment at work. The creation of a human-robot collaboration scale that guarantees efficiency and safety is highlighted by Gervasi et al. (2019), who reported enhanced job satisfaction. Similar findings were made by Eimontaite et al. (2019), who discovered that efficient task allocation and open communication between humans and cobots can lower anxiety and boost general job satisfaction.

However, the integration of collaborative robots (cobots) in workplaces introduces significant challenges, particularly job displacement. Liu et al. (2023) found that robot adoption in China causes worker anxiety and stress due to job loss fears, negatively impacting job security and satisfaction. This study highlights that automation can negatively impact job security and satisfaction. Similarly, Acemoglu and Restrepo (2020) demonstrated that for every robot added per 1,000 workers in the U.S., a noticeable decline in wages by 0.42% was observed, and also a reduction in the employment-to-population ratio by 0.2 percentage points, translating to a loss of about 400,000 jobs. The impact is more pronounced in regions with high robot deployment, where one robot addition will reduce employment by six workers. Additionally, TechReport (2023) warned that automation might eliminate up to 73 million jobs globally by 2025, emphasizing the need for reskilling to mitigate workforce impacts.

These findings highlight the need for a balanced approach to cobot integration, maximizing productivity benefits while addressing displacement risks and ensuring worker well-being.

TECHNIQUES FOR INCREASING EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

In order to optimize cobot benefits and sustain increased employee satisfaction, organizations need to implement the following approaches:

1. Programs for Reskilling and Upskilling: Providing employees the tools needed for efficient collaboration with cobots may reduce worries about losing their jobs and, thus, increase their job satisfaction. Opportunities for continuous development will ensure employees remain valuable assets in an organization with advanced technology.
2. Inclusive Implementation Processes: Engaging employees during the cobot integration planning and execution phases can help them feel more accepted and in control of the process. Clear communication of the goals and benefits of cobot adoption can reduce anxiety and foster confidence.
3. Emphasis on Job Design: Redesigning jobs to include more meaningful and engaging duties can result in job enrichment. Employees can devote more time to areas needing human ingenuity and critical thought as ordinary activities have been delegated to the cobots.

4. Well-being Initiatives: Improving overall employee well-being can be achieved by addressing the ergonomic benefits of cobots, such as lowering physical strain. Programs that support both physical and emotional well-being can make employees happier and more productive.

CONCLUSION

One major development in Industry 5.0 is the introduction of collaborative robots in the workplace, which brings both benefits and challenges. By taking over dangerous and repetitive tasks, cobots can improve employee roles and job satisfaction. However, they also require careful management to address concerns about job displacement. Organizations can guarantee a favorable effect on employee satisfaction by engaging employees in the implementation process, investing in reskilling programs, and emphasizing job design and well-being.

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