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Conflict Management in Organizations Adopting Artificial Intelligence: An Analysis of Workplace Accidents and Implications for Sustainable Development in the European Union

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Abstract. *This study empirically examines the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in conflict management, focusing on its impact on workplace safety and sustainable development. The literature review focuses on three thematic areas: (1) conflict management in organizations, (2) workplace safety, including improved efficiency from automation and risks related to job displacement, and (3) sustainable development in the AI era.*

This study analyzes Eurostat's 2021 dataset on AI adoption, workplace safety, and sustainability. It is examined the relationship between AI adoption in enterprises and workplace accident rates across EU Member States. To ensure data reliability, only countries with complete and verified records in both categories were included in the analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the key trends and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was applied to assess the strength and direction of the association between AI adoption and workplace accident rates. The chosen methodological approach enables an impartial assessment of potential correlations while considering variations in data distribution across different EU Member States.

Preliminary findings reveal a significant positive correlation, indicating that rapid AI adoption may coincide with heightened organizational tensions and increased risk of conflict triggers. These results underscore the need for comprehensive conflict resolution strategies that explicitly integrate sustainability objectives, ensuring that AI technologies are implemented responsibly and equitably.

By shedding light on the interplay between AI, conflict management, and sustainable development, this study contributes new insights into how organizations can harness innovative tools without compromising workforce well-being or long-term societal progress.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Artificial Intelligence, Workplace Safety, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Conflict management is a very important element within an organization and it can determine its future depending on the importance given to it. From the way in which employers pay attention to

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this topic we can determine the level of interest of employees in the assigned tasks. For example, an unresolved conflict situation may lead to dissatisfaction on one side and a decline in the quality of work. The existence of conflict management contributes to maintaining a harmonious working environment, increases employee efficiency and automatically increases productivity. Conflict prevention is essential in reducing tensions that can demotivate employees. Effective stress management contributes to sustainable development by maintaining balanced relationships within organizations.

Artificial intelligence and its impact on work is intensely discussed, as repetitive tasks are automated and increase productivity, but it can lead to job losses. At the same time, it creates new jobs, in which case constant retraining is needed to keep up. Also, in the use of artificial intelligence in recruitment, it may raise suspicion among some employees while others may see it as the best solution in terms of hiring. If we talk about work safety, AI is very beneficial because it offers solutions to work accidents. Sensors can be implemented that anticipate possible injury risks. Lately, more attention is being paid to sustainable development in the context of AI, as it offers numerous benefits. It helps optimize resource consumption in different industries, contributes to reducing carbon emissions. Another benefit is real-time monitoring of employees and equipment to prevent accidents. So are drones that check construction to prevent collapses and injuries to employees.

The challenges of implementing AI in conflict management differ from every organizational culture. If conflict management does not exist in some organizations and employees are working under stress, implementing AI can become difficult because it adds to an inefficient environment. At the same time, it can become a solution and resolve previous conflict situations. Sustainable development can be supported by AI by making industrial processes more efficient, fighting pollution and waste. It can be a solution for managing natural resources. Knowing that sustainable development is based on social, economic and ecological pillars, different tensions are bound to arise. The social pillar can be affected by the misuse of artificial intelligence, including discrimination. In this situation, it is necessary for people to be mindful of the ethical rules of the workplace and to manage the benefits correctly. The economic pillar can be supported by reducing costs and productivity. The ecological pillar can be fully supported if employees are involved in the process and pay attention to sustainable solutions.

Literature review

Conflict Management in Organizations

Based on his research, Upadhyay (2024), believes that reflective thinking can be beneficial, helping to find the balance between competition and cooperation between self-interest and others interest. Demonstrating that the link between thinking styles and conflict management styles can help negotiators find the necessary balance between cooperation and competition. Conflict escalation damages the team's activity, and its resolution can bring positive changes, it is important to foresee conflict situations, but also the risks caused by it (Zanora et al., 2023). It is recommended that employees participate in a practical training to assess their conflict management style and to learn to differentiate between constructive and destructive solutions and to practice effective problem-solving strategies (Thornton et al., 2024). Interpersonal conflicts can be managed by analyzing the impact of each conflict management style in different situations (Kwofie et al., 2024).

Managers with a high level of emotional intelligence combine empathy and compassion, thus reducing the level of tension and increasing the chances of finding long and short-term

solutions in conflict management (Schlegel et al., 2024). Exploring the factors influencing the relationship between workplace bullying and employee silence, including favoritism or lack of reaction by authorities, could provide a broad understanding of this phenomenon (Krishna et al., 2024). For a manager, conflict management skills are essential, and developing logical thinking and through training programs can improve decision making (Hendijani & Ahmadi, 2024). Leaders with a high level of self-confidence tend to adopt a dominant style especially if financial resources are limited and use this self-confidence to manage uncertainty and conflict (Dhillon et al., 2024).

Unresolved conflicts in the workplace contribute to increased stress and fatigue. Over time, they can affect both an employee's professional and personal life. Continuous stress can cause physical and mental exhaustion, which contributes to burnout, as well as a lack of concentration and focus. This can be the cause of increased road accidents. Managers need to identify ways to improve workplaces and processes to make them safer, and addressing employee safety reduces medical costs including lost productivity due to workplace injuries (Kabir et al., 2018). Automatically, work productivity is caused by the way employees complete their tasks, and stressful conditions are detrimental to company results.

Artificial Intelligence: Impact on Work and Workplace Safety

The key verb for defining AI is to replicate. The core function of AI is to replicate. Ethical and social protection within digitized workplaces issues become visible when we invasively analyze: what exactly does this AI replicate and if this AI helps or takes over. In this given context, artificial intelligence development path reconfiguration in order to empower the easy availability of new range of digital toolkits for general usage brings to the fore its impact on human work. In the rush to automate and digitize as a form of competitive transnational and intercompany growth to acquire new market shares, to overcome the shortage of trained human resources and the shortcomings generated by the physical and psycho-emotional limitations of the human body, the focus in protecting human workforce tends to be placed second within the development guidelines.

The fear of humans being replaced by thinking machines can itself be replaced by the creation of new opportunities for intellectual capacities development or new upskills that were put on the back burner due to current repetitive tasks generating fatigue and other related ailments. Thus, as AI takes over the mundane and repetitive tasks, there is a growing opportunity for new intellectually contingent skills that integrate critical thinking, creativity and emotional intelligence. Offloading tedious tasks opens for the emergence of new skill sets that AI cannot easily replicate. Along with the Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) notable breakthrough that is propelling us toward the development of machines that can understand and communicate using language in a manner that closely resembles that of humans (Yenduri et al., 2024) the question if this AI helps or takes over becomes a global socio-economical matter. Due to the fact that artificial intelligence replicates algorithms, the core focus must be placed on ensuring and monitoring that what it replicates matches the general socio-economic and political beliefs and that it respects all personal identities and the needs to protect the fallible human body in the development of current activities at work.

When taken into consideration that the algorithms are written by external teams of developers with own beliefs and memberships, awareness must be raised on what are the biases of the AI core algorithms and on the lack of empathy and physical and psycho-emotional support impact within the digitized workplaces. Maintaining as central pillar of monitoring the infographics on task automation that grow in setting up globally, at the level of companies down to the level of

work teams and individuals it is easily seen the increase in artificial intelligence tools usage with a preponderance in all daily activities whether at work or at home. It is also easy to see the influence that AI has on decision-making power and on what defines human beings: free will, and how it can reconfigure global decision-making paths. In as much as AI runs on algorithms, distorted feedback based on the experience, personal and professional maturity of the external group of developers stands out as awareness must be raised on inequities engendering due to the pace imposed in work processes, that do not take into account the mental, physical and emotional limitations of the human body that needs a certain type and environment to perform sustainably.

Mankind takes nowadays a huge leap towards generalized use of artificial intelligence without any doubt and without any hesitation, a leap that cannot be slowed down or eliminated, a leap that involves losing the ability to work in the classically established manner and involves the detachment from classical ways of obtaining information and classical ways of being educated and professionally trained. In the account of new workforce design paradigms and educational approaches emergence, that develop our ability to navigate the ethical and social issues that AI brings (Lalioti, 2019), monitoring the impact on human labor remains the only control key to manage the sustainable balance in the development of artificial intelligence face to face with human capabilities. In this regard, global leadership will have to make difficult decisions between progress on the one hand and social protection on the other. Moreover, as sustainable digitized workplaces stand for regulations and human-rights empowerment artificial intelligence can provide for unsafety tasks take over and ensure that fair conditions are regulated on the basis work authorization issued according to the law, such as: strain, exhaustion and exposure to traumatic content with negative health impacts including cardiovascular disease, mental health disorders, muscular skeletal injuries, violent content and reasonable accommodations for workers with additional needs due to health, safety and other personal reasons (such as pregnancy, care requirements, disability and other health conditions) (Fairwork, 2023).

As artificial intelligence takes over the repetitive tasks and considers justifying the algorithms to defend the inequities that can cause segregation in digitalized workplaces, the imposed pace of work can help in reducing conflicts within workplaces by appropriate allocation according to preset patterns, as it can be justified increased or decreased depending on the human performance at the workplace and the ergonomics of the workstations. Artificial intelligence can help diagnose certain symptoms as well as identify risk factors that can lead to the emergence of conflict situations or the generation of certain injuries. The costs in the unit of measure: time, are indisputably lower in the reinstallation of a system than in the re-education of a societal group, just as the repair costs of a broken system are indisputably lower than in the healing of a person, a team or an entire group of personnel who have gone through work accidents or traumas related to workplaces. By presetting algorithms that are human-centric, by early identification of behaviors that in the past led to situations with a negative impact on the sustainability of workplaces, artificial intelligence can raise an alarm signal during the course of work processes, identifying those key elements that collide with the system in real-time, that will empower the decision-makers using critical thinking, creativity and emotional intelligence to make the necessary decisions to upgrade or downgrade digitized systems as they no longer serve the purpose for which they were created. To preset fixed variables in AI sustainability algorithms, in order to prevent social segregation, with keeping the impact on labor at the fore, human-centered algorithms are required to set the landmark on fair work conditions that proactively protect health and safety within digitized workplaces.

Sustainable Development in the Context of Artificial Intelligence

Sustainability implies the responsibility of organizations to use resources as carefully as possible without compromising future generations. With this in mind, sustainable development and AI are topics that are increasingly intersecting, with organizations understanding the need for both in an attempt to optimize resource consumption and streamline production processes as well as reduce waste and more. When these two topics are in the same action plan of an organization, conflict management intervenes. By automating tasks, there is the possibility of reducing the number of employees and conflicts start to arise. It is important for sustainable development to take place, but under normal conditions and to affect all parties involved as little as possible.

Artificial intelligence used in sustainable projects can create business opportunities and improve efficiency and access in areas such as health or transportation, with education playing an essential role in preparing to manage opportunities and challenges (Goralski & Tan, 2020). It is important that the use of AI is carried out as carefully as possible and with ethical principles in mind. Abuse can be avoided by a concern for the ethics of robots which is necessary to protect the technologies, and a misinterpretation of customer needs can even lead to misdirection of investments (Law et al., 2024). In order to understand the benefits of AI, it is important to explore its limitations, as there are risks with the information generated (de Villiers et al., 2024). In order to ensure the quality of the results, it is important to check them carefully after each use.

As far as AI is concerned, there are concerns about the ethical implications, but also prejudices about the effects on the workforce (Acosta-Prado et al., 2024). In view of these uncertainties, it is important to implement a framework of accountability and sustainability for a beneficial direction in order to minimize negative impacts (Chang & Ke, 2024).

It is important for organizations to integrate AI into sustainability strategies, highlighting the need for it by aligning organizational goals, helping to maintain competitive advantage (Schwaeke et al., 2025). As long as the organization is carefully analyzed, an AI action plan can be made for a real needs-based use of AI that will bring beneficial results to the stakeholders.

For sustainable growth, organizations should adopt a resource-based strategy and invest intelligently in AI to promote innovation and flexibility, including for maintaining competitiveness (Khan et al., 2024). AI can optimize resources and reduce environmental impact by improving energy efficiency or reducing waste. At the same time, organizations can assess environmental impacts and develop new technologies for sustainable development. Environmental risk areas can be analyzed and early action can be taken. Conflict management can be supported by anticipating possible conflicts between employees by analyzing interactions. It can provide customized strategies to combat tense situations. For example, environmental protection can be improved by analyzing climate data and anticipating extreme events. AI can manage energy consumption and integrate new programs for renewable sources. Starting from conflicts and continuing with the benefits of AI in sustainable development, organizations can determine how they can use the benefits it offers.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and analytical framework used to investigate the relationship between the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies by enterprises and workplace accidents across the Member States of the European Union. It presents the data sources, the methods of data collection and processing, as well as the statistical techniques employed in the Analysis.

Objective and Hypothesis

The primary objective of this research is to examine the potential statistical association between:

- The percentage of enterprises (with more than 10 employees, excluding the financial sector) that use AI
- The rate of workplace accidents (accidents per 100,000 employees)

Based on this objective, the main hypothesis is that, for the year 2021, there is a statistically significant correlation between the degree of AI adoption among enterprises and the workplace accident rate in EU Member States.

Data sets

The data from Tabel 1 were obtained from the Eurostat database, focusing on three main sets: the percentage of AI-using enterprises, the number of workplace accidents, and total employment. For the first indicator, information was extracted on public or private firms (each with at least 10 employees, excluding the financial sector) declaring AI use in 2021. Workplace accident data covered incidents resulting in at least four days of absence (NACE Rev. 2, all activities), also for 2021. The size of the labor force (employed population) is expressed in thousands of individuals aged 15 to 64. To ensure comparability, these data were selected and harmonized from a single source (Eurostat), which provides standardized methodologies and indicators across the European Union.

Table 1. Data sources (2021)

Country	AI (%) – The percentage of enterprises that use AI	Accidents at work	Total Employment
Romania	1.4%	2779	7668
Bulgaria	3.3%	1953	2785
Greece	2.6%	4476	3823
Latvia	3.7%	2272	822
Slovakia	5.2%	8050	2522
Cyprus	2.6%	1428	428
Lithuania	4.5%	4483	1310
Poland	2.9%	67929	16743
Hungary	3.0%	23518	4511
Malta	10.2%	1587	261
Croatia	8.7%	9697	1559
Ireland	7.9%	16505	2325
Czechia	4.5%	36704	5066
Estonia	2.8%	5478	616
Netherlands	13.1%	82420	8975
Sweden	9.9%	47378	4842
Italy	6.2%	272787	21849
Belgium	10.3%	62038	4795

Country	AI (%) – The percentage of enterprises that use AI	Accidents at work	Total Employment
Austria	8.8%	55490	4232
Slovenia	11.7%	14197	954
Finland	15.8%	36994	2470
Germany	10.6%	810127	40036
Luxembourg	13.0%	6474	303
Spain	7.7%	457435	19546
France	6.7%	655024	27274
Portugal	7.2%	119798	4597
Denmark	23.9%	85309	2794

Source: Own processing based on data from Eurostat (2021) and Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI, 2022)

Indicators and Data Processing

The percentage of enterprises that use AI remained as a percentage variable, while the number of workplace accidents was adjusted according to labor force size, producing the accident rate per 100,000 employees. Specifically, the total number of accidents was divided by (Total Employment in thousands × 1,000) and then multiplied by 100,000 to express the number of accidents per 100,000 employees. After consolidating the information into a single file, a dataset was created that includes 27 EU Member States (where data were available). Tabel 2.

Table 2. Accident rate (per 100,000 employees) (2021)

Country	Accident rate (per 100,000 employees)
Romania	36
Bulgaria	70
Greece	117
Latvia	276
Slovakia	319
Cyprus	334
Lithuania	342
Poland	406
Hungary	521
Malta	608
Croatia	622
Ireland	710
Czechia	725
Estonia	889
Netherlands	918
Sweden	978

Country	Accident rate (per 100,000 employees)
Italy	1249
Belgium	1294
Austria	1311
Slovenia	1488
Finland	1498
Germany	2023
Luxembourg	2137
Spain	2340
France	2402
Portugal	2606
Denmark	3053

Source: Own processing based on data from Eurostat (2021) and Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI, 2022)

Table 3. Dataset Characteristics

Variable	Description	Source	Processing method
AI adoption %	Percentage of enterprises using AI in 2021	Eurostat, 2021	Used as a percentage variable
Workplace accidents	Number of workplace accidents resulting in at least 4 days of absence	Eurostat, 2021	Normalized to accidents per 100,000 of employees
Total employment	Total number of employees with age15-64	Eurostat, 2021	Used to standardize the accidents rates across EU states

Source: Own processing based on data from Eurostat (2021).

Statistical Analysis

To assess the relationship between the percentage of AI-using enterprises and accident rates, descriptive statistics (mean, median, and standard deviation) were first calculated for each variable. Next, normality tests (Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov) were performed to determine the appropriate correlation method. Because the variables did not meet the normality assumption ($p < 0.05$ based on Shapiro-Wilk), Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (rho)—a nonparametric measure more robust to departures from normality—was selected. The analysis was carried out in SPSS using the Bivariate Correlation (Nonparametric) procedure, employing a 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$).

Methodological Considerations and Limitations

Differences in reporting across countries, as well as variations in economic structures, may affect the quality of workplace accident data despite Eurostat's efforts at standardization. Additionally, the AI adoption indicator simply indicates whether AI is present in a company, without capturing the intensity or quality of its implementation. Further, any correlation observed does not necessarily imply a causal relationship, as other factors (e.g., legislation, organizational culture, prevalence of high-risk sectors) might simultaneously influence both accident rates and AI adoption. Since secondary, open-access data from Eurostat was used, no participant consent was required, and the data does not involve ethically sensitive issues.

Conclusion on the Methodological Approach

By collecting, normalizing, and statistically analyzing official Eurostat data, this study tests the hypothesis that there is a meaningful relationship between the percentage of AI-using enterprises and workplace accident rates across EU Member States. This methodological design provides a consistent basis for comparing values among countries and offers a solid foundation for further discussion regarding the role and impact of AI technologies on occupational safety and health.

Results and discussions

In the below figure the measures of central tendency are highlighted, illustrating the descriptive statistics of adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies by enterprises and workplace accidents across the Member States of the European Union.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics

Indicator	AI - The percentage of enterprises that use AI	Accidents at work
Mean	7.711%	1084.15
Median	7.200%	889.00
Standard deviation	5.0240%	853.299
Skewness	1.350	0.793
Standard error of skewness	0.448	0.448
Kurtosis	2.742	-0.369
Standard error of kurtosis	0.872	0.872
Minimum	1.4%	36
Maximum	23.9%	3053

Source: the author's own processing in SPSS.

There are significant findings after the data processing of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies by enterprises and workplace accidents across the Member States of the European Union. Percentage of enterprises using artificial intelligence registered a mean of 7,71% with a slightly lower median of 7,2%, variance of 25.240 and standard deviation of 5,024% which shows a moderate variability for the adoption of artificial intelligence. Also, adoption of AI has a significant variance depending on the characteristics of enterprises, registering a range of 1,4 % – 23,9 %. Skewness registered a positive value of 1,350 which is explained by the fact that the majority of enterprises have low rates of artificial intelligence integration, with only few registering high rates of AI adoption and Kurtosis value of 2,742 demonstrates that there is extreme value with peaks registered among the data set. Regarding the accident rate per 100 000 employees, the mean is 1084,15 accidents per 100 000 employees with a median of 889 and variance of 728 118,823, which shows a high spread of accident rates. Also, there is a high variability depending on the characteristics of enterprises sustained by the standard deviation of 853 299. The variability is shown also by the results of range from 36 to 3 053 which demonstrates that in some enterprises there are registered a lot of accidents and others with only a few. Skewness value is positive as well with 0,793, which shows that the high value is registered by only a few enterprises and Kurtosis of -0,369 is showing that the distribution is flat with only a few values considered extreme. Therefore, adoption of artificial intelligence is low, on average approximately 7,7%, registering high values of variability. Both variables registered high variability and positive skewness with only a few cases with high values.

In the bellow figure it is explained the non-parametric correlation between Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies by enterprises and workplace accidents across the Member States of the European Union.

Table 5. Statistical correlation between the variables

		AI - The percentage of enterprises that use AI	Accidents at work
AI - The percentage of enterprises that use AI	Pearson Correlation	1.000	0.717
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.000
	N	27	27
Accidents at work	Pearson Correlation	0.717	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	27	27

Source: the author's own processing in SPSS.

It can be observed that the high value of accident rates in companies are associated with the enterprises using artificial intelligence, explained by the strong positive correlation between the variables, with a value of 0,717 coefficient correlation, based on the 27 countries for each of the countries where analysis was performed. The p value is less than 0,01 which indicates that the results are not obtained due to randomness. The findings had a different result than the one expected and supported by the previous studies in general, artificial intelligence being connected with increasing the accident at the level of companies. This can be explained by the fact that AI with all its new traits bring also new risks for the enterprises using it, due to the fact that companies are not properly trained or prepared to face those new risks. Even if there is a correlation between the two variables, this doesn't imply causation.

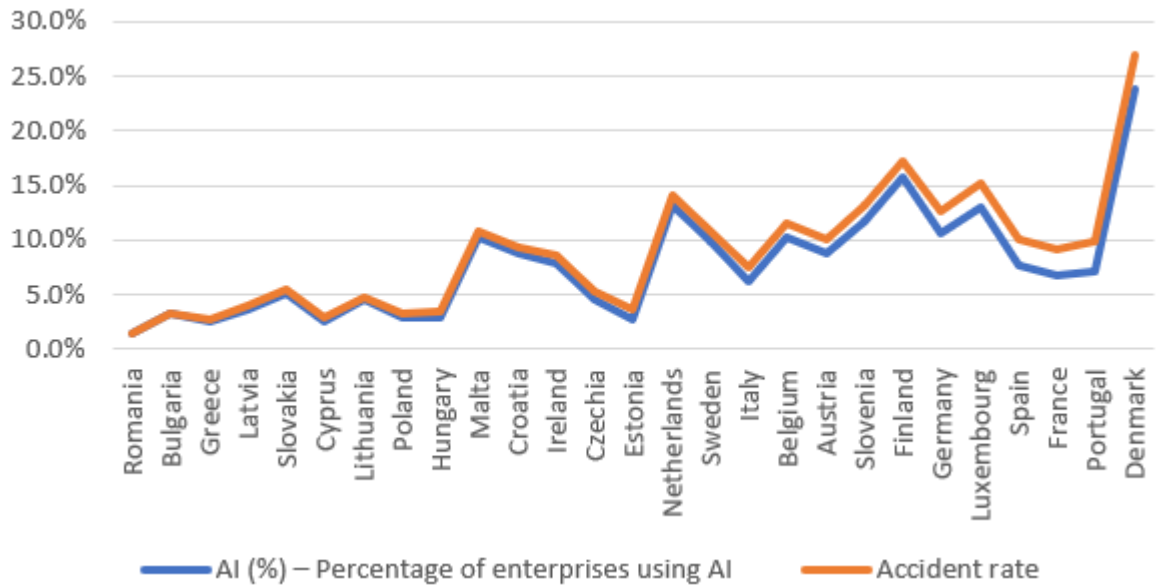

Figure 3. Correlation between the two variables, percentage of enterprises using AI and accident rate reported to 100 000 employees.

Source: authors interpretation, using Excel.

The above figure represents a visual representation of the correlation between the enterprises using AI and accident rates at the level of the 27 analyzed countries from Europe.

Conclusion

The paper *Conflict Management in Organizations Adopting Artificial Intelligence: An Analysis of Workplace Accidents and Implications for Sustainable Development in the European Union* arrived at significant findings in the scientific domain. The main hypothesis was validated, demonstrating that there is a statistically significant correlation between the degree of AI adoption among enterprises and the workplace accident rate in EU Member States, for the 2021 year. This aligns with previous research indicating that emerging technologies, including AI, introduce both opportunities and risks in workplace safety (Jarrahi, 2018; Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017).

The analysis was done using secondary data processed on SPSS software, performing the correlation statistical analysis, registering significant p value and Person correlation coefficient. The positive correlations between variables could be explained by the appearance of new types of risks together with AI technology determined by either: improper training of the employees, difficult interactions between employees and AI communication (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020), among others. Another factor could be the fact that AI is more present in specific industries which are already characterized by high level of accidents, such as construction or logistics, in this case the accidents rate is due to the risk of industry and not risks associated with artificial intelligence (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. EU-OSHA, 2021).

Therefore, the correlations between the variables are not a causation relationship type and it cannot prove that the AI incorporation determined a high rate of accidents, because there are also other factors that should be taken into consideration. There are some limitations of this research, related with the fact that data was collected from only 27 countries from Europe. Therefore, these findings apply to only the analyzed countries and could be further extended to a higher number. There is also a temporal limitation, due to analyzing the data only for 2021 year, therefore the study could be extended to a longitudinal analysis, consisting in analysis of relationship of the two variables during longer period of time.

Despite the limitations, this research paper is valuable and could be helpful for other researchers, students and companies interested in the subject. The use of statistical correlation analysis is an appropriate and reliable approach to investigating the relationship between AI and workplace accidents. To further enhance these findings, future studies could expand the dataset across multiple years. Nonetheless, within the scope of this study, the methods employed are sufficient to support the conclusions reached.

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Appendix

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