



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

The fear and the future: what the emergence of AI can mean for our youth

ABIR HOSSAIN

Abir Hossain is a sub-editor at Campus, Rising Stars, and Star Youth.



The notion that artificial intelligence (AI) is going to rewire the basis of our understanding of many entities, even at this point in time, seems a little far-fetched. Yet, what it does have the potential to do is lead us into new territory. As things stand, though, most users are still trying to figure out its limitations, while those who develop it seek to shatter them. In between the swinging tides stand the youth. Left in limbo, the young demographic is left wondering precisely how disruptive artificial intelligence really is and what its development means for their future.

Zunayed Ahmed, a third-year software engineering student at Seneca Polytechnic in Canada and a software automation intern at Communications

tedious, you're expected to know a lot more and do more as well."

The development of generative AI has been meteoric. Most constraints that were conspicuous even a year ago have been rectified to various extents. Although new concerns have emerged, its integration into the professional realm has been evident. Even through AI's limited capacity, it is able to execute tasks that are typically reserved for entry-level workers, which is to say repetitive and often mundane tasks that are low-stakes. Such a prospect is understandably anxiety-inducing for fresh graduates as well as for those on the precipice of graduation and even those who are currently pursuing their education.

SUMMARY

1. AI is changing entry-level work, especially in tech and creative fields, increasing anxiety among young people.
2. Students and fresh graduates are unsure how disruptive AI will be as it is able to execute tasks that were previously reserved for them.
3. In Bangladesh, youth unemployment is rising, and although AI is not the main cause, it adds pressure to an already weak job market.
4. Experts suggest AI will change how people work rather than fully replace human labour.
5. Human skills like creativity, empathy, judgement, and adaptability are expected to become more valuable.

what AI tools can be leveraged to your benefit. This is something I do myself, and it does make working easier. I also think the ability to use AI tools might become a requirement in the future," emphasises Hossain.

"Using AI in my workplace is encouraged. My employers have seen how powerful a tool it is. In fact, we have a proprietary AI model that employees are expected to use. In my workflow, I use it for debugging, and sometimes to find fixes as well. I will also use it to generate snippets of code that may be considered repetitive, low-risk, and not complicated. Lastly, I use it to write documentation whenever I am finishing up work on a big file, which is supposed to guide the next person who is going to work on it," Ahmed affirmed.

A point of contention still remains, of course. WEF asks that if AI and algorithms are contributing to a larger proportion of output and income, then where does that leave people? It, thus, becomes imperative that the significance of human-machine collaboration is reinforced when these inquiries are made.

Whether such considerations are going to be made remains to be seen. Based on findings from the World Bank, 1.2 billion young people in emerging economies will become working-age adults. In contrast, the job market is projected to only create 420 million jobs, leaving almost 800 million people in a precarious employment position. To tackle an issue of this magnitude, employers across the globe are emphasising the need to reskill and upskill.

"No technology is inherently good or bad. We can harness it for productivity and efficiency increases, which is how we utilise the benefits. But we can also not be prepared for it, for which we may pay a price in terms of lost employment and opportunities," Salma Begum explains.

The conversation surrounding the impact of AI tends to devolve quickly into one of paranoia, where the most plausible outcome is envisioned to be the complete substitution of human labour. While these fears are by no means unfounded, what they do require us to do is take a step back, which can be difficult due to the uncertainty that has cloaked the entire situation. Nonetheless, the need to do so remains integral.

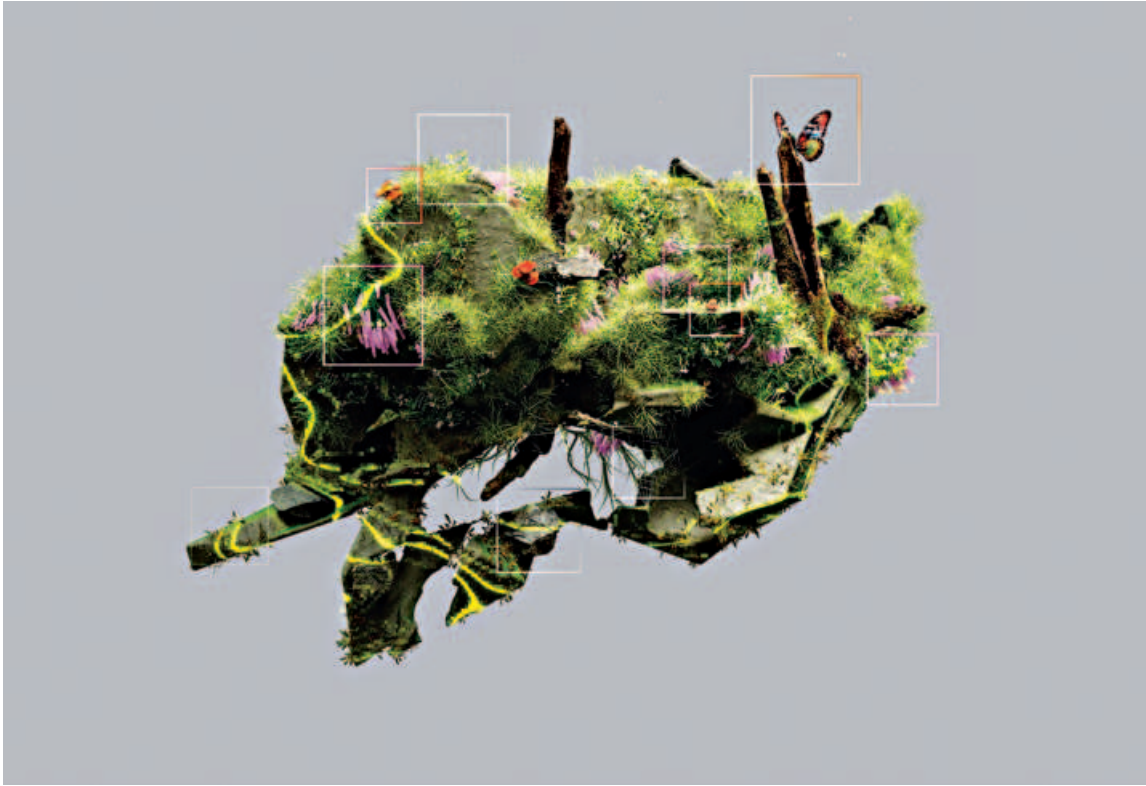


IMAGE: GOOGLE DEEPMIND

& Power Industries (CPI), explains how he thinks entry-level jobs in tech have been impacted due to the emergence of AI: "The bar has been raised. For example, let's say you are writing an API—Application Programming Interface. What you'd previously have to do was go through the documentation, read it, understand it, and then code. Now, it takes minutes to have a skeleton code. Because the workload is less

Anica Hossain, a graduate student of communications at University of Liberal Arts (ULAB), a graphic designer, and owner of art merchandise business Anico, discusses the shift she has observed: "The development of AI has impacted the industry a bit. A lot of employers and brands tend not to hire graphic designers. They're convinced that AI models can generate social media posts, write captions, and brainstorm

ideas. But output that's churned out by models distinctly looks like it was made by AI. Not everyone wants that kind of work. People still look for the human touch in the design. So, I don't feel super threatened yet."

"Each artist and designer has their own distinct style, which I don't think AI models can replicate yet. As an artist, I am unsettled that the work we create is used to train these models. In the future, these tools might create output that can emulate artists' distinct styles. Right now, however, you still need designers to refine work generated by AI," Hossain adds.

Having spent their formative years pursuing a qualification, only for it to be deemed inadequate, is discouraging. The purpose of entry-level jobs has been to help young graduates transition from the classroom to the professional realm. It is a period of training, one that isn't just meant to teach and enhance the skills of fresh graduates but also allows them to figure out what kind of work they want to do. For such a crucial part of the process to become seemingly obsolete is disruptive in more than one way. In Bangladesh, particularly, this can amplify an already existing problem.

In a report by the World Bank, it was stated that unemployment in Bangladesh amongst tertiary-educated youth has increased significantly, with university-educated youth making up 27.8 percent of the total unemployment in 2022. An alarming rise from 9.7 percent in 2013. The rise in employment cannot be attributed to the rise of generative AI, though. However, with job creation stagnating and AI's rapid

improvement following in tandem, the state of the job market hangs in the balance.

Salma Begum, PhD, an associate professor at the Department of Economics and Social Sciences at BRAC University and a labour economist, analyses the dynamics of the current Bangladeshi workforce: "If we look at the research, it shows that the Bangladeshi labour market is at a low exposure level. Our exposure is well below the regional average when comparing neighbouring countries. This is because we depend more on agriculture and have informal services, which have not seen much automation so far. Digital inequality, in terms of access to digital literacy and relevant education, is another contributing factor."

"AI models learn from data, and our country's availability of good-quality, reliable data is low. This is a problem because while AI will eventually affect our market, our low exposure currently indicates our low preparedness for it," she adds.

According to a report by the World Economic Forum (WEF), AI and information processing are projected to displace 9 million jobs, while creating 11 million new ones. It is expected that automation alone will cause 5 million jobs to be displaced. It must, however, be noted that the net disruption in the job market will be positive, with more jobs being created than displaced. What will be subject to change, though, is how people work, with the dynamic between humans and machines expected to alter.

"It is important to know and learn