Analyzing the Structural Impacts of Occupational Replacement and AI Safety Risks on Social Governance

Xiang Miao

Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

Abstract: The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is profoundly reshaping systems of social governance, evolving from an auxiliary tool into a core component of contemporary governance architectures. AI's capabilities in data processing, automation, and self-learning have significantly improved the efficiency of public administration and social services; meanwhile, they have also introduced challenges related to occupational restructuring, technical security, and ethical governance. This paper focuses on the structural impacts of occupational substitution and AI safety risks on social governance. Evidence suggests that AI not only replaces low-skilled jobs but is increasingly penetrating professional domains such as healthcare, law, accounting, and education, which may trigger large-scale structural unemployment and distributive pressures. In addition, the development of embodied intelligence raises concerns about algorithmic bias, system reliability, and value alignment, which become even more complex due to the irreversibility of technological adoption and fragmented global governance. To address these challenges, this paper proposes governance strategies including proactive workforce planning, reskilling and upskilling programs, algorithmic transparency, auditing mechanisms, and human-in-the-loop supervision for human–AI collaboration. This study provides theoretical and practical references for understanding the systemic effects of AI integration on social governance.

Keywords: occupational substitution; safety risks; social governance; artificial intelligence; governance

1. Introduction

With the rapid growth of computing power and data resources, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an important technological force in social governance. AI can not only assist decision-making, but also optimize governance processes through autonomous learning, improving service efficiency and predictive capability. However, the widespread deployment of AI also brings considerable pressure from occupational substitution and safety risks, posing new challenges to traditional social governance and public policy (Frey & Osborne, 2017; Arntz, Gregory, & Zierahn, 2016)[1][2]. This paper aims to analyze the structural impacts of AI on social governance in terms of occupational substitution and safety risks, and to propose corresponding governance strategies.

2. Applications and Effectiveness of AI in Social Governance

AI contributes to social governance primarily through two mechanisms: data-driven decision optimization and the automation of repetitive tasks. In areas such as urban management, public safety, healthcare services, traffic regulation, and social security, AI can integrate multi-source data from sensors, databases, and social media to enable real-time monitoring, predictive analytics, and optimized resource allocation (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014)[3]. For instance, machine learning algorithms can analyze historical and real-time traffic data to improve signal timing and reduce congestion, while computer vision systems enhance surveillance networks to detect public safety incidents more accurately.

At the same time, AI can support policy design through natural language processing and knowledge graphs, improving the consistency and precision of public service delivery. NLP tools are capable of processing vast amounts of public opinions and legal documents to assist in formulating more responsive and inclusive policies. Knowledge graphs help governments visualize complex social relationships and resource flows, facilitating more coherent and evidence-based decision-making processes.

Nevertheless, excessive reliance on automation may weaken the resilience of governance systems when coping with complex or unexpected events, such as natural disasters or cross-border crises, where human judgment and adaptive strategies remain critical. Moreover, the pervasive use of AI may raise concerns about data bias, algorithmic discrimination, and privacy infringement. If training data reflects existing social inequalities, AI systems could perpetuate or even exacerbate these biases, leading to unfair treatment of certain demographic groups. Additionally, large-scale data collection and analysis might intrude into individuals'private lives without sufficient transparency or consent. Therefore, while AI offers

significant efficiency gains, its deployment must be carefully regulated to ensure fairness, accountability, and the protection of fundamental rights.

3. Occupational Substitution and Governance Pressures

The development of AI generally follows a trajectory of functional substitution, efficiency improvement, and structural reconfiguration. In the early stage, AI mainly replaced low-skilled jobs such as parking attendants, ticket clerks, and cashiers. Today, however, professional occupations are also increasingly affected. Level-3 autonomous driving has been deployed in some cities, and AI applications in the healthcare and legal sectors are becoming more mature (Zhao & Wu, 2025; Babashahi et al., 2024)[4][5]. For example, Google's Med-PaLM 2 has achieved near-clinician performance in certain diagnostic tasks, while ChatGPT-4 can support professional work in accounting, auditing, news writing, legal assistance, and administrative management.

The social consequences of occupational substitution are not limited to changes in employment structure; they may also trigger large-scale unemployment, intensify social inequality, and increase the burden on public services. Reports from the OECD (2016) and McKinsey (2017) indicate that high-skilled and middle-skilled jobs are also exposed to automation risks. Without proactive interventions, tax systems, education and training programs, and social welfare systems may face substantial pressure. Even if basic livelihood issues are addressed, individuals may still struggle with psychological well-being, social integration, and self-worth, which require policy and education-based responses.

4. AI Safety and Governance Challenges

AI safety risks mainly manifest in two dimensions: technical reliability and value alignment. First, algorithmic bias, hallucinations, or erroneous predictions may lead to severe consequences in critical decision-making, especially in medical diagnosis, judicial decisions, and public safety (Floridi, 2020)[6]. Second, value alignment refers to whether AI behavior remains consistent with human interests. With the development of embodied intelligence, AI may gain the capability to act autonomously, while traditional ethical norms and legal constraints may be difficult to fully enforce at the technical level (Bostrom, 2014)[7]. Fragmented global governance and insufficient international coordination further complicate cross-border AI regulation and the establishment of unified standards (Susskind & Susskind, 2015)[8].

5. Governance Strategies and Policy Recommendations

To address occupational substitution and AI safety risks, this paper proposes a set of governance strategies, including proactive workforce planning that incorporates AI substitution risks into social policy and career development planning to prepare for job transitions and skills development in advance; reskilling and educational upgrading through lifelong learning opportunities and reskilling programs to help workers adapt to emerging occupations and changing skill requirements; algorithmic transparency and auditing mechanisms to ensure AI decision-making is interpretable, traceable, and accountable in order to reduce technological risks; human–AI collaborative oversight that retains meaningful human intervention in high-stakes decision-making to balance efficiency and safety; and cross-border coordination and governance mechanisms that encourage international organizations and regional alliances to establish harmonized standards and regulatory frameworks to reduce unilateral operational risks, thereby balancing technological progress with social stability and providing policymakers with a systematic governance approach.

6. Conclusion

AI exerts structural impacts on social governance through occupational substitution and safety risks. While AI can improve efficiency and service quality, it may also bring risks of structural unemployment, exacerbated social inequality, and governance instability. Through proactive risk assessment, workforce planning, algorithmic transparency, and human-in-the-loop oversight, potential negative impacts can be mitigated. Future research should further examine AI ethics, social equity, and global governance mechanisms to support the coordinated development of AI and social governance.

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Author Bio

Xiang Miao (1974—), male, born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, Doctor, Associate Professor, whose research interests include strategic management and investment management.