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(How)does occupational identity change due to co-working with robots?

Edin Smailhodzic
University of Groningen, e.smailhodzic@rug.nl

Alexandra Marije Nijgh
University of Groningen, a.m.nijgh@rug.nl

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(How)does occupational identity change due to co-working with robots?

Edin Smailhodzic, e.smailhodzic@rug.nl; Alexandra Nijgh, a.m.nijgh@rug.nl

Digital technology has become increasingly embedded in the very core of many firms' products, services, and operations, which implies that people's roles and relationships become somewhat inseparable from their interactions with technology and in changing professional roles, which influences one's occupational identity (Carter & Grover 2015; Lifshitz-Assaf, 2018).

Whereas the relation between digital technologies and occupational identity is primarily researched in the area of knowledge work, scholars have predicted that frontline workers will also be confronted with the use of digital technologies (Pemer, 2021), for example by human-robot interaction or human-AI teams (Wirtz et al., 2018). Vaast and Pinsonneault (2021) argue that reviewing how people deal with these technological developments is key to understanding and identifying occupational identity in the digital age. To contribute to the knowledge of this phenomenon, we focus on exploring how employee-to-robot interaction alters occupational identity. Based on 31 interviews, our preliminary results suggest that occupational identity change is dependent on both the technical characteristics (i.e., functionalities) of the robot, the employee-robot interaction, and how this interaction alters the professional needs, beliefs, and practices.

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