IS GLOBALIZATION GOOD FOR THE WORLD?

Riddhima Sahu

Your breakfast this morning may have been a global journey—coffee beans from Brazil, bread made from Canadian wheat, and a phone notification from a friend in France.

Over 2 billion people today use Facebook. It is so astonishing when you realise how human civilization has evolved from trade routes to digital transactions. The underlying concept behind these statements is globalisation. The concept of growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and more, is globalisation.

Globalisation is often prefixed as Western globalisation. Those in favour find it an undervalued idea. On the flip side, it is seen as a continuation of Western imperialism, a contemporary capitalism led by Western countries. The interconnectivity of globalisation has been instrumental in the overall development of countries. Its active agents are far from the west. Well-known economist Amartya Sen mentions an obvious example for this. Consider the world at the beginning of the last millennium rather than at its end. Around 1000 A. D., the global reach of science, technology, and mathematics was changing the nature of the old world, but the dissemination then was, to a great extent, in the opposite direction of what we see today. The high technology in the world of 1000 A. D. included paper, the printing press, the crossbow, gunpowder, the iron chain, the magnetic compass, the wheelbarrow, and the rotary fan. A millennium ago, these items were used extensively in China. The Silk Route increased trade and investments, and technological advancements.

Against this backdrop, this essay argues that globalization, though economically transformative, must be evaluated in terms of its uneven outcomes, environmental implications, and value-driven potential for reform.

The global economy has undeniably expanded under globalization, lifting millions out of poverty and accelerating innovation. However, its pros and cons are inevitable.

Who Gains and Loses from Globalization?

Globalisation contributes to economic growth by providing a wide labour pool, giving people more access to resources and jobs, and facilitating specialisation. Furthermore, it advocates global cooperation and cross-border investments. For instance, it has enabled the rise of a robust middle class in countries like China and India, while multinational corporations headquartered in the Global North have significantly increased profits through access to global labor and markets. However, on the other hand, it makes the domestic market of countries quite competitive, leading to the loss of local companies. One of the key concerns is the distribution of the growth among the people of the economy.

Does the structure of capitalism eliminate or reinforce inequality?

One such economist who questioned this matter was Mr Thomas Piketty in his book "Capital in the 21st Century. ". He questioned whether the structure of capitalism eliminates inequality or reinforces it. He disagrees with the Kuznets Curve Analysis, as this curve was misleading. It was based on the data collected from a very unusual period of history. Furthermore, it creates inherent class conflict between capital and labor. Saskia Sassen's analysis of labor markets in Globalization and Its Discontents (1998) states that globalisation reconstructs in a way that marginalises the workers. Large companies easily take over the market from local companies.

Thus, while globalization generates aggregate wealth and opportunity, the distribution of those gains remains highly uneven.

Cultural Erosion vs. Cultural Exchange

Globalisation has always acted as a catalyst for the movement of people, ideas, beliefs, and cultural goods across borders, leading to rich intercultural exchanges.

The craze for Hollywood, K-pop music,and Indian culture (including Bollywood) highlights how globalisation encourages cultural appreciation. However, these exchanges can be counterproductive. Critics believe that it significantly impacts cultural identity by homogenizing diverse cultural expressions into a single global culture, particularly in a popular culture dominated by Western forms.

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Let us take examples of famous media platforms like Netflix and Disney. They produce content for the masses globally. They lower their average costs significantly.

As the quantity of output increases, the average cost of each film, song, or series declines, enabling these firms to price competitively, distribute widely, and outcompete smaller local producers. The result is a concentration of cultural production in a few hands, with over 70% of global audiovisual content originating from just five countries, according to UNESCO.

And just like that, many won't realise that these streaming platforms have become omnipresent. This, in turn, leads to the marginalisation of less commercial platforms.

Trade-offs and Tensions: Growth vs. Equity

At the heart of globalization lies a persistent dilemma: should economic policies prioritize growth, or should they prioritize equity?

Introspecting, nations are successful in enlarging the economic pie but fail to distribute it evenly. Many nations start acting out pro-market reforms, like lowering taxes and cutting social spending to attract foreign investment. These policies are not helpful in the long term. For example, India's post-1991 liberalization ushered in impressive GDP growth but was accompanied by a widening rural-urban income gap, as urban centers attracted global capital while agricultural communities remained stagnant. This pattern reflects what economist Joseph Stiglitz calls "asymmetrical globalization."

Some economists argue that equity-enhancing growth is possible through "inclusive globalization. Through progressive taxation, universal education, and collective bargaining, nations like Sweden and Norway mitigate the inequalities globalization tends to produce elsewhere.

As Amartya Sen argues, development should be viewed as the expansion of human freedoms, not merely output. Thus, the true measure of globalization's success is not how much it grows economies, but how justly it distributes the benefits.

Conclusion: Reimagining Globalization Through Values

Globalization is not inherently good or bad—it is a set of evolving structures, policies, and choices that shape how we interact across borders. While it has undeniably generated economic growth and lifted millions out of poverty, it has also magnified inequalities, threatened cultural identities, and left many behind. As Amartya Sen emphasizes, development should be measured not just by income but by the expansion of freedoms and human capabilities. Joseph Stiglitz and Dani Rodrik caution that unfettered globalization, when decoupled from democratic oversight and national sovereignty, risks deepening economic and social fractures. Yet, from these critiques emerges a crucial insight: globalization is not a destiny—it can be reshaped. Globalization must be reimagined through the lens of equity, environmental sustainability, and democratic accountability. Only then can it become a force not of division, but of collective human progress.

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THUNBERG'S CLIMATE LAWSUIT REJECTED BY SUPREME COURT IN SWEDEN.

Ed Green

A class action lawsuit filed in 2022 by prominent climate activist Greta Thunberg and hundreds of other activists, who call themselves the Aurora Group, has been rejected by Sweden's Supreme Court. The lawsuit argued that the state was violating rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) by not doing enough to combat climate change.

In 2023, after a request by the state for the case to be dismissed, the district court the lawsuit was filed with asked the Supreme Court to clarify whether a lawsuit of this nature could be trialled in Sweden.

The Supreme Court's decision was that: "A court cannot decide that the parliament or the government must take any specific action. The political bodies decide independently on which specific climate measures Sweden should take."

The court said that its decision in such a case could "only concern the question of whether individuals' rights under the convention [ECHR] have been violated, not what specific measures the state is obliged to take".

This therefore leaves the door open for an adjusted lawsuit to be brought against the Swedish state in the future, as long as it alleges that specific individual rights under the ECHR have been violated by the Swedish government's perceived inaction over deterring climate change.

Similar climate-based lawsuits brought to the European Court of Human Rights have experienced varying outcomes in the past. There was success for the plaintiff in 2024, when the Swiss government was ruled to have violated its citizens' rights by failing to do enough to combat climate change. However, a 2023 climate-inaction lawsuit brought against 32 European countries by six young Portuguese people affected by deadly wildfires in 2017 failed, demonstrating how it is extremely difficult to achieve success and progress through cases like this.

Ultimately, the failed case in Sweden and the previous lawsuits in Europe show that the fight against climate change is not over for Thunberg and her allies. They also create the opportunity for similar lawsuits to become more frequent in the future.

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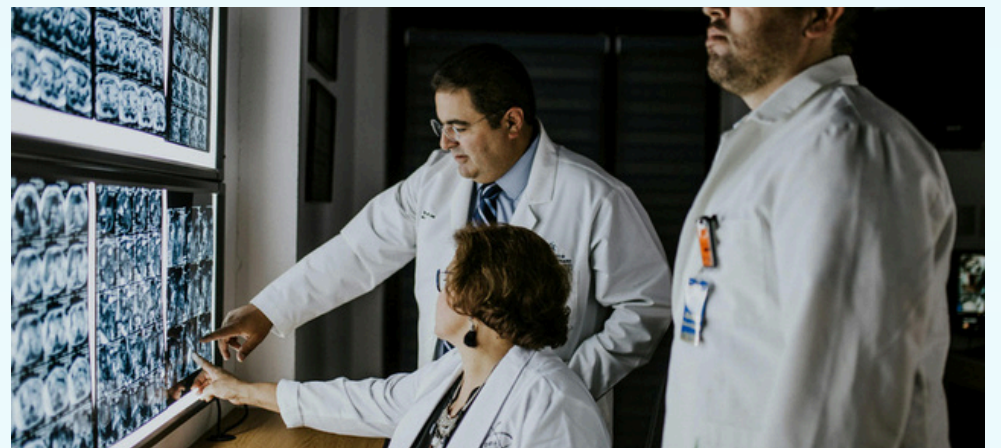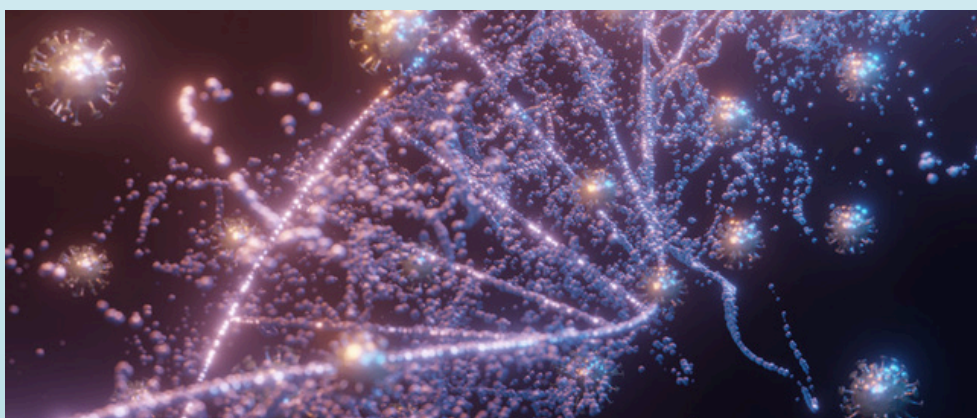# THE CONTROVERSIES OF GENE THERAPY

Harshitha J

Gene therapy, a newfound therapy that is known to cure the impossible, has now shown promise in treating a variety of genetic disorders and can potentially revolutionize the field of medicine.

This groundbreaking treatment had the potential to provide long-lasting or even permanent relief for patients suffering from genetic disorders.

WHAT IS GENE THERAPY?

Gene therapy is the introduction of a normal gene into an individual's genome to repair a mutation that causes a genetic disease. The idea of gene therapy is to fix a genetic problem at its source by altering the instructions that the (mutated) cell is given.

The first therapeutic use of gene therapy was administered by French Anderson in September 1990, where there was a direct insertion of human DNA into the nuclear genome. Since then, numerous clinical trials have been conducted. 'Gendicine' was the first gene therapy to receive regulatory approval in 2003 for the treatment of certain types of cancer, and after that, many more gene therapy drugs were approved. Some of the diseases that have been treated by gene therapy are sickle cell anemia, Leber congenital amaurosis, cystic fibrosis, and Huntington's disease. The introduction of a newfound method of healthcare procedure has also served to create new fields in the healthcare industry. One example of the use of gene therapy is Molly Troxel, who suffered from the disease Leber amaurosis. This was caused because Molly inherited the disease-causing mutation from her parents' DNA. This resulted in her having vision problems. In 2013, Molly underwent gene therapy with the hopes of making her vision better. For her, this worked, and Molly had normal vision again.

PROS AND CONS OF GENE THERAPY

PROS:
Potential for cure — most genetic diseases do not have a cure. For some of them, gene therapy might be the only option to cure their diseases, especially when the situation becomes life-threatening.
One-time dose — the existing gene therapies have to be given only once, and they can last up to a lifetime. It doesn't have to be done in sessions or over and over again.
Gene therapies aren't limited to humans — gene therapies can also be used in various animals, like dogs or cats.
Create a new field of medicine — in the future, if gene therapies have an increase in success rate, a new field of medicine concerning gene therapy could be established. This would provide an opportunity for dedicated researchers interested in gene therapy to make it safer, more successful, and holistically better.

CONS:
Cost — the cost of gene therapy is very high, making it inaccessible to several people. For example, Zolgensma, a gene therapy used to treat spinal muscular atrophy, is the costliest medication in the US, costing up to 2.1 million USD.
Inherently risky — Unfortunately, gene therapy is new and still in its experimental stages. There are possible risks of the treatment becoming unsuccessful, causing complications, or perhaps even death.
Misuse of gene therapy — there is a chance of misuse of gene therapy; people could want to modify themselves through genetic manipulation that isn't for medical purposes, like physical and cognitive enhancement. This would lead to major ethical and societal issues.
Ethical concerns — some express ethical concerns about gene therapy. They wonder whether gene therapy is the right or wrong thing to do and whether it makes us less of who we truly are.

THE CONTROVERSIES OF GENE THERAPY

Harshitha J

IS GENE THERAPY JUSTIFIABLE?

It is quite debatable whether gene therapy is justifiable. The ethical cons of gene therapy can be diminished by government implementations of its limitations. Strict measures, like the use of permits for hospitals to have access to the particular types of equipment needed for the procedure. But these measures can only take us so far in pragmatic scenarios.
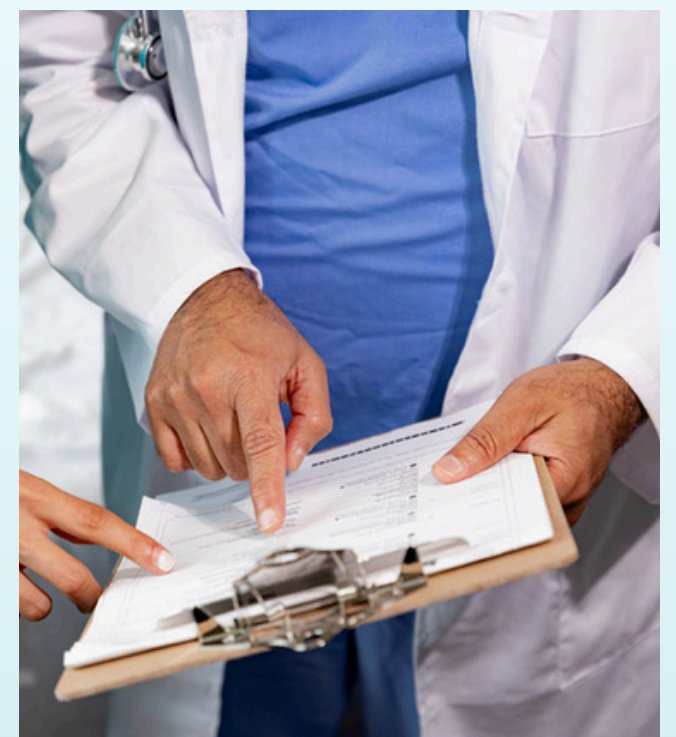
Furthermore, gene therapy has sparked quite a debate in terms of religious beliefs. These factors have also led to its ban in a few countries.

Gene therapy is also inherently risky; in fact, the main drawback for gene therapy occurred during its clinical trial, where an 18-year-old man, Jesse Gelsinger, died due to an immune response during the procedure at the University of Pennsylvania. During this time, many volunteers withdrew from the clinical trials.

Some believe that despite the complications that cost lives, it wouldn't outweigh the fact that it has saved as many or more lives, too. Overall, gene therapy has a chance of becoming a cure for several genetic diseases that were deemed incurable.

Through the continued efforts of researchers, we bring in knowledge about genome editing, which tremendously helps this newfound therapy excel and have a higher success rate. Through the continued efforts of the public, we tend to bring in an open mind about the newer technologies introduced in the medical field.

With ongoing advancements in genome editing technology, the possibilities for gene therapy are expanding rapidly, providing hope for patients and their families. By embracing this innovative approach to treating genetic diseases, we can improve the quality of life for numerous individuals. But there is no denying that this newfound medical procedure still needs a lot more time and work put into it before it can be determined whether it is safe to be used on the public.

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50 YEARS AFTER THE DAY OF LIBERATING THE SOUTH, UNIFYING THE COUNTRY: HISTORY COMMEMORATION AND SIGHT FOR THE FUTURE

Nguyen Ngoc Linh Chi

April 30th, 1975, is the day Vietnam escaped the invasion by the American Empire. This year, April 30th marked 50 years after Independence Day. This event included many meaningful celebrations and became an important memory for the Vietnamese. This article explores the history and meanings of this event.

1. The history of April 30th

During the time between 1954-1975, the United States invaded Vietnam. They founded a "puppet government" called "Republican Vietnam" (or "Việt Nam Cộng Hòa") - a group of Vietnamese people who wanted to resist their country and the Communist Party of Vietnam. The United States and the Republican Vietnamese government collaborated to make Vietnam a part of America

However, with a love for the country, the Communist Vietnamese people were always ready to fight the invaders and country traitors. From 1955 - 1975, from north to south, there were 849,018 soldiers who sacrificed to protect Vietnam. There was a great sentence at that time: "Quyết tử cho Tổ quốc quyết sinh", which means Vietnamese people are always ready to fight for the peacefulness of the nation.

"They say Vietnam is a war-torn country,
For decades leading to the 20th century,
Firearms never ceased."
(Anh La - "A war-torn country")

Millions of people died for this beloved country, 127,000 mothers or wives let their husbands or sons, daughters go into the war with tears; however, this Vietnamese spirit never changed. This spirit became the thoughts of Vietnamese leaders. Madam Nguyen Thi Binh said in the Paris Agreement signing ceremony in 1973: "Americans can go to the moon and then return but I am not sure when they fight in Vietnam." Her saying became history and scared the opponent.

On April 9, 1975, Vietnam People's Army troops attacked Xuan Loc town, a key base of the enemy protecting Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh city) from the Northeast. At 5 pm on April 26, the Ho Chi Minh Campaign to attack the headquarters of the Saigon regime started. Five wings of the army overcame the enemy's defence line to enter the heart of Saigon and storm the enemy's headquarters. At 10:45 am on April 30, tanks and infantry forces broke into the Doc Lap Palace and captured the whole cabinet of the Saigon government, forcing President Duong Van Minh, who had just taken office on April 28, to declare an unconditional surrender. At 11:30 am, the Ho Chi Minh Campaign ended with a complete victory, marked with a yellow-star red flag flying on top of the palace. The image of soldier Bui Quang Than planting the first flag on the roof of the Doc Lap Palace, followed by the unconditional surrender of President of the Republic of Vietnam Duong Van Minh and Prime Minister Vu Van Mau, has always been kept in the minds of generations of Vietnamese people as well as international friends who love peace and independence worldwide.

2. How Vietnam celebrated 50 years after Victory Day

This year marked 50 years since Independence Day, with many memories in Vietnamese hearts. Time flies, 50 years have passed, the country has changed and developed much, but history is unforgettable. Vietnam celebrated this event with a formal parade in Ho Chi Minh City. The celebration had the attendance of Vietnamese leaders and others worldwide.

"But like a chim Lạc She rose,
Unwavering and briskly.
Where Her blood once flowed
Now flow rivers and streams
Now providing for Her children."
(Anh La - "A war-torn country")

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Participating in the parade on April 30 were 56 forces, including the Army, Police, civilians, and mass representatives who marched together on Le Duan Street, in front of the Reunification Hall. There were more than 700 reporters from 106 domestic press agencies and 169 foreign reporters from 58 foreign press agencies attending the ceremony. The celebration began with a flag-raising ceremony amid the roar of 21 cannon shots by the artillery team at Bach Dang Wharf, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City. General Secretary To Lam delivered a speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of the South and National Reunification Day. Next were speeches from veterans and representatives of the young generation of Vietnam. The parade program, chaired by the Ministry of National Defense, includes a performance by helicopters and fighter jets; a parade program of 4 Honorary Units, 36 parade units of the Army and Police, 12 parade units and parade units of the armies of China, Laos, and Cambodia. In particular, 350 delegates who are Heroes of the People's Armed Forces, Heroes of Labor, and typical historical witnesses participated in the parade on double-decker buses. On this occasion, to recognize the outstanding achievements of the Party Committee, government and people of Ho Chi Minh City, contributing to the cause of building socialism and defending the Fatherland, the Party and State decided to confer the title of Hero of Labor to the Party Committee, government and people of Ho Chi Minh City. The national emblem is placed on the symbol of the chim Lạc, representing the will and aspiration of the Vietnamese people. 54 talented men and women, symbolizing the strong solidarity of 54 ethnic groups - the invincible strength forged through thousands of years of nation-building and defense, crystallized into the miraculous strength of our army and people that created the Great Victory in the Spring of 1975.

"This victory will be written in the history of our nation eternally as a most glorious page and an illuminating symbol of an all-winning victory of revolutionary heroism and human wisdom, and go down in world history as a great feat of the 20th century and an event of pivotal international importance and profound epoch-making magnitude."
-Late Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong

Victory Day Celebration is not only a display of strength but also carries profound spiritual value. This is an opportunity for today's generation to express gratitude for the sacrifices of their ancestors, while at the same time arousing a sense of responsibility in building a peaceful and prosperous Vietnam. This is also an opportunity to train and practice cadres and soldiers, and test vehicles and equipment. In particular, the intangible and tangible values that parades and marches bring are enormous. It arouses pride, creates great motivation for the entire nation to continue to strive and rise; it is a symbol that strengthens the spirit of great solidarity and patriotism; then raises the position and prestige of Vietnam in the international arena; it contributes to promoting tourism and economic cooperation.

Seeing the celebration, we, the Vietnamese people, are very proud to acknowledge the previous generation's contributions. They exchanged their lives and their happiness for us to live in a peaceful era. As students, the youngest generation of the country, our only dream is to try our best to contribute to helping our homeland develop.

"Don't ask what country has done for us
Wonder what we have done for our Father Land today"
(Vu Hoang, Tung Duong- "Youthful Aspirations")

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THE CYCLE OF POVERTY: WHEN POVERTY IS NOT JUST A PERSONAL FAILURE BUT A SYSTEMIC PROBLEM.

Teu-Khanh Phuong

Poverty is an undesirable state. Yet sometimes well-off individuals might ponder the question, "Why don't poor people just work harder or make better decisions?" whenever they pass by a person in need. This view is subjective because it assumes the fact that poverty is simply the result of laziness and bad choices in life. However, the truth is far more complex when one addresses the topic of poverty. **Poverty is not just due to personal failures or non-commitment throughout one's life, but also due to a person's background and where they are born.** It's crucial to keep in mind that failure isn't always the direct cause of poverty, since many people who are born into poverty face extreme barriers that make it difficult for them to escape, no matter how hard they try. This is what we refer to as "the cycle of poverty."

1. **What is the cycle of poverty?**

According to data from the World Bank in 2017, poverty is when a person has no more than $2.15 to live on a day. Specifically, a family may live in poverty if it suffers from an endless lack of basic resources.

The cycle of poverty starts when a baby is born into a poor household with limited resources and income to meet the most basic needs. When people spend their entire lives struggling to make ends meet, they often have little energy to deal with existential problems that put them in poverty. As a result, the constant struggle can last from generation to generation, with no end in sight.

Most of the time, extreme poverty happens in remote areas of low or middle-income nations. This means when a child is born into these harsh and devastating conditions, they're less likely to have the chance to make immense changes to their life or even their future children, which can also be described as a person's birth lottery when one can't control their circumstances of birth, ultimately impacting their opportunities and outcomes.

1. **How does the cycle of poverty impact individuals?**
- **For the child**

The vicious cycle of poverty has had a detrimental and profound impact on the rest of the world, especially on future generations. Statistics from the World Bank 2020 showed that, while children make up 30% of the total population, they are in the group that makes up 50% of extreme poverty. The UN Women Data Hub also mentioned how children have a higher probability of being poor than adults over 18 globally. It makes sense that the cycle of poverty through multiple generations can lead to child poverty. When families are trapped in this cycle, it becomes even more challenging for them to provide their kids with the required resources, education, and skills to thrive.

As mentioned above, being considered "poor" is when you have less than $2.15 to survive through the day. However, poverty doesn't simply stop at the dollar figure, particularly through the lens of children who face challenges in their everyday lives. According to data analyzed by UNICEF, "Nearly 900 million children worldwide experience multidimensional poverty – meaning they lack necessities like food, water, shelter, education, and healthcare."

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Since children are dependent on their family or guardians and don't have many resources to pull themselves out of the poverty cycle, they are faced with adverse effects. While it is evident that children face immense hunger, lack of education, and various health concerns, their mental health and development are also in jeopardy when below the poverty line. For children facing poverty, growing up without the things that wealthier peers might take for granted can contribute to their increased anxiety and low self-esteem. They are more likely to experience a higher level of stress and behavioral problems due to the constant struggle and exhaustion they encounter daily. Moreover, their chances of thriving and receiving academic training can be impeded due to a lack of access to education, which ultimately hinders their educational opportunities, the ability to explore the outside world, and exposure to books and skill development.

- **For the adults**

We must not forget about the adults, who bring up children while dealing with the pressure of poverty at the same time. The emotional toll of poverty for these individuals can be devastating as constant pressure and expectations to bring food to the table and raise an entire family arise on a daily basis. This distress easily leaves individuals feeling overwhelmed and trapped inside their circumstances, with no assistance on their side. Besides the emotional challenges, poverty also results in feelings of hopelessness and helplessness as individuals have a belief that their situation can't be improved. Therefore, the cycle of poverty is hard to break out of since people who face it live in regions that don't receive adequate support.
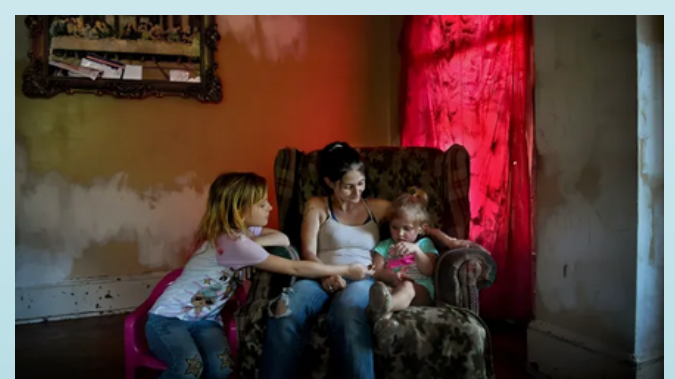
What can potentially break the cycle of poverty?

As mentioned above, one of the main reasons why people can't get out of poverty is because of a lack of access to outside assistance and education. Without this, people below the poverty line have no way to improve their own devastating situation. That's why several factors must be taken into consideration, particularly for international organizations and foundations to help break the cycle of poverty that generations of households are facing.

When one thinks of education, one thinks of academic success and the ability to earn a living. For any individual, having knowledge and the necessary skills opens doors to endless possibilities and hopes that would otherwise vanish, since knowledge is considered the foundation of a prosperous society. For instance, Oprah Winfrey - one of the most famous, inspiring, and successful television producers of all time wouldn't have come this far if she hadn't focused on education and set out on her own initiative. From a tough and harsh childhood to becoming a figure of women's empowerment, she was able to break the cycle of poverty with the right support from her family members and a strong belief in the power of education. Especially for children who are not in school, they face the hardship of labor and even child marriage, running the risk of being low on income even when they mature. As a consequence, this limits the future for children and further repeats the cycle of poverty through multiple generations.

Besides education, combating the effects of climate change offers huge benefits to families under poverty. An improved climate contributes to better energy security, protection of communities, and reducing the impacts of severe weather conditions on families living in remote regions. Climate change is known to be one of the foundational causes for issues such as poor housing, insufficient health care access, and growing diseases in households dealing with the cycle of poverty. Therefore, when organizations unite to change the circumstances and address climatic conditions strictly in those regions, children and families will have a better chance to thrive and live in the environment they deserve.

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TO ATTACK, OR TO ACCEPT: THE DEBATED ROLE OF THE THUMBS-UP EMOJI IN THE WORKPLACE

Mahati Sathish

Emojis are a widely accepted means of communication in the digital age. Representing aspects of daily life, objects, and a range of complex emotions, emojis simplify conversations, engaging both speaker and listener and providing a tool for emotional debate. This transmission of meaning, therefore, is centra**l** to the usage of these icons as messengers and is dubbed as "non-verbal cues" to best represent the "senders' self-revelation". This fabric of purpose necessary for its optimal utilisation is what is being attacked in the digital age, with rising generational gaps and the distortion of language.

The rift between Generation X, those individuals born between 1965 and 1980, and Generation Z, comprising individuals from 1997 to 2012, is perhaps most evident in understanding the consequences of emoji culture. With more and more of Gen-Z entering the previously Gen-X and Millennial-dominated workplace, there is a clash of values, technology, and culture at the heart of workplace disagreements. A comical topic of these misunderstandings often includes avenues of professional communication, slang, and, most recently, the debated meanings of emojis.

A popular example is the use of the thumbs-up emoji. For Gen-X, who consider it the standard emoji of choice to represent any form of agreement, the thumbs-up emoji is a regular addition to workplace group chats or even official correspondence. Across corporate culture, this emoji has been viewed in a positive light and predominantly as one of acceptance.

Hence, Forbes calls emojis "moving targets", subject to dynamic changes in meaning that are often hard to keep up with. These conversations open up avenues for discussion that do not often end with one or two emojis, but instead tear down the foundations of much of visual vocabulary into context and culture. The short-forms that the emojis are meant to provide are expected by the younger Generations to be replaced with typed-out messages that older generations are constrained to send. The rift, therefore, **between Gen-X and Gen-Z** in the workplace also shifts roles and weighs responsibility between sender and receiver, posing the question of how one can take accountability for the emojis they send.

Hence, the displacement of meaning in the context of emoticons opens up not only cultural, but legal and socio-political nuances on how language in the visual medium often distorts with age. Although the **thumbs-up emoji** is but one such study, it is pertinent for professionals to view these emoticons as integral components of correspondence, as Forbes concluded, one can "track, dissect, parse, and comprehend". In conclusion, while emojis are considered representations of the emotional landscapes of the senders, they also contain multitudes of factors prominently affected by generational gaps, which need to be studied.

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GERMANY'S PLASTIC PLAN: SAVING OCEANS THROUGH INNOVATION AND POLICY

Nguyen Huyen An

"Our oceans are being suffocated by waste. The pollution of the oceans caused by vast amounts of plastics is a colossal environmental problem that is damaging animal and plant life and harming humans as well."

Steffi Lemke—Germany's Federal Minister for the Environment and also the owner of the quote given above—has the main target of underscoring the threat that our planet's marine environment is facing all around the world.

In response to the need for immediate action, Germany has launched an ambitious plastic plan that can combine both innovation and strong policies at the same time.

In response to the need for immediate action, Germany has launched an ambitious plastic plan that can combine both innovation and strong policies at the same time.

A Strategic Five-Point Plan

In 2018, Germany introduced us to a strategic plan to cut down on plastic waste by doing simple things like encouraging sustainable packaging, increasing recycling rates, stopping plastics in organic waste, and supporting worldwide ocean cleanup initiatives.

The German Environment Minister Svenja Schulze underscored turning the trend of plastic excess in consumer society around and the international nature of the problem, as well as the commitment of Germany towards international cooperation.

Innovative Technologies: Micro

Germany is also leading the way with disruptive technologies that eliminate plastics from waterways before they enter the oceans. One of the technologies is microflotation, created by engineer Roland Damann. Microflotation produces microscopic air bubbles that draw and float microplastic particles (0.1-5 millimeters) to the water surface as a simple extraction method.

Lab tests revealed a 99.7% rate of success in pulling microplastics out from samples of river water.

The technology is being developed as a free-floating, fruit-bowl-like device that is capable of functioning in open water bodies like reservoirs and lakes with the aim of using it in running water bodies. The low-energy, chemical-free technology brings a potential solution for the alleviation of microplastic pollution in water bodies.

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Research and monitoring

German research institutes have a key role in the battle against marine plastic pollution and an awareness of its implications. The Alfred Wegener Institute in Bremerhaven is behind efforts such as the European projects BASEMAN and WEATHER-MIC, as well as the standardization of microplastic analysis and the toxicity and degradability of these plastics in the oceans. One of the most significant findings of marine biologist Melanie Bergmann's recent work is that the Arctic represents a potential "final depot" for plastic waste, which emphasizes the need for immediate action globally.

The organization also created LITTERBASE, an online platform consolidating plastic litter information for the benefit of conservation and policymaking.

Global and Grassroots Engagement

Germany's One Earth—One Ocean (OEOO) organization proactively cleans plastic trash from waterways across various countries. One of their collection ships, the "Circular Explorer," is used in Manila Bay in the Philippines, and a bigger ship, "Seeelefant," is scheduled for 2025 to raise the capacity of the cleanup effort.

Moreover, the citizen science program "Plastic Pirates" recruits young people throughout Europe to record evidence of plastic pollution in streams and rivers, raising public awareness and providing valuable information for protective action.

Internationally, Germany leads the way for clean oceans as a G7 and G20 presidency leader with action plans and coordination with developing nations aimed at combating marine litter. The Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMUV) financially supports projects all around the world in regard to sustainable production, circular design, and waste management, with more than €82 million spent from 2019 up until 16 projects across 25 countries.

Germany's plastic strategy showcases the way innovation, science, policy, and public participation can all play together in combating the multifaceted problem of plastic pollution of the oceans. By curbing the amount of plastic waste that is generated in the first place, improving technologies that filter out microplastics, and encouraging international coordination, Germany is safeguarding marine biodiversity and establishing a worldwide standard of sustainable stewardship of the oceans.

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PROSECUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES BY THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT: AN ANALYSIS OF MISSION & JURISDICTION

Elza Elif Mehdiyev

Introduction

The problem of climate change and its increasing negative effects is a widespread subject of discussion. A point of controversy within the issue is over the International Criminal Court and whether it is a worthy pursuit for the Court to prosecute environmental criminals. Established in 2002 by the Treaty of the Rome Statute, the ICC is an institution that prosecutes genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. Increasing arguments have been posed against the Court to additionally prosecute crimes against the environment, such as ecocide. Pursuing the prosecution of environmental crimes accurately reflects the ICC's mission of ending impunity; its current resources could be used for pursuing said crimes, and doing so may prove to be highly impactful in helping to establish deterrence for potential perpetrators. Therefore, prosecuting environmental crimes is a worthy pursuit for the ICC.

Prosecution and the ICC's Mission

Prosecution of environmental crimes accurately reflects the ICC's mission of ending impunity through holding environmental criminals accountable for harming both frontline communities and the environment. According to The Climate Impacts Group, frontline communities are "often hit hardest by climate change impacts, although they have often contributed the least to the causes of climate change." This disproportionate effect is a significant injustice that affects innocent people. Prosecution of this injustice could end impunity through holding perpetrators accountable for the harm they caused to these communities.

Dr. Kevin Jon Heller from the University of Copenhagen points out the need to approach criminalization in a way that should carry out justice for the environment as well:

"We need a genuinely ecocentric definition of ecocide at the international level, one that views environmental protection as an end in itself."

His argument shows the need to approach criminalization and prosecution through an ecocentric perspective. This can be achieved through environmental criminals being held accountable for harming the environment itself, not just for the harm their crimes will ultimately cause humanity. To truly reflect the ICC's mission statement of ending impunity, it is crucial to consider harm to the environment as a factor of accountability.

The mission statement of the Court to end impunity is correlated with prosecuting environmental crimes as a way of establishing accountability for both injustice towards frontline communities and the environment, thus making the prosecutions an on-brand pursuit for the ICC.

The Court's Jurisdiction

The ICC could use existing resources to prosecute environmental crimes because the link between the crimes outlined in the Rome Statute and environmental crimes places them under the Court's jurisdiction. On the 16th of March 2024, multiple institutions submitted a Joint Comment to the ICC: "The Comment insists on the critical connection between human and environmental health. It argues that human conduct and activities leading to severe environmental harm usually involve equally severe violations of human rights, potentially qualifying as crimes under the Rome Statute, such as genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes." The connection between environmental crimes and human rights violations explores the Court's responsibility regarding environmental crimes; The environmental crimes linked to the crimes outlined in the Rome Statute might be considered under the Court's jurisdiction, due to the connected harm.

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Evidence shows that the ICC itself has begun to recognize this connection. In February 2024, the ICC's Prosecutor Karim Khan announced an upcoming policy initiative regarding the prosecution of environmental crimes, with the explanation that "This new policy initiative will help promote accountability, transparency, and predictability in the Office's work in this crucial area. The policy paper on environmental crimes will be developed on the basis of the Rome Statute and other regulatory instruments of the Court, as well as on applicable environmental treaties, rules of customary international law, and the jurisprudence of other international and national courts." By stating that the basis of the policy will be influenced by the Rome Statute, the statement highlights the connection between environmental crimes and the founding statute. This shows the potential of prosecuting perpetrators who commit environmental damage under the ICC's existing jurisdictions, without the need for modification, revealing that it is entirely feasible for the Court to prosecute said crimes.

The link between the ICC's founding statute and environmental crimes places said crimes under the Court's jurisdiction, meaning that it could use its sources to prosecute those accountable for them, emphasizing the worthiness of pursuing prosecution for the ICC.

The Factor Of Deterrence
Prosecution of environmental crimes by the ICC could be highly impactful in solving environmental issues through the establishment of deterrence. As Naima Fifita, Founder of the non-profit Moana Tasi Project, stated in her submission to Just Security:

"A long-term potential consequence of the ICC's ecocide submission is the promotion of a shift from the 'polluter pays' principle to the 'polluter no longer pollutes.' This shift would have profound global implications, advancing the realization of the right to a healthy environment by focusing on preventing environmental harm rather than merely compensating for it."

This point is a well-constructed explanation of going from denunciation to deterrence. Denunciation has its roots in

'punishing,' making the perpetrator be condemned for their crimes. Although denunciation is a crucial aspect of sentencing, in this case, it is ill-fitting because it does not undo the harm. To achieve environmental preservation, the sentencing method of deterrence is a more sustainable alternative because it can ensure that environmentally harmful crimes do not take place to begin with. Thus, we can see that the prosecution of environmental crimes is a worthy goal for the ICC due to establishing a factor of deterrence.

Conclusion
Prosecution of environmental crimes is a worthy pursuit for the International Criminal Court. It is in accordance with the Court's mission statement of ending impunity; its resources could be used to pursue prosecution, which may prove highly impactful in avoiding future environmental harm by creating a factor of deterrence. There is no denying that environmental problems are significant and that, in order to protect the planet and its inhabitants, collective action is necessary; from which the International Criminal Court is not exempt.

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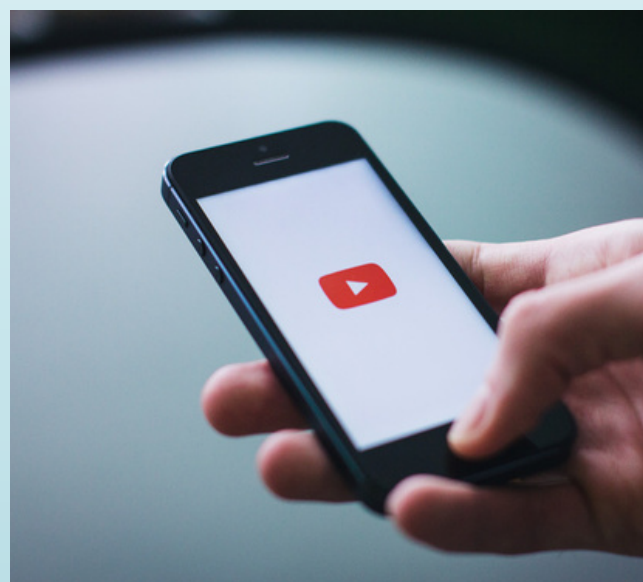
FAKE NEWS: THE LIES BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Tran Binh Nguyen

With the advent of the digital age, the dissemination of news in real time has revolutionized the way we consume news to its core essence. Social media platforms, particularly, have emerged as core media through which people access news and in the form of real-time actions such as scrolling, liking, and sharing.

While this revolution has made the accessibility and pace of information greater, it has also introduced tremendous problems, not the least of which is the spread of false news. This is more than the spreading of misinformation; rather, it is usually the intentional sharing of untrue or false information presented as real news with no discernible sources.

There are also concerns over the breadth and scope of the content. Once limited to private opinion, content can now reach the masses and have a significant impact. In the case of the majority of articles, they become popular in a viral manner. Such dissemination can have significant impacts upon the formation of public opinion, institutional trust, and overall well-being of the information climate.

Therefore, the problem of misinformation is important to address to achieve a well-informed and responsible discursive domain in the digital media era.

The Rise of Misinformation

Fake news is not something that has appeared out of thin air. People have been manipulating the truth for centuries, from war propaganda, political campaign brochures, to gossip pages of ancient newspapers. And what has made recent fake news even more dangerous is its ease and speed of transmission. The internet, and social media even more so, has made it easy to spread false announcements before even taking the time to ensure they're true. There was a paper in Science that looked at how news makes it on Twitter. They determined that fake news spreads more quickly than true news--much more quickly. False news was being passed around repeatedly with frequencies that dwarfed fact-based news. Why is that? Because they're more sensational, emotive, or shocking.

People tend to get drawn to stories that surprise them or justify their worst fears, even if at a deep unconscious level, they sense something.

The ploy is that these fabricated stories don't necessarily read as such. Some of them are verbatim copies of genuine headlines on genuine news websites. Some of them rely on a kernel of truth in an attempt to sound credible, even if the message within is not true. And the moment a story is around long enough, people start assuming that it is true, because everybody else is apparently doing the same. It is how fake news becomes lodged in the public psyche.

Why do so many people believe in misinformation?

Perhaps the most powerful explanation that people believe in misinformation is simply that we are human. We respond emotionally before we respond intellectually. Misinformation is written with the intention of getting a response—to appeal to our fear, anger, surprise, or hopes. Whatever speaks to us on the emotional level is most likely to stick with us, to be believed, and passed along from there. It doesn't hurt that the algorithms that make up the social media sites themselves amplify these emotional statements by passing them along to more people.

The more wild something is, the more viral it will become.

One of the problems is that we tend to accept as truth what we already believe. It has been termed by psychologists as confirmation bias. Whatever news appears when we already hold certain convictions—on political issues, health issues, issues of the world—it simply rings true regardless of being true. It is therefore hard not to get carried along by our own objectivity. Once a lie has taken root in a population with similar views, it is continuously passed around until it becomes conventional wisdom.

And truly, verifying all the headlines or the videos we see is exhausting. Most of us simply don't have the time or the stamina. And then there is the fact that not everybody has been educated on how to weed out credible sources, and we see that it is not an easy battle against fake news.

Elections and Fake News: Lethal Combination

Of all the ways that fake news is dangerous, elections perhaps represent the most concerning. Democracy's premise is that people vote from an informed decision. But what if the information is not accurate? One of the most glaring

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examples of this is the 2016 United States Presidential Election. Fake news filled social media sites—some outrageous, some more insidious, but all to influence voters' minds. A U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee report laid out how foreigners actively distributed fake and misleading information to promote polarization and outrage. And they did not stop there.

They used memes, videos, and even bots pretending to be American voters.

They succeeded because they were not overt propaganda. They were intermixed with regular postings in a manner that permitted persons to absorb the misinformation unwittingly. And once the misinformation took hold, it took a long time to uproot.

The problem is not unique to America alone.

Around the world—in India, in Brazil, in the Philippines—the entry of fake news into the election process has occurred with occasionally disastrous consequences.

And if the people vote based on falsehood or misinformation, the entire democratic process is undermined.

Fighting fake news with new and effective solutions

So, how then do we repair this whole fake news disaster? Not in a single night's sleep perhaps, but if we all get together (governments, tech companies, schools, and the rest of us mere people), we might at least try to fix it. There are some ideas floating around as to how we might prevent ourselves from consuming fake news. Empowering Minds with Media LiteracyFirst up is the straightforward

job of teaching people how to think for themselves when it comes to the news. You know, actually questioning things instead of scrolling and sharing. It's more common these days in schools with courses that appear to teach young people (and even the occasional adult!) how to find good sources of news instead of the dross that is out there. It's not a question of blind acceptance of everything that comes with a "verified" checkmark—it's more a question of identifying sources that have a grasp of what they're passing on and sources that are simply causing trouble. It's the kind of topic that ought to find its way into school curricula, if you ask me.

Getting the platforms involved

Social media websites can do better. We all acknowledge that social media is the place where a good amount of this misinformation is passed on. But these websites generally don't care that much. They've got fact-checking there, but is that accurate? Are they going out of their way to kill off the fake news before it goes viral? Not usually.

We've all read headlines that sound like they were written in a fevered dream, and yet despite that, their audience ends up taking them seriously.

It's as if these websites need a complete makeover when it comes to catching bad news and being more cautious with good, genuine, credible news. Studies have proven that even the "ad transparency" tools on these websites are something of a joke.

Transparency of political advertisements

Political advertisements aren't far behind.

Right now, it is just too convenient for anyone to post an ad and not have to report where it's coming from.

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A huge problem is that fake news isn't just isolated to articles; it's sponsored articles and advertisements that don't inform you of who sponsored them as well. Take the European Union, for example, which already has legislation in the works that puts these political advertisements more in the open light. They're simply saying, "Hey, if you're going to advertise politically to people, you've got to inform them of who's behind it." It's simple enough in concept, but in action, it isn't always being enforced. In the United States, there's an Honest Ads Act that's trying to get something similar underway. It would make it that much harder for political parties (or nefarious individuals) to engage in false advertising and deceive voters. We could surely use more of this type of regulation across the board.

The positive effect of eliminating fake news

It is of some advantage to combat fake news. It would empower the development of more well-informed citizens capable of making more well-informed decisions, most crucially in voting.

It would greatly affect public health as well because accurate information would steer people away from dangerous myths and allow them to make more intelligent decisions. There would ultimately be less misinformation that brings society together and enables them to fill the blanks as well as gain a deeper insight among communities.

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WHY DO TEENAGERS SEEM TO EXPERIENCE NOSTALGIA MORE STRONGLY?

Nina Martins

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, nostalgia is defined as "a feeling of pleasure and sometimes slight sadness at the same time as you think about things that happened in the past." But how is it that today's teenagers, with such a short past behind them, already experience nostalgia so intensely?

At first glance, it might seem paradoxical. After all, what could someone who's only lived through childhood and early adolescence already miss? But if you look closer, you'll see that today's youth have more tools than ever to capture and revisit the past, and that's exactly what they do. Teenagers document everything: photos, videos, memories with friends and family. In many cases, they prioritize recording an experience over truly living it. Ironically, they end up missing the very moments they were never truly present for in the first place.

One reason for this heightened sense of nostalgia is the relentless speed of our digital world.

We live in a culture where everything happens so fast that even recent memories begin to feel distant.

A song that went viral last month already feels "old". A fashion trend from last year is already considered outdated. This constant acceleration makes young people nostalgic for moments whose permanence often only exists in the form of archived Instagram stories or saved TikTok drafts.

Another major factor was the COVID-19 pandemic. Experiencing such a dramatic, global shift at a young age made teenagers deeply aware of how quickly the world can change. It caused many to cling to small moments of normalcy, joy, or connection, even as those moments were unfolding.

The pandemic taught this generation how fragile time is and how easily treasured experiences can slip away.

Growing up in this world where attention spans are shrinking, 10-minute videos seem long, and five hours can pass watching reels without realizing it can be disorienting. Teenagers are standing at the edge of adulthood, one of life's most uncertain and complex phases. In response, many find comfort in the familiar. Wearing the same hoodie from three

years ago, replaying the playlist they made at 14, or going to the same friend's house party, feels like a way to be connected again, even just for a moment.

There's something deeply human about that. The desire to feel emotions deeply. To feel the life in its roots. To cry over a memory that doesn't feel like the past, yet. To experience the preciousness of life without always rushing to what's next.

In a generation defined by speed and constant change, nostalgia has become one of the most powerful emotional anchors for teens.

It's not just about missing the past; it's about missing the fleeting feeling of being fully alive in a moment. And maybe, in some ways, feeling nostalgia has become the foundation of being a teen in today's digital-based generation, holding tightly to the memories that remind us of who we are, and what it means to feel.

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THE HISTORY OF GUANTANAMO BAY'S DETENTION CENTER AND ITS RECENT EXPANSION

Chimwekele Okoro

For more than two decades, the Guantánamo Bay detention center—which sits on a U.S. naval base in Cuba—has operated as a legal black hole, where constitutional safeguards vanish and due process is treated as optional. Opened on January 11, 2002, by the Bush administration to detain and interrogate alleged terrorists following 9/11, the prison was deliberately established outside U.S. sovereign territory in order to avoid judicial scrutiny. The result was a system of indefinite detention, inhumane interrogation methods widely condemned as torture, and the incarceration of hundreds of men—some of whom were never formally charged.

President Obama vowed to close the prison and even signed an executive order to shut it down, but was thwarted by bipartisan resistance on the grounds of vague national security concerns. President Trump reversed course entirely and vowed to "load it up with some bad dudes" and keep it open indefinitely. President Biden repeated similar closure intentions, yet his administration has made minimal progress.

As of May 2025, only 27 detainees remain. However, under new immigration regulations, the center is being expanded.

A specialized tent camp, the Guantánamo Migrant Operations Center, is now in the process of being established to accommodate up to 30,000 undocumented immigrants—an expansion yet again of the base's function as an instrument of extrajudicial detention.

Guantánamo Bay was designed from the outset to operate within a legal twilight zone. By placing the facility outside U.S. jurisdiction, American officials argued that detainees incarcerated there were not constitutionally entitled to legal protections. For years, detainees were denied access to lawyers, the right to challenge detention in court, or even knowledge about the charges against them. The Bush administration's creation of "enemy combatant" status further blurred the line between criminal prosecution and military action, adding an entirely new category of law to justify indefinite imprisonment without trial. This legal fiction permitted the U.S. to arrest people—such as minors and those arrested based on inaccurate tips—without ever being required to prove guilt.

What happened at Gitmo has been decried globally as a violation of fundamental human rights. Severe methods of interrogation—most now recognized as

torture—were justified under the guise of upholding national security. Waterboarding, sleep deprivation, and sensory deprivation were employed covertly, sometimes using psychologists contracted by the CIA. Detainees often were subjected to these tactics before any formal legal review of their case occurred. Legal battles around habeas corpus finally reached the Supreme Court, and although the court decided in Boumediene v. Bush (2008) that detainees did have a right to challenge their detention, the decision was too late for many detainees.

Torture had already become institutionalized, and few, were held accountable.

Now, the function of the detention center is changing once more—this time towards immigration enforcement. In the early months of 2025, the Trump administration began planning how to convert part of the base into the Guantánamo Migrant Operations Center. The new center is to accommodate 30,000 illegal immigrants apprehended at sea or discovered "high-risk" along the border. Legal experts and human rights advocates

have sounded alarms, warning that the expansion mirrors the same constitutional loopholes that defined the war on terror. Like suspected terrorists before them, migrants detained in Guantánamo are liable to be subjected to isolation, indefinite detention, and limited access to the law. If left unchecked, this expansion risks institutionalizing Guantánamo as a permanent extraterritorial location where freedoms are suspended at the behest of political convenience.

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WHAT DO WE OWE TO EACH OTHER?
THE ETHICS OF 'I DON'T OWE ANYONE ANYTHING' IN SELF-HELP CULTURE AND POP THERAPY

Braelyn Burris

The rise of self-help culture has brought with it a new moral framework—one that seems eager to answer the question posed by philosopher T.M Scanlon nearly two decades ago: "What do we Owe to Each Other?"

In pseudo-therapeutic online spaces, many have responded with striking clarity: nothing.

The phrase "I don't owe anyone, anything" has evolved from a rallying cry for emotional independence into a lifestyle that challenges long-held norms surrounding social reciprocity.

To be sure, this mindset can be liberating for individuals struggling with people-pleasing or chronic overcompensation. But on a societal level, healthy autonomy risks tipping into hyper-individualism when emotional detachment is framed as a form of empowerment.

Now, more than ever, we must re-evaluate what we owe—to each other, to our community, and to ourselves.

Where It Comes From: Digitalization of Therapeutic Terminology, Burnout and People Pleasing

Scrolling through TikTok on a Saturday night, you might encounter an influencer offering gentle mental health reminders. One common refrain: *"You don't owe anything."* It's not unusual to also see hundreds of comments in agreement, many referencing personal experiences with emotional burnout to justify no longer overextending themselves at the expense of their wellbeing.

According to *The Tribune,* older generations have cultivated a culture of people-pleasing among Gen Z and Millennials—cohorts that both often use conflict-avoidance as a defense mechanism. In this context, the appeal of radical attachment becomes clearer: it isn't just a rejection of obligation, it's a form of self-preservation.

At its core, the phrase reflects the long-overdue establishment of emotional boundaries. For many, saying "I don't owe anyone, anything" is a first act of rebellion, and a way to reclaim autonomy in relationships that once demanded self-erasure.

However, the line between healthy self-respect and emotional withdrawal is thin. When the phrase becomes a blanket justification for avoiding difficult conversations, refusing accountability, or disengaging from mutual care, it quickly turns problematic.

The Ethical Cost: What We Lose When We Owe Nothing

This cultural shift to hyper-individualism can act as a shield against intimacy, not a path toward it. In this worldview, the highest good becomes self-protection, even if it comes at the cost of community. But is emotional distance truly self-care if it leaves us disconnected?

T.M Scanlon argued that the idea of "owing" others is not simply a moral obligation, but a precondition for participation in the human experience. It's a recognition that we are more alike than different—and in that recognition, less alone. If that's true, then rejecting any sense of obligation to others may not be liberating at all, but extremely isolating.

Of course, we do not owe financial support to every unhoused individual we pass. Nor are we required to greet every stranger. And yet, we often do so anyway. These connections, seemingly small and fleeting, hold immense value. Even if we argue that we owe nothing to one another, there is quiet, enduring beauty in choosing to give anyway.

WHAT DO WE OWE TO EACH OTHER?
THE ETHICS OF 'I DON'T OWE ANYONE ANYTHING' IN SELF-HELP CULTURE AND POP THERAPY

Braelyn Burris

Isolation vs. Interdependence

When we declare that we owe nothing to anyone, we also become more comfortable with excusing ourselves from fighting for others. But justice depends on the belief that someone else's struggle matters, even if it doesn't affect us personally. Social movements, mutual aid networks, and environmental actions are fueled by the notion that we owe something to people beyond our immediate circle.

Without a shared sense of responsibility, activism becomes optional and empathy becomes inconvenient. And when that moment arrives, the greatest cost will not be moral—it will be societal.

Rethinking What We Owe

The phrase "I don't owe anyone anything" was born from a place of emotional exhaustion.

For many, it was a necessary assertion to break free from the demands of others. But when taken to its worst extreme, it risks becoming a philosophy of disengagement, one that confuses self-preservation with moral absolution.

If we're to build a world even slightly closer to justice, we must reimagine what it means to owe. "Owing," rather than a debt or a burden, should be reinterpreted as a shared human contract in which lives are enriched by responsibility to others.

What we owe to each other, then, is not everything.
But surely, it is something.

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MAKAN BERGIZI GRATIS

Fikry Rabbani Muraza

Indonesia's MBG — Makan Bergizi Gratis or Free Nutritious Meals — stands as one of the country's most ambitious public policies. It is a very bold initiative aimed at ending malnutrition by providing free nutritious meals to schoolchildren and pregnant mothers nationwide. The pilot has already reached 650,000 students, with IDR 71 trillion (USD ~4.33 billion) earmarked in the 2025 state budget and a projected IDR 460 trillion (USD ~28 billion) total allocation through 2029.

The core aim is clear: reduce malnutrition and stunting by ensuring schoolchildren receive at least one healthy meal per school day. This goal is especially urgent given that 21.6% of Indonesian children under five still suffer from stunting.

However, spending alone does not yet correlate with measurable improvements in nutrition of beneficiaries. So far, there is limited national data to support improvements in crucial indicators like anemia, BMI-for-age, or learning outcomes linked to better nutrition. This disconnect between cost and core outcomes raises important questions about the program's effectiveness.

Nevertheless, the MBG initiative offers significant benefits beyond the immediate nutritional metrics. It creates jobs, strengthens local food systems, and empowers communities —especially women—in food production and distribution. In Sukabumi, for instance, local kitchens have demonstrated that meals meeting balanced diet standards can be delivered for just Rp 10,000 per child, especially when sourced from community farmers. Despite limited data on nutrition-specific benefits, the program's economic spillover has contributed meaningfully to local food infrastjoure.

Public concern about data transparency remains valid. While fiscal allocation and operational scope are extensively reported, data on nutritional outcome data is lacking—a gap that citizens and civil society now expect the government to address. This demand is not rooted in cynicism, but in a growing civic confidence that public institutions should deliver on the full promise of the program through scientific monitoring, outcome-based evaluations, and community feedback.

From a fiscal perspective, MBG is more than a welfare initiative.

It's a long-term investment in human capital. If successful, the program could lower healthcare costs, improve cognitive and academic performance, and strengthen the national workforce in the decades ahead. Its implementation aligns with inclusive development principles by directing government spending into rural communities, women's cooperatives, and smallholder farmers—making it a fiscally redistributive policy.

Ultimately, Makan Bergizi Gratis has yet to prove nutritional impact, but it is already proving its worth as a national experiment in scalable, inclusive policy.

With increased public scrutiny, evolving government frameworks, and renewed commitment to transparency, MBG holds the potential to become not only a model for food security—but also for governance that listens and learns.

This program invites Indonesians to believe that a meal can be more than sustenance—it can be a promise of dignity, equity, and national progress.

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IS ANYTHING NEUTRAL ANYMORE? EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF PROPAGANDA

SaiShruti Avullapali

If someone asks you what neutrality means to you, what would your answer be? "Not picking a side", "Not being judgmental", "Objectivity" — an individual can define it however they choose to. In its true essence, neutrality may encompass all these things at once, but in a more concrete sense, it can be defined as the state of not being afflicted by opinions of multiple forms. This raises a larger question — aren't all opinions at least partly formed from other's perceptions?

Have you ever caught yourself looking at something as simple as a poster, or a piece of writing, or a show, and found yourself influenced to stick to one school of thought? But later you quickly realize that hundreds of others feel the opposite — that would subconsciously change your perception, wouldn't it? The human brain is wired to gravitate toward what is more common amongst peers and seemingly more emotionally soothing rather than what is objectively correct. This is called conformity. Your sense of judgement is tainted, therefore creating an automatic sense of bias— prejudice. On a larger, more tactful scale, this can be called propaganda, a result of which these very common psychological mechanisms are taken advantage of.

Propaganda can be defined in many ways, although it is formally defined as the act of spreading information, ideas, and opinions favoring one perspective over others, thereby carrying a negative reputation more often than not. Essentially, it is the selective representation of facts. It appeals more to emotions than to actuality.

Interestingly enough, propaganda can be either intentional or unintentional.

Despite the term generally referring to a deliberate attempt at emotional coercion, merely spreading biased information can lead to unintentional misinterpretation. Even the act of repeating intentional propaganda without supporting its agenda leads to unintentionally practicing it, and this exists more commonly in daily life than one would realize.

Ultimately, subtle propaganda exists everywhere, all the time.

From being told what to eat, and what to learn, to the dramatic glorification of ideals, political messaging , and portrayal of stereotypes, many of our ideas and opinions originate from one form of propaganda or another.

Although it subconsciously existed everywhere before, the term propaganda itself was introduced in the early 1910s during World War1. It was used as a US military effort to make known the disdain against Germany's intentions towards the United States. Over time, the handling of this word got so intensely misused, that it became difficult to neutralize. Before attaching a fully negative connotation to the word though, remember that not all propaganda is negative. In fact, there was actually a time in U.S. history, specifically during the 1930s and 1940s, when positive advocacy was so prevalent that the period came to be known as "the golden age of propaganda". One main reason why it happened around that time was because this era coincided with the rise of new modes of media, which provided an effective space for public expression and deliberation. Citizens were encouraged to actively participate in significant crusades, which was achieved by the act of propaganda with the help of up-and-coming media- colorful posters and cartoons in the 40s, televisions and newspapers in the 50s, radio channels and cable network news in the 60s, and of course post 2000, with the invention of social media, everything has drastically changed. Even campaigns around public health

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environmental protection, and civil rights – commendable causes— can also be considered a form of propaganda.

Today, the act of propaganda has a very different definition in modern society than it did almost a hundred years ago. With the exponential rise in social media and with several new forms of communication, negative and harmful propaganda is almost a given. Especially in the political space, advocacy is so intensely widespread that it has brought a rise in radicalism. The fact that there's an increase in the number of creators relying more on personal gain and fulfillment rather than the greater moral good is incredibly alarming. With more people depending on these unofficial sources of media and several unqualified and unverified creators for information, it is implicit that ideals are shaped from what is consumed through digital media. With that said, propaganda has become more of a strategy than a tool to pass on information. The more people there are that follow along despite its flawed nature, the more it becomes the new normal. These issues arise from the dynamics shared between creators and followers, and producers and viewers, which greatly shape how content is passed and perceived. Even a trace of bias in information put out by acclaimed reliable sources has the power to impact billions of people's perceptions.

Whether the outcome is positive or harmful ultimately depends on the motives of propagandists and adherents.

Coming back to the discussion of neutrality, in a world flooded with propaganda, what wins the tag? There are so many factors affecting its general definition, and the idea of what is neutral is subjective and varied amongst groups of people, meaning it is context dependent. The reason and the result? Interestingly, the answer to both questions is propaganda itself . In a more general sense of course, the obvious answer is moral and epistemological objectivity. But with the existence of propaganda, even the nature of that is tainted. The entire concept of neutrality is therefore a debated value and brings forth several opinionated interpretations. Conceptually, the idea of neutrality in the context of political liberalism is built around the view that every individual is entitled to opinions of their own, regardless of where they've originated from. The understanding of this along with the existence of individual opinions can be defined as rational in the least. As both creators and consumers of information, we all carry vital responsibility to make sure that the information we encounter is questioned, pursued and verified

thoroughly. In doing so, we can personally reclaim and shape the narratives of our understanding of the world. Although the disposition of "neutrality" has grown versatile today, meaningful dialogue and discussion opens a path to a very achievable middle-ground.

They bring us closer to a society less driven by propaganda, and more by reason.

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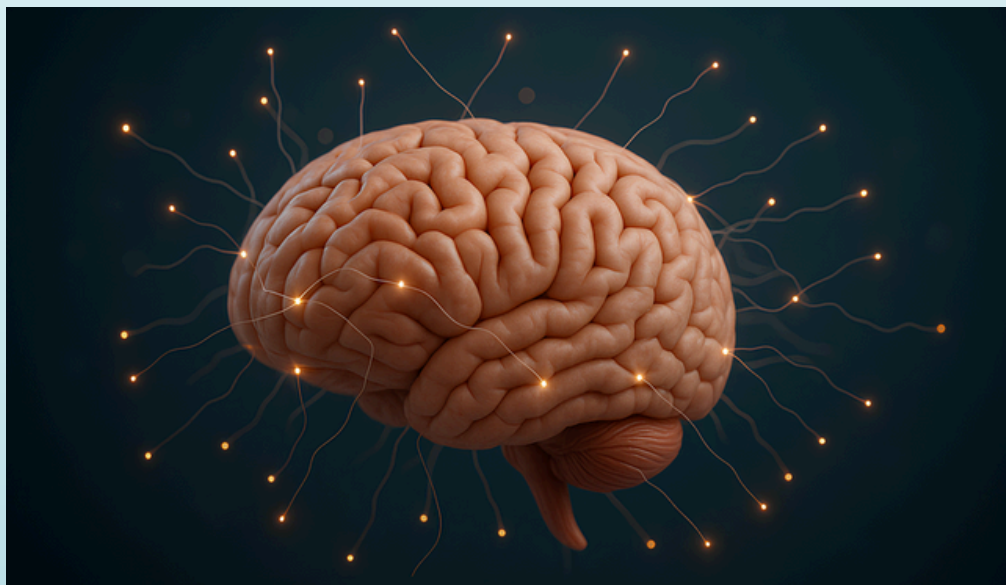# NEURAL UPLOADING

Sharvanth Saravanan

What if your mind could live forever, even after your body dies? This is quite an interesting topic that has been debated over the past few years. After all, memories are neural connections in your brain fueled by the movement of chemicals and electrical impulses. What would it be like if you could recreate such a neural pathway, uploading your brain onto a system that could make your memories live forever?

Mind uploading, in which a digital self is created by uploading your brain to a virtual environment, would have felt like a science fiction story a few decades back, but due to recent technological advancements, such neural uploading is theorized to be possible in a couple of decades.

Let's take a deeper dive into how such uploading can be possible. Consciousness is quite a fascinating concept, as it in itself expresses memories, thoughts, perception, and self-awareness. Humans are still unaware of where or how consciousness arises in the brain, making it even more of a fascinating topic. It is easily one of the most complex thoughts to understand consciousness, let alone figuring out a way to upload it into a virtual environment.

The human brain has 86 billion neurons, each with its own unique chemical composition and electric impulses that gives rise to your consciousness. Such complexity is hard to replicate, let alone upload in a virtual environment. Techniques are being explored to scan the brain, such as whole brain emulation, brain mapping, neuron-to-neuron scans, each complex in its own way.

However, if we were to find a way to map the brain, how exactly would it be done? The most ideal solution would be to scan the brain, upload it to a supercomputer, thus creating a "digital self". Several attempts have already been undertaken for creating a mind upload, with the most prominent ones being Elon Musk's Neuralink, Blue Brain Project, and so on.

But such mind uploading comes with its own set of ethical concerns and hurdles. If we were to upload our brain into a virtual environment, it is really you, or is it just a clone? Moreover, there are several ways in which your brain data can be manipulated, which branches out to other ethical hurdles. Would creating a digitally present mind be a moral idea? What if people find a way to abuse such neural uploading? What would be the effects of creating such sentient beings? Finally, would such sentient beings have rights? These are some of the ethical concerns that arise out of mind uploading. How would we tackle such hurdles?

Artificial Intelligence would also play a key part in not only developing a neural upload model, but also help sustain it.

To develop sentient beings that can live after death is to create a virtual mind like AI.

Thus, AI would play a key role in creating neural uploads. AI integration to sustain memories and data would be created, which might promote consciousness to AI. What would be the ethical concerns that arise from AI becoming self-aware? As we explore, more and more questions arise, making mind uploading a fascinating but dangerous concept.

There's a lot to conclude from the concept of neural uploading. It enables our loved ones to live forever, holding together their memories and emotions in a virtual environment. But until we truly understand how consciousness arises—until we solve the hard problem—we're left wondering: can a digital version of ourselves ever be more than just a shadow? Even though neural uploading might be so much of just a theory now, it may evolve and take shape in the upcoming decades from technological advancements and growth in AI.

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AI IN TRADE - A REVOLUTION OR AN ILLUSION?

Minh Anh Ta

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been integrated into innumerable areas of society, servicing various demographics, ranging from education to finance. In the area of trade, the prevalence of AI usage has notably risen coincident with the continuous advent of technology, with two instances being AI in algorithmic trading and in global trade logistics and supply management, which will be delved into deeper in the following analysis.

As a chief consideration, AI displays a profound impact on algorithmic trading in this technology-driven generation.

Within a matter of milliseconds, AI yields the power to process substantial amounts of data based on economic input, political stability, and market conditions to execute results that outperform humans, making it especially essential in this Darwinian stock market.

The assets are evident – AI algorithmic trading can conduct trades with ideal prices, accelerate transaction times, reduce administrative costs [1], and, in the absence of human intervention, reduce bias and error. Nonetheless, the weaknesses ought not to be neglected in light of the benefits mentioned above. Market instability is an exemplification of this, with the uncommon and deleterious phenomenon of "flash crashes," which essentially refer to unforeseen and sharp declines in trading owing to outdated or unsuitable reactions and responses. Notably, minimal human interference in such a situation has the potential to induce much greater harm. Despite this, again, such occurrences happen rarely, and so AI algorithmic trading continues with its use being both provisional and long-lasting, and will be constantly enhanced to perform with greater success rates.

Building on this, AI being incorporated in international trade logistics and supply chain management is undeniably invaluable. AI's capabilities extend beyond simply analysing patterns and administrating trades online; it connects and optimizes supply chain networks, driving better outcomes by predicting demand trends, flagging potential shortages, and automating replenishment cycles [2]. Additionally, it holds access to the supervision of the movement of products to pinpoint optimal shipping routes and circumvent the occurrence of disruptions. This decreases the demand for manual labor, shortens the aforementioned procedure, while ensuring high accuracy. Nevertheless, the growth of AI ultimately instigates a rise in unemployment rates. A justification for this thought lies in how human workers have now been superseded by AI employees to complete tasks. For emphasis, there were 53,619 people employed in the Supply Chain Management Services in the U.S. alone as of 2023 [3], most of whom may lose their occupations in the increasing integration of AI.
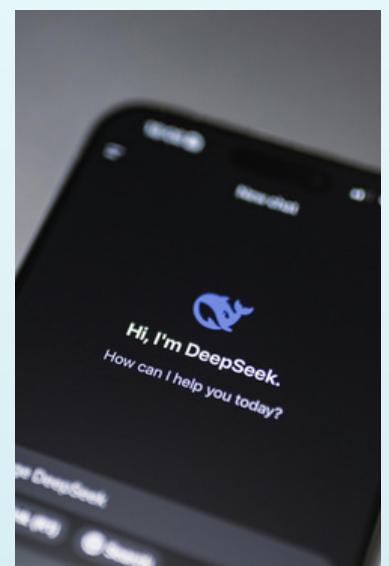
However, it is indisputable that AI offers immense efficiency, productivity, and accuracy in terms of logistics and stock management, which is an aspect that the majority of retailers appeal to regardless of job-loss complications.

Therefore, this acts as an indication of its continuous use and development in the foreseeable as well as the long-term future.

In brief, AI in algorithmic trading, multilateral trading logistics, and supply chain management is a double-edged sword, offering both merits and demerits. Nonetheless, the apparent fact remains that the future awaits AI's potential to further propel the global economy and create better living conditions for citizens.

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LIES - A SWORD OR SHIELD?

Amber Ta

When hearing the word "lie", a likely visual representation of it would be a young child pretending to have done their homework in exchange for candy as a reward. In this setting, the child has understood the correlation between homework and candy, and used that to their advantage by subconsciously manipulating their parents into doing something in their favor.

Shift your gaze to a different household, and you'll find another child claiming to have done their homework as well but quivering in front of their parents instead. This child has comprehended the association between homework and a scolding, but they are driven by fear and have used that as an attempt to prevent the familiar consequences of their actions.

It can be inferred from the illustrations above that lies always have an association. This can range from avoidance behaviours against negative outcomes, seeking personal gains, or other psychological aspects. In addition, lying can be acquired from the young age of 2 to 3 years old, when children go through the initial stages of cognitive development where they learn to perceive and deceive in various social situations from adults.

Without a wholesome and positive environment, children are raised to lie in order to mentally, but unhealthily, protect themselves, or to exploit vulnerable figures to their benefit.

As an opening factor, on a surface level, lying is widely interpreted as a means of manipulation to exert coercion or emotional and information control upon a subject. This could be through blaming, making excuses, gas-lighting, guilt-tripping, or just altering the details of a course of action to your advantage. This form of lying is categorized as a way of achieving personal gains. Thus, lying here is known to be heavily and fervently immoral due to its potential complications on external matters such as disharmony in social bonds, work/academics, and even pecuniary affairs.

Yet, in conflict with the dominant view of lying, it can be shown that lying may actually be an innate protective mechanism. A situation supporting this would be lying as self-deception, which acts as a coping mechanism against failures or obstacles. This allows individuals to maintain optimism and bolster self-esteem, as studies have shown. In other words, this could be described as deluding oneself to face or move on from the unpalatable truth of something. To illustrate this point, by adjusting and swaying the sequence of actions or events that have happened, as well as changing the overall way of perceiving them, self-deception through lies aims to convince the experiencer that their circumstances are perfectly normal. Cyclical repetition of this practice crates a panacea to stress and failure management.

LIES - A SWORD OR SHIELD

Amber Ta

Additionally, a similar type of lying is associated with trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In this case, lying is a defensive response or mechanism to traumatic events. It is also notable that self-deception and trauma-related lying tactics have certain traits in common, including how both allow individuals to reshape the narrative of events to avoid confronting overwhelming emotions or perceived negative judgement. The CETC notes that, especially in children, lying can constitute a self-preservation strategy rooted in trauma. Punishing them for lying would not adequately address the issue but would instead foster more lying.

Another significant branch of lying is pathological lying (mythomania and pseudologia fantastica). Pathological lying is defined as chronic, impulsive, and excessive lying with no pinpointed objective. This is often the symptom of insecurity or mental disorders, but not a distinct one itself, where individuals may inflate their sense of self-worth, prevent social exclusion, or seek validation. There may be underlying biological drivers behind pathological lying, according to FHE Health. A study conducted by the NIH found that central nervous system behavior may influence a propensity for lying, while other research committees demonstrate an imbalance in the hormone-cortisol ratio.

Seeing as this is true, it is critical to differentiate habitual lying and pathological lying. The former is carried out consciously with a targeted purpose but without specific indications of negative mental conditions, while the opposite is true regarding the latter. Therefore, the most apparent contrast between habitual lying versus its pathological counterpart is found in the intensity, frequency, and purpose behind the lies, as well as the consideration of suggestive mental disorders.

After discussing the theses above, it can be concluded that approaches to counteract or resolve lying inherently vary depending on the kinds of lying.

Concerning habitual or compulsive lying, therapy is often most effective.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can help such individuals to identify the triggers for their lying and practice changing their thought patterns and mindset, which may come to fruition after long periods. Turning to pathological and other forms of lying, treatment is more complex owing to its involvement in deeper psychological problems. Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), CBT, or even medications may be prescribed to tackle anxiety, depression, or other contributing elements to their lying behavior.

In sum, there is no doubt that lying has a profound impact on relationships and personal well-being. It would thereby be unreasonable to base a jdugement on a lie by someone whom you are relatively unacquainted with, as lies are always a double-edged knife. Recognizing and seeking optimal help is pivotal for both the "liar" and those affected by them to curb the early signs of more severe consequences. But as of the present, the ethics revolving around lying are still of heated disputation and examination and will most probably continue its legacy for years to come. Until then, it is up to each one of us to act on what we feel is necessary for our own sake and that of those around us, whether we realize it or not.

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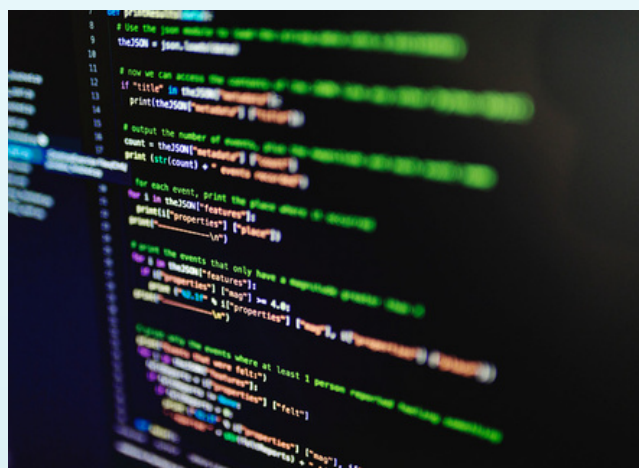# IMPACTS OF LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS IN MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE

Mazi Faith Ifeoma

The utility of LLMs (Large Language Models) has the potential of becoming a focal point for medical discourse, a potential that's capable of causing a seismic change that promises to bring about a redefinition from beyond just mastering microscopic intricacies to deciphering complex diagnostic data. As I embark on the journey to becoming a future medical laboratory scientist I can't help but think about: one paramount thing is that the microscope and the centrifuge amongst many others have for long defined the medical laboratory, and now there is a new tool that's powered by the intelligence of Large Language Models that is likely to bring about a revolution not just to the lab, but also to the learning of people like myself and our contribution as future medical laboratory professionals. I will be introducing you to LLMs, the starting point of a wonderful future for all medical laboratory students.

A large language model (LLM) is a type of machine learning model that is a framework especially for natural language processing tasks such as text generation. LLMs are multi-parameter languages that are learned on a large volume of text using self-supervised learning. One major area in which LLMs can impact my field as a medical laboratory student and bring about a potential change is through "Improved Research Competence." One of the major challenges for medical laboratory students is the time-consuming nature involved in research, necessitating the need for a tool to save time and increase efficiency. Introducing LLMs to help in research purposes will involve aiding and bringing ease in the aspects of scanning, summarizing, and even comparing large volumes of medical research quickly. In the moment of

being at a crossroads regarding research, LLMs help in making decisions that make one's work faster and easier.

It can also help in hypothesis generation, especially by brainstorming research topics that would be essential and beneficial to humanity. In addition to this, the use of LLMs will help in explaining certain test results that will be carried out in the laboratory using evidence-based sources. Ultimately, LLMs enable medical laboratory students by making research more accessible, comprehensible, and efficient, leading the students to have a deeper understanding of their fields.

Another viable potential in which innovation in LLMs can impact the field for medical laboratory students is through "clinical decision support." In the clinical terrain, LLMs will provide assistance to laboratory officials by providing context to unusual lab conditions.

In addition, LLMs will also help to identify anomalies in results and even find errors for review purposes. It can also help in possible interpretations or conditions that are linked to lab findings. In the medical terrain, the use of LLMs will assist and help healthcare professionals in identifying diseases with enhanced accuracy and speed.

LLMs can also be impactful in enhanced learning and education.

The medical domain is broad, and LLMs grant students the opportunity to gain more experience regarding the medical domain and expose students to certain knowledge that they know nothing about. It also grants students access to global knowledge which involves a broad range of scientific and medical literature summaries and guidelines. LLMs don't replace hands-on training, but they can serve as a guide that will walk students through virtual lab scenarios, explaining the lab procedure that involves step-by-step work.
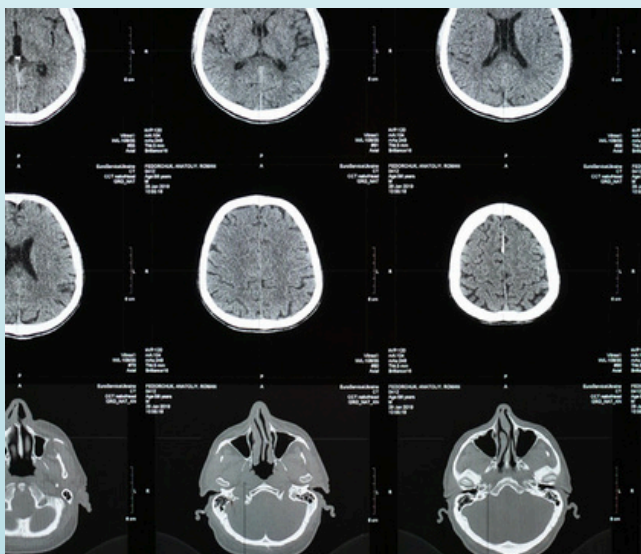
IMPACTS OF LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS IN MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE

Mazi Faith Ifeoma

When LLMs are integrated, they can help manage care schedules, facilitate doctor-patient contact, and monitor and analyze patient health records, treatment plans, and laboratory findings at the individual bed level. Also, in drug discovery, LLMs can also predict the activity, toxicity, and pharmacokinetic properties of a new compound, bringing about early-stage screening of potential drug molecules, in order to avoid future complications.

LLMs have also found utility in medical imaging (Xu et al., 2022). When a patient has an MRI (Magnetic Resource Imaging) or computed tomography scan, for example, an LLM may quickly evaluate and combine the image data with the patient's written medical records to provide more thorough diagnostic insights. Furthermore, LLMs can automatically recognize and highlight important regions in medical images, giving doctors precise references that help them spot possible problems. Additionally, depending on the studied picture data, LLMs can provide automated image reports that provide preliminary interpretations and treatment recommendations, greatly increasing the effectiveness and precision of medical diagnosis and therapy.

In conclusion, the era of digitization makes evident the life-changing potential of LLMs in medicine.

While the fundamental tools for the laboratory remain completely indispensable, LLMs are an outstanding addition that will stand as a powerful ally poised to augment and enhance learning, also enhancing research capabilities and even helping in contributing to clinical decision making. Also, as we embrace this new era, it is clear that LLMs are not intended to replace the critical skills and expertise of medical laboratory students or professionals but rather enhance our abilities and capabilities.
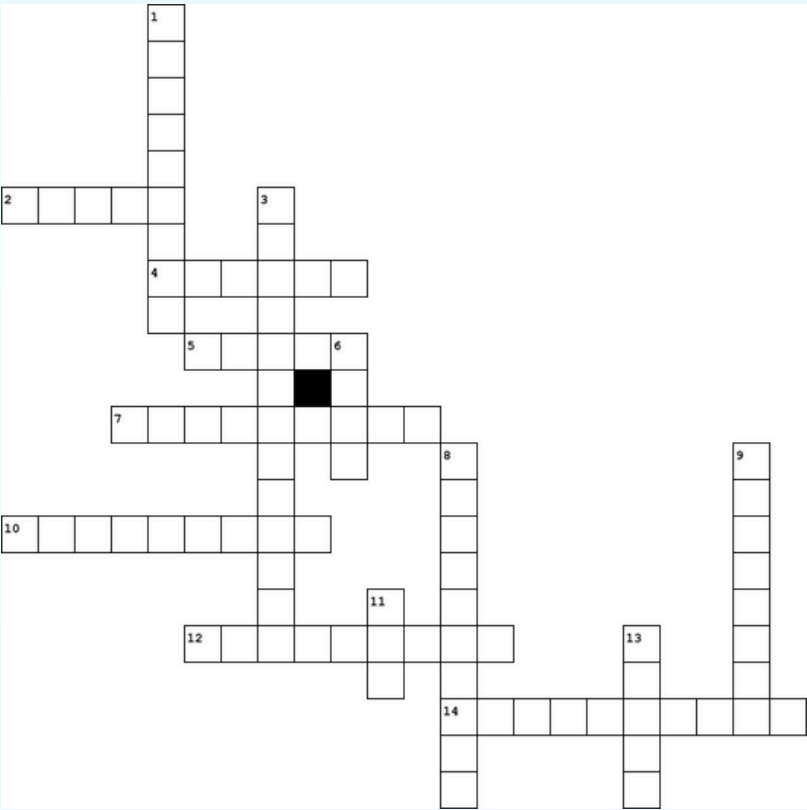
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Crossword: Changing World

Across:

2. Trade agreement among the U.S., Canada, and Mexico (abbr.)
4. Currency often used in international trade
5. Country often seen as a symbol of globalization's rise
7. Movement of people across borders
10. Spread of ideas and values across cultures
12. Environmental concern linked to industrial globalization
14. Widening income gap between rich and poor nations

Down:

1. Popular global food chain symbolizing cultural homogenization
3. Giant companies that operate in multiple countries
6. Region often industrialized first in global supply chains
8. Outsourcing jobs to another country is known as __
9. Technology that enables real-time global communication
11. International group promoting free trade (abbr.)
13. Flow of goods, services, and capital across borders

Word Search: Fields of Study

Word Bank:

chemistry
history
literature
mathematics
biology

psychology
economics
engineering
physics
philosophy

Crypto-Quote: Smart Start

"BO JOTFTUNFOU JO LOPXMFEHF QBZT UIF CFTU JOUFSFTTU."
- CFOKBNJO HSBOLJO

Instructions:

Figure out the quote from one of these articles by figuring out a simple code. In this code one letter will replace another, (it will be the same letter throughout the puzzle). Example: KLFRFLP = SYNONYM. Solution is found through trial and error.