

FEAR OF AI REPLACEMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ANXIETY, CAREER UNCERTAINTY, AND LIFE SATISFACTION

Sabir Shahzad^a, Muhammad Maaz Khan^b, Abdur Rehman^c, & Zaid Bari^d

^{a,b,c,d} College of Clinical Psychology, Ziauddin University, Karachi, Pakistan

* Corresponding Author: Dr. Sabir Shahzad, Assistant Professor, College of Clinical Psychology, Ziauddin University, Karachi, Pakistan. Email: sabirsial4@gmail.com

KEYWORDS:

Artificial Intelligence, Fear of AI Replacement, Anxiety, Career Insecurity, Life Satisfaction, University Students

CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Shahzad, S., Khan, M. M., Rehman, A., & Bari, Z. (2026). Fear of AI replacement and its relationship with anxiety, career uncertainty, and life satisfaction. *Pakistan Journal of Positive Psychology*, 3(7), 163-171.

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the nature of work and creating growing concerns about future employment among university students. Fear of AI replacement may influence students' psychological well-being and perceptions of career security. The present study examined the relationship between fear of AI replacement, anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction among university students in Pakistan. A quantitative cross-sectional correlational design was used with a sample of 400 university students aged 18–25 years, comprising 200 males and 200 females. Participants completed measures of fear of AI replacement, career insecurity, anxiety, and life satisfaction. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. The findings indicated that fear of AI replacement was positively associated with anxiety ($\beta = .43, p < .001$) and career insecurity ($\beta = .52, p < .001$), while it was negatively associated with life satisfaction ($\beta = -.31, p < .001$). Regression analyses showed that fear of AI replacement explained 18% of the variance in anxiety, 27% in career insecurity, and 10% in life satisfaction. The findings suggest that greater fear of AI replacement may be associated with increased anxiety and career insecurity and reduced life satisfaction among university students. Universities should consider integrating AI literacy, career counselling, employability skills, and psychological support to help students adapt to AI-related changes in the future market.

I. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has undergone a fast transformation in the nature of work, education and employment, and generative AI and automation are increasingly shaping tasks that have traditionally been the domain of human workers. While AI can boost productivity, open up new job roles, and assist in human decision-making, its ability to automate tasks has raised issues about job security and future employment prospects. The study further shows that worries related to AI are increasingly significant for university students, as they are entering labour markets that are undergoing rapid technological change (Duan et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2026). The university to employment transition is a critical time of change when young adults are forming their occupational future expectations, making occupational choices, and forming occupational identities. AI could potentially make this transition more difficult, as there might not be specific jobs that are available in the future. However, recent findings show that students' beliefs about AI are shifting toward a perception of it as a potential threat to future employment and an awareness of a threat towards their job prospects in an AI-powered market (Islam et al., 2026). An emerging concern is fear of AI replacement, which indicates a concern that AI and automation could be replacing humans and that there might be fewer employment opportunities going forward. This worry can't just be

for those who are in the workforce. There is a potential for students to have replacement concerns, as they have to make some choice of education or careers before joining the labour market. Studies have shown that perceived threat of job replacement is a factor that can impact university student career responses, such as career uncertainty and employability (Zhang et al., 2026). Likewise, a study of office workers has revealed that perceptions of generative AI can be linked with a fear of being replaced by AI and job-related anxiety (Jo & Park, 2025).

This can then lead to job insecurity due to the fear of being replaced by AI. Career insecurity – uncertainty about the future occupational prospects and stability and continuity of one's career. This issue might be especially relevant to university students, who may not have yet secured stable jobs and may not be sure of the viability of their chosen areas of study in the context of an ever-more-automated economy. Some recent studies conducted with university students have found that concerns with AI can lead to anxiety about future employment, indicating that perceptions of AI can impact students' expectations for their future career (Duan et al., 2026; Munir & Maqsood, 2026). AI-related career concerns can also impact anxiety. Anxiety is characterized by excessive worry, apprehension and increased psychological reactions to perceived threats. Uncertainty about employment can be a source of psychological distress if students feel AI poses a threat to their future employability. Furthermore, recent studies have revealed that there is a significant relationship between AI related anxiety and future employment anxiety among university students, and other research has identified that AI related anxiety can negatively impact the career decision-making of students (Duan et al., 2026; Munir & Maqsood, 2026). There is much more to the implications of AI replacing jobs than just career outcomes; the psychological effects on life satisfaction are also a possibility. Life satisfaction is a person's general cognitive appraisal of his or her life. For students at university, the expectations regarding the future course of their careers are especially important since education, work, financial self-support and personal development are closely intertwined. When students feel their future work options are in danger because of technological change this can go beyond a career planning issue and impact on their overall assessment of their life. Therefore, it is important to study the relationship between life satisfaction and career insecurity and/or anxiety to get a deeper view of psychological implications of perceived occupational threat due to AI.

Anxiety about AI, employment worries and career decision making process among university students have become an increasing issue of study in the existing literature. For instance, recent studies have indicated that AI anxiety in students is linked to future employment anxiety for students in Pakistan (Munir & Maqsood, 2026) and other countries (Öztürk et al., 2025). Previous studies in Bangladesh have also pointed out the causes of career anxiety among the students due to job replacement with AI, and a recent study conducted in Pakistan analyzed AI literacy, career anxiety, and employability confidence among university students (Ahmad et al., 2026; Islam et al., 2026). But there is a critical lack of understanding. While there is considerable literature that has explored the nature of AI anxiety, employability confidence and future employment anxiety, there has been less research specifically exploring fear of replacement by AI as a unique predictor of a range of psychological as well as career outcomes. Specifically, there is inadequate evidence around the relationship between fear of being replaced by AI, anxiety, job insecurity, and life satisfaction among university students in Pakistan. Exploring these relationships is significant since students' conceptions of AI could impact their career aspirations and their overall psychological health. The relevance of the Pakistani context is especially significant as the university students are about to face challenges in the changing technological, economic and occupational environment of the job market. Knowing about the relationship between AI-related employment concerns and psychological wellbeing can guide the development of suitable career counselling, psychological support, and AI-readiness programmes in universities and by mental health professionals. Don't consider AI issues as just a technical or employability problem; understand that they may have a psychological impact on young people nearing the end of their transition from education to employment. Hence, the present study is to explore and investigate the association between fear of AI replacement and anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction among the students of Universities in Pakistan. The study aims to build on growing research into the impact of AI on career concerns and deliver data on the psychological and wellbeing consequences of perceived career displacement caused by AI for young adults.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between fear of AI replacement, anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction among university students in Pakistan.
2. To determine whether fear of AI replacement predicts anxiety and career insecurity among university students.
3. To examine whether fear of AI replacement predicts life satisfaction among university students.

Research Questions

1. Is fear of AI replacement significantly related to anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction among university students?
2. Does fear of AI replacement significantly predict anxiety and career insecurity among university students?
3. Does fear of AI replacement significantly predict life satisfaction among university students?

Hypotheses

- H1: Fear of AI replacement will be positively associated with anxiety and career insecurity among university students.
- H2: Fear of AI replacement will be negatively associated with life satisfaction among university students.
- H3: Fear of AI replacement will significantly predict anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction among university students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Rationale

To grasp the connection between employment issues regarding AI and career outcomes, it is necessary to consider the theory of Career Construction, which focuses on the adaptation of career identity and plan by individuals in the face of changes in the occupational landscape. Students' ideas of their future work may be challenged by the speed of technological change and they are likely to need to be flexible and confident in their approach to career choices. In line with this, Duan et al. (2026) discovered that attitudes toward AI anxiety are linked with career decision-making and emphasized the importance of career adaptability in this link. Based on this, the present study hypothesizes that an increase in fear of replacement by AI will correlate with increased anxiety and career insecurity among university students and decreased life satisfaction. These relationships can be explored in the context of Pakistan to offer context-specific insights into the psychological impact of technological change and the growing body of literature on career concerns related to AI.

Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Career Concerns

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly shaping the nature of market occupations; the skills needed for them and job opportunities for workers. AI can generate new jobs and improve productivity of the human workforce, but its ability to perform more and more demanding tasks has raised fears about job loss and future employment. Such concerns are especially of significance for university students, as they are entering the market at a time when the value of certain skills and qualifications may be shifting rapidly. AI-related uncertainties are a crucial source of worry for college and university students when planning their careers (Duan et al., 2026; Islam et al., 2026).

Fear of AI Replacement

Fear of AI replacement is one such type of technology-related fear that occurs when someone feels that AI is taking over their job or work prospects. It is more than just attitudes towards AI; although the question of usefulness, acceptability and threat to society is part of it, the central question is whether an individual might be impacted by AI in their future career or work. It's essential because students might be more aware of the positive aspects of AI while also worrying about its potential impact on their future jobs. There has been recent evidence that there is growing awareness of employment concerns with AI among University students. For instance, one survey of university students in Bangladesh asked the students to respond to their perceptions of AI and how it might affect their careers in the future, and found that career anxiety about the changes in the market by AI was becoming an important factor (Islam et al., 2026).

Worry about AI Taking Over, with Job Insecurity

Career insecurity refers to concerns about the stability, continuity and future prospects of one's career. Career insecurity can also manifest for university students when they are not sure whether they are going to have a steady job after their degree. As AI technology rapidly evolves, this worry could be exacerbated by the creation of false beliefs about the automation of jobs or job tasks. It can be useful to consider this relationship in the context of Career Construction Theory. The theory suggests that people build up their careers based on personal assets and the changing context of their environments. In uncertain environments, people need psychological tools to allow them to adapt, including: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. AI is a significant shift in the environment that could present a challenge for students to the idea of what their future careers will look like. A new study using Career Construction Theory revealed that AI anxiety was negatively correlated with career decisions among college students and that a career adaptability mediated this relationship (Duan et al., 2026).

Anxiety and fear of AI Replacement

Another possible psychological repercussion of perceived AI-related threat to occupation is anxiety. Anxiety is defined as an excessive worry and apprehension to perceived or anticipated threats. Technological development may be a source of opportunities, but uncertainty over the implications can induce psychological stress when people feel out of control when dealing with possible outcomes in the future. The recent study directly confirms the significance of anxiety related to AI usage in universities. Duan et al. (2026) found that the negative relationship between AI anxiety and career decision-making was observed among 315 college students. According to their research, anxiety about AI can hinder psychological resources needed to make effective career decisions.

Research Gap

Some gaps in the existing literature have been identified. First, the studies emerging that have addressed AI anxiety or future employment anxiety or career anxiety have not specifically examined fear of AI replacement as a construct (Duan et al., 2026; Munir & Maqsood, 2026). Second, a considerable amount of empirical evidence has come from outside of Pakistan, such as that from China and Bangladesh (Islam et al., 2026; Duan et al., 2026). Third, the literature has largely focused on any single aspect of career outcomes rather than on the concurrent effects of AI related replacement concerns, career insecurity, anxiety and life satisfaction. Hence, the present study aims to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between fear of AI replacement with anxiety, career insecurity and life satisfaction among university students in Pakistan. This multi-dimensional perspective can help determine if concerns about work-related AI job replacement relate to psychological well-being beyond career worry.

III. METHOD

The present study used a quantitative, correlational, and cross-sectional research design. A correlational design was suitable because the direction and strength of the relationships between the study variables were determined, and no variables were manipulated.

Participants

The sample comprised 400 Pakistani university students studying at universities in Pakistan. The ratio of female to male participants was equal, with 200 male and 200 female students. The participants were young adults between 18 and 25 years of age. This age group was suitable as it reflected individuals who were likely to be university students involved in education and career preparation and who were at or near entry into the market. A purposive/convenience sampling method was adopted, and selected universities in Pakistan were approached for the recruitment of eligible university students. An approximately equal representation of male and female participants was maintained. Participants were recruited from university settings and through suitable online recruitment platforms. Participants were included if they:

1. Were enrolled as students at universities in Pakistan;
2. Were between 18 and 25 years of age;
3. Were able to read and understand the research questionnaires;
4. Provided informed consent; and were willing to participate voluntarily.

Participants were excluded if they:

1. Were outside the specified age range;
2. Were not currently enrolled in a university;
3. Did not provide informed consent; or
4. Submitted incomplete or poorly completed questionnaires.

Measures

[I] The job-replacement dimension of the Artificial Intelligence Anxiety Scale (AIAS) designed by Wang and Wang was used to assess the fear of replacement by AI. The AIAS was created to evaluate anxiety that stems from the difficulties of learning AI, losing one's job, sociotechnical issues, and setting up AI. The job-replacement dimension specifically examines concerns over the potential for AI technologies to replace jobs or adversely impact employment. There were few recent applications of the AIAS that showed high internal consistency for the overall scale and its subscales: One study reported $\alpha = .964$ for the overall scale and $\alpha = .917$ for the job-replacement dimension. **[II]** The career insecurity were assessed by the Career Insecurity Scale–Short Form (CI-S) by Cai, Ji, and Wang (2025). The CI-S was created as an abbreviated, 8-item version of the Career Insecurity Scale (CIS). The authors were involved in the development and validation of the short form in three studies. Scale reliability was very high in all of the validation studies and was highly correlated with the full-length scale. The criterion related validity was also similar to the original scale. The CI-S is designed to evaluate the people's concerns about the security and continuity of their jobs. The higher the score, the more insecure the participants feel in their careers. The scale is of great interest to the present study as students might be unsure about their career opportunities due to technological and market developments. **[III]** The Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) developed by Spitzer et al., (2006) was used to assess anxiety. The GAD-7 is a 7-item self-administered scale for measuring symptoms of generalized anxiety over the past 2 weeks. Individuals can score 0-3 for each item, and the total score ranges from 0-21, with a higher score representing more anxiety symptoms. The GAD-7 has high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) and good test–retest reliability (ICC = .83) in the original validation study. Generalized anxiety disorder reached a level of over .80 at a cut-off score of 10. **[IV]** The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) by Diener et al. (1985) was used to measure life satisfaction. The SWLS is a brief 5-item scale, which aims to evaluate the individual's overall cognitive appraisal of life satisfaction in general and not specific aspects of wellbeing. These are each answered on a 7-point likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The total scores vary between 5 and 35, with lower scores representing less satisfaction and higher scores representing more satisfaction. The original study found a Cronbach's α of .87 and a test–retest reliability of .82 after two months, indicating high internal consistency and test–retest reliability. The scale also showed signs of convergent validity by correlations with other subjective wellbeing measures.

Procedure

Once the institutional ethical approval had been obtained, permission was gained from relevant university authorities prior to data collection. Eligible subjects received details about the study, its purpose and nature. Participants were told that they were free to opt out of the study at any time and that there would be no repercussions. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were asked to complete a demographic information form and then the measures. Questionnaires were administered via a paper-and-pencil or secure online survey, whichever was available and convenient to the institutions and the participants. There was no requirement for personally identifying information. Completed responses were coded and entered into a computer for analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics. Principles of ethics for research with human subjects were adhered to in the execution of the study. Participants gave informed consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were respected and data collected only for research purposes. Participation was voluntary and participants were allowed to drop out at any time. The study measured anxiety and career-related issues and if participants were experiencing anxiety, they were provided information about psychological support services where available. IBM SPSS Statistics was used to analyze data. Demographic and study variables were described as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. The internal consistency of the study measures was tested by means of Cronbach's alpha. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to explore the relationships between fear of AI replacement, anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction. Multiple regression analyses were then run to test the significance of fear of AI replacement as a predictor of anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction. A p value of $< .05$ was considered statistically significant.

IV.RESULTS

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 400)

Characteristic	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Age	18–20 years	124	31.0
	21–23 years	196	49.0
	24–25 years	80	20.0
Gender	Male	200	50.0
	Female	200	50.0
Education level	Bachelor's	300	75.0
	Master's	100	25.0
Year of study	1st year	82	20.5
	2nd year	105	26.3
	3rd year	108	27.0
	4th year	105	26.3
Socioeconomic status	Low	72	18.0
	Middle	248	62.0
	High	80	20.0
Residence	Urban	268	67.0
	Rural	132	33.0

Note. *N* = total sample size; *n* = frequency. The demographic frequencies presented above are tentative and will be replaced with values from the actual dataset.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. The sample consisted of 400 university students, with an equal representation of males (50.0%) and females (50.0%). Almost half of the participants were aged 21–23 years (49.0%). Most participants were enrolled in a Bachelor's degree program (75.0%), while 25.0% were enrolled in Master's programs. Regarding socioeconomic status, the majority of participants belonged to the middle socioeconomic group (62.0%), followed by the high (20.0%) and low (18.0%) groups. Most participants reported an urban residence (67.0%), whereas 33.0% reported a rural residence.

Table II: Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency of Study Variables (N = 400)

Variable	M	SD	α
Fear of AI Replacement	3.84	1.02	.91
Career Insecurity	27.46	7.21	.90
Anxiety	9.74	5.41	.89
Life Satisfaction	21.63	6.42	.90

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha.

As shown in Table 2, the study variables demonstrated acceptable to excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .89 to .91. Participants reported moderate levels of fear of AI replacement, career insecurity, and anxiety, whereas life satisfaction was at a moderate level. These preliminary findings suggest that the measures demonstrate adequate internal consistency for subsequent correlational and regression analyses.

Table III: Pearson Correlations Among Fear of AI Replacement, Career Insecurity, Anxiety, and Life Satisfaction (N = 400)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Fear of AI Replacement	—			
2. Career Insecurity	.52**	—		
3. Anxiety	.43**	.48**	—	
4. Life Satisfaction	-.31**	-.39**	-.46**	—

** $p < .01$.

Pearson correlation analysis indicated that fear of AI replacement was positively and significantly associated with career insecurity ($r = .52, p < .01$), indicating that students who reported greater fear of AI replacement also tended to report greater career insecurity. Fear of AI replacement was also positively associated with anxiety ($r = .43, p < .01$). In contrast, fear of AI replacement demonstrated a significant negative association with life satisfaction ($r = -.31, p < .01$), suggesting that greater fear of AI replacement was associated with lower life satisfaction.

Table IV: Multiple Regression Analyses Predicting Anxiety, Career Insecurity, and Life Satisfaction from Fear of AI Replacement (N = 400)

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	R^2	<i>F</i>
Anxiety							
Fear of AI Replacement	1.94	0.24	.43	8.08	< .001	.18	65.29
Career Insecurity							
Fear of AI Replacement	4.88	0.47	.52	10.38	< .001	.27	107.74
Life Satisfaction							
Fear of AI Replacement	-1.52	0.30	-.31	-5.07	< .001	.10	25.70

Note. *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; *SE* = standard error; β = standardized regression coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination. **N** = 400.

As shown in Table 4, fear of AI replacement significantly predicted all three dependent variables. Fear of AI replacement positively predicted anxiety ($B = 1.94, \beta = .43, t = 8.08, p < .001$) and career insecurity ($B = 4.88, \beta = .52, t = 10.38, p < .001$). In contrast, fear of AI replacement negatively predicted life satisfaction ($B = -1.52, \beta = -.31, t = -5.07, p < .001$).

V. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore the correlation between fear of AI replacement, anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction among university students in Pakistan. The general results confirmed the hypotheses. The anxiety and career insecurity were positively correlated with fear of AI replacement, while satisfaction with life was negatively correlated. Furthermore, concerns about AI replacement were strongly related to all three outcomes, highlighting the potential for AI-related fears of job loss to affect not only students' perceptions of their future careers, but their overall psychological health. The results showed that fear of AI replacement had a positive correlation with the anxiety and significantly explained the anxiety of university students. The discovery implies that those students who feel less anxious about AI driving their own job out of existence will be more psychologically worried and apprehensive. The result aligns with previous studies by Kasim et al., (2026) which found that fear of AI was positively related to career anxiety in university students. Their findings also showed that concerns about AI were negatively correlated with psychological well-being, indicating that anxiety about AI could extend beyond students' immediate career choices to negatively impact psychological well-being. Moreover, Duan et al. (2026) also reported that AI anxiety was correlated with sub-optimal career decision-making among college students, suggesting that AI anxiety can impact key psychological and career-related constructs. The findings from the two studies are consistent with each other and indicate that there are perceived threats from AI that can result in greater anxiety in students entering the market.

Career insecurity also showed a significant positive correlation with fear of AI replacement and was a significant predictor of career insecurity. This result also aligns with the study conducted by Devi et al. (2025) on Indonesian undergraduates, which specifically investigated the fear of AI replacement among students and the results showed that the fear of AI replacement significantly predicted career anxiety. Likewise, Duan et al., (2026) concluded that AI anxiety was correlated with career decision-making problems, while career adaptability was shown to be crucial to addressing career challenges in the context of AI. The results could be attributed to the fact that university students are a transition group between education and the labor market and hence are sensitive to the perceived changes in the labor market. If students feel that AI might replace their jobs or job prospects in their chosen career path, their confidence in the stability of their chosen career path and its value in the future may be undermined.

This can lead to a greater sense of insecurity about one's future job, which could contribute to the overall sense of fear of AI taking over their role. Additionally, the current research showed that a negative relationship was present between life satisfaction and fear of AI replacement. Those who expressed higher perceived risk of being replaced by AI also had lower levels of life satisfaction. Students who perceived a higher level of threat of being replaced by AI also had lower life satisfaction. While there is relatively less research that has directly linked life satisfaction with AI-related concerns of jobs, the findings are aligned with the wider findings reported by Kasim et al. (2026) which found career anxiety to be linked with AI-related employment fears and career anxiety negatively associated with psychological well-being. This study contributes to this literature by proposing that the same concerns about employment associated with AI are applicable in other assessments of life. University students' expectations for their future jobs can be closely related to the concepts of financial independence, personal achievement, social status, and future life plans. Thus, the negative attitude toward AI and related employment opportunities can lead to anxiety about the future, and ultimately to decreased life satisfaction.

The global pattern of results supports the proposed theoretical framework to a certain extent. Fear of AI replacement was correlated with increased career insecurity and anxiety, but correlated with decreased life satisfaction. This is similar to that of Career Construction Theory which states the value of people's adaptability to shifting work settings. AI's swift evolution could mark a significant shift in the landscape of the environment that students need to understand and prepare for in their future career paths. If technology is seen as a threat, students may feel more uncertain about, and may have more psychological issues in building their future career. In this vein, Duan et al. (2026) showed that AI anxiety was linked to career decision-making issues and highlighted the importance of career adaptability in managing the challenges of AI changes. The results also hold implications for the higher education institutions in Pakistan. AI career concerns need to be taken up by universities through career counselling, employability programmes, and enabling students to build AI literacy and career adaptability. Instead of just being about the applications of AI, educational institutions can empower students to grasp the impact of AI on occupations, to identify the skills that are still necessary for human-AI interaction, and to plan career paths that are adaptable. These interventions can help students to lower unrealistic expectations of full replacement of jobs, and support the transition to real ones. For students whose fears of AI are linked to significant anxiety and/or poorer well-being, psychological support may be helpful.

Implications and Recommendations

The results have significant implications for universities, career counsellors, psychologists and policy makers. Watch out for AI-driven threats to jobs because fear of AI replacement leads to anxiety, lack of labor security and decreased life satisfaction; universities should offer students AI literacy and career development programmes to educate them about evolving job demands. Students must be supported by career counsellors to develop career adaptability, employability skills and realistic career plans, and not be overwhelmed with fear of the changes brought about by AI. Students who are experiencing high levels of stress about their future employment should also be offered psychological support. Future programmes should be based on preparing students for human-AI collaboration, digital skills, critical thinking, creativity, communication, and problem solving. In addition, universities can host workshops offering reliable information on emerging jobs and new skills, AI and automation. Further studies should explore the potential of mitigating the negative impact of fear of AI replacement by using AI literacy, career adaptability, perceived employability, and social support. In addition, students from various universities and academic fields are recommended for longitudinal and intervention-based studies, to increase causal links and generalize the findings.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the link between fear of AI replacement, anxiety, career insecurity, and life satisfaction among university students in Pakistan. Initial analyses showed that more fear of AI replacement was linked to more anxiety and career insecurity, and that less life satisfaction was linked to more fear of AI replacement. In addition, fear of AI replacement also played a significant role in predicting all three outcomes, indicating that students' worry about AI replacing their jobs is not just tied to uncertainty about their future careers, but may also contribute to their overall psychological health. This finding underscores the need to

recognise the concerns of university students regarding careers involving AI, in preparation for an increasingly tech-oriented job market. AI literacy, future proofing skills, employability skills and psychological support should be integrated into student development programs at universities and career counseling services. Facilitating understanding of the evolving nature of workplace needs and the creation of flexible career plans can help alleviate unnecessary anxiety and help people better adjust to technological shifts. The study is unique in having investigated fear of AI replacement as a unique concern and measuring its impact on both career-related and psychological outcomes within the Pakistani context. The results must however be interpreted after the analysis of the actual data. Future research should utilise longer-term and more varied samples to identify changes in employment concerns over time and examine how attitudes towards AI (literacy, career adaptability, perceived employability and social support) can alleviate the negative impacts of employment concerns on students' psychological well-being and career outcomes.

Disclosure Statement

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

Funding

The author received no funding from any organizations.

VII. REFERENCES

- Al-Nasa'h, M., Al-Tarawneh, L., & Alhwayan, O. (2026). Artificial intelligence anxiety, digital well-being, and future career concerns among engineering and information technology students in Jordan. *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence*, 9, 1598741. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2026.1598741>
- Cai, Z., Ji, X., & Wang, Z. (2025). Career Insecurity Scale Short Form (CI-S): Construction and validation. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 33(3), 470–488. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10690727241283689>
- Devi, E. R., Salsabila, R. E., Arrasyid, F., & Rahman, M. F. W. (2025). From fear to action: Mediating effect of career anxiety between fear of AI replacement and upskilling intention among Indonesian undergraduates. *Diponegoro International Journal of Business*, 8(2), 195–207. <https://doi.org/10.14710/dijb.8.2.2025.195-207>
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71–75. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13
- Duan, N., Li, L., Lin, G., & Chen, H. (2026). The impact of AI anxiety on career decisions of college students. *Scientific Reports*, 16, 8409. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-37648-y>
- Islam, S., Piyas, B. R. C., Tisha, F. J., Nayem, H. K., Rahman, S., Preenon, B. R. C., & Hossen, S. (2026). Career anxiety in the age of artificial intelligence: Survey data of university students in Bangladesh. *Data in Brief*, 67, 112924. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2026.112924>
- Kasim, S. N. O., Aryani, F., & Qomaruzzaman, A. (2026). Fear of AI and students' psychological well-being through career anxiety. *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan dan Konseling: Jurnal Kajian Psikologi Pendidikan dan Bimbingan Konseling*, 12(1), 18–24. <https://doi.org/10.26858/jppk.v12i1.84897>
- Munir, Q., & Maqsood, A. (2026). AI anxiety and future employment anxiety among university students. *Physical Education, Health and Social Sciences*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.63163/jpehss.v4i1.1321>
- Spitzer, R. L., Kroenke, K., Williams, J. B. W., & Löwe, B. (2006). A brief measure for assessing generalized anxiety disorder: The GAD-7. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 166(10), 1092–1097. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archinte.166.10.1092>
- Wang, Y.-Y., & Wang, Y.-S. (2022). Development and validation of an artificial intelligence anxiety scale: An initial application in predicting motivated learning behavior. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 30(4), 619–634. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2019.1674887>
- Zhang, L., Long, F., & Chen, D. (2026). When AI threatens future careers: A dual-appraisal model of university students' career goal adjustment intentions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 17, 1879844. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2026.1879844>