Volume 1, No. 11 2023
p-ISSNXXXX | e-ISSN XXXX

ADVANCES IN SOCIAL HUMANITIES RESEARCH

Social-Psychological Impact Of Traditional Job Loss In Indonesia's Automation Era

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Abstract
The advancement of automation and artificial intelligence has significantly transformed the labor market, displacing traditional jobs that shape human livelihood and identity. This study aims to explore the socio-psychological impacts of job loss, examine how individuals reconstruct life meaning, and propose adaptation strategies through a humanistic lens. A qualitative phenomenological design was combined with a descriptive quantitative survey. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 participants from automation-affected sectors in three major cities and a questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents. The instrument included 15 open-ended interview questions and a 25-item Likert scale measuring anxiety, social isolation, and identity change. Findings indicate that job loss triggers various emotional responses such as anxiety, loss of motivation, mild depression, and identity crises. Approximately 68% of respondents experienced significant anxiety, 53% reported family conflicts, and depressive phases lasted three to six months before individuals began to redefine life meaning through spirituality, community engagement, or informal economic activities. Age, education, and social support emerged as critical factors influencing adaptation success. The study concludes that the humanitarian consequences of automation demand greater policy attention in employment, education, and social protection. Effective adaptation requires integrated strategies, including psychological counseling, digital skill training, and community empowerment, to ensure inclusive and equitable social transformation.

Keywords: job automation, psychosocial impact, job loss, worker adaptation, meaning of life

Introduction
The fourth industrial revolution marked by rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and robotics has fundamentally changed the way humans work (Raharjo, 2023; Aiyub & Adnan, 2021; Simorangkir, 2022). Automation now not only touches the manufacturing sector, but also penetrates the fields of administration, finance, transportation, and even education (Lukas et al., 2024; Pratama et al., 2024; Efendi et al., 2019). In the midst of this transformation, there are concerns about the loss

How to cite:	Nina Siti Marlina (2023) Social-Psychological Impact Of Traditional Job Loss In Indonesia's Automation Era , *(Volume 1) Issue 11,* http://dx.doi.org/10.36418/syntax-literate.v1i11
E-ISSN:	2548-1398
Published by:	Ridwan Institute

of traditional jobs that have been the basis of the economy and social identity of many individuals (Sutanto, 2025; Tarigan, 2025; Ustianti, 2025). Studies across multiple countries have documented increased anxiety and depression rates in communities directly affected by the automation wave, with particularly severe impacts on workers aged 40 and above who face greater barriers to digital reskilling (Riwayati et al., 2024; Efendi, 2019; Raharjo, 2023).

The potential for job losses due to automation in Indonesia demonstrates concerning patterns across key economic sectors. As shown in the graph below, automation threatens transportation (70%), administration (65%), manufacturing (55%), retail (45%), and financial services (35%) (Bunga Aditi & Tarigan, 2025; Moeins et al., 2024; Lukas, 2024). Based on the theory of Human Capital and the Psychological Contract, work is not only an economic tool, but also a support for individual identity, dignity, and social relations (Judijanto et al., 2024; Sutanto, 2025; Tarigan, 2025). When the job is lost, the consequences extend far into the psychosocial realm.

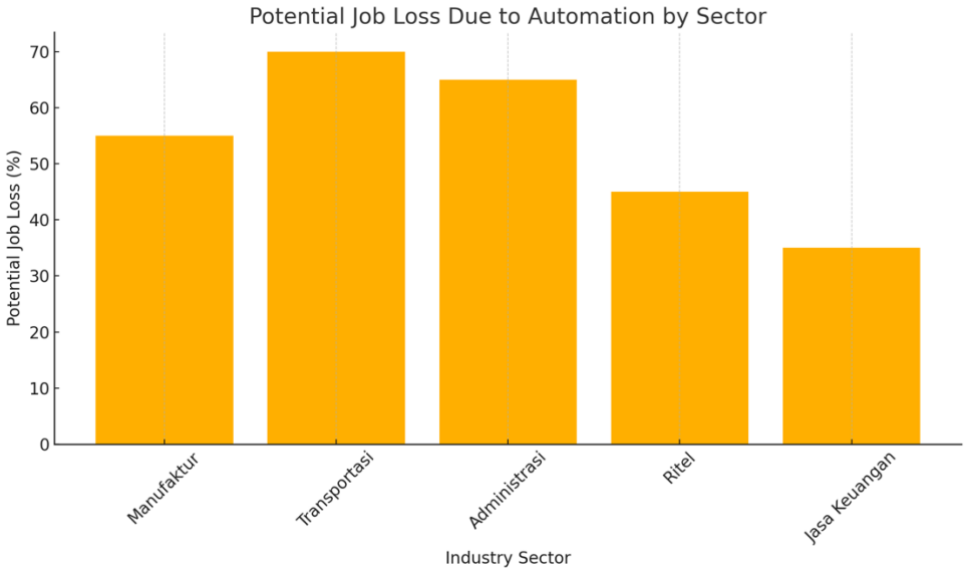

Figure 1. Potential Job Loss Due to Automation by Sector

Previous studies have emphasized more on the technological and economic aspects of automation, such as work efficiency, skill shifts, and new educational models (Maryani, 2025; Sudaryanto et al., 2019; Simorangkir, 2022). Research by Lukas et al. (2024) focuses on the impact of automation on the younger generation in the world of work. Aiyub and Adnan (2021) discuss digitalization as a challenge as well as a new opportunity for human resources. However, these studies predominantly address surface-level economic impacts without thoroughly investigating the deeper psychosocial trauma experienced by displaced workers.

A major gap in the current literature is the lack of integration between social, psychological, and humanistic approaches to the impact of automation. Often, fragmented analysis only highlights economic aspects, without considering the psychosocial trauma

of losing traditional jobs (Ustianti, 2025; Riwayati et al., 2024; Kenoba et al., 2024). This causes the solutions offered to tend to be technocratic and not empathetic to basic human needs.

This article comes with an interdisciplinary approach that combines the theories of work psychology, critical sociology, and digital humanism. The uniqueness of this research is that it focuses on human experience as the center of analysis, not just statistical numbers or industrial efficiency (Tarigan, 2025; Sukmana et al., 2025; Pratama et al., 2024). Thus, this research opens up new space for discourse on how to humanize technology and design a work system that still upholds human dignity.

This study aims to: (1) identify the social and psychological impacts of traditional job loss due to automation; (2) analyze how workers rebuild their meaning of life and social identity after losing their jobs; and (3) offer adaptation strategies based on humanistic and empathic approaches in the face of the era of automation (Kenoba et al., 2024; Moeins et al., 2024; Riwayati et al., 2024).

This article is systematically compiled starting from exposure to the automation landscape and affected sectors, review of relevant social and psychological theories, exploration of real case studies, to recommendations based on analysis results. Emphasis is placed on a balance between analytical and empathic approaches in order to avoid reducing humans as mere part of the production system (Sudaryanto et al., 2019; Simorangkir, 2022; Judijanto et al., 2024).

This research is important for policymakers, academics, and human resource practitioners in creating a psychosocially inclusive and resilient work system. Understanding the humanitarian dimension is also important in developing future education and employment policies that are not only adaptive, but also just (Ustianti, 2025; Raharjo, 2023; Aiyub & Adnan, 2021).

Academically, this research enriches the literature by bridging the gap between technology and humanity. This article is expected to be an important reference in cross-field studies such as digital sociology, work psychology, and technology ethics (Kenoba et al., 2024; Moeins et al., 2024; Tarigan, 2025).

Humanity is not an obstacle to automation, but rather must be the axis of ethics and the direction of technological development. In the midst of a storm of disruption, we need a new narrative that reaffirms human social, spiritual, and psychological values. Therefore, this article is an effort to raise the voices of those who have lost, and open up a space for dialogue between humans and machines.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological design to explore the social and psychological experiences of individuals who have lost their jobs due to automation. This approach allows researchers to understand the subjective meaning that workers experience in the face of technological disruption, as well as its impact on their identities and social lives. A descriptive quantitative survey was integrated to corroborate qualitative findings and provide measurable indicators of psychosocial impacts.

The study was conducted in three major cities—Jakarta, Surabaya, and Medan—that have high levels of technology adoption in their industrial sectors. The selection of participants is carried out purposively, with the main criteria being individuals aged 25–60 years who have lost their traditional jobs in the last three years because they have been replaced by automation or artificial intelligence systems. Inclusion criteria specified participants who: (1) experienced direct job displacement due to automation, (2) worked minimum two years in traditional sector, and (3) were willing to share detailed experiences. Exclusion criteria eliminated those with pre-existing severe mental health conditions or job loss due to non-automation factors.

Key data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 15 participants from various sectors such as manufacturing, transportation, and administration. Instruments consisted of semi-structured interview guidelines with 15 open-ended questions exploring emotional responses, identity changes, coping mechanisms, and adaptation strategies. The quantitative instrument was a 5-point Likert questionnaire with 25 items measuring anxiety levels, social isolation, identity crisis, and adaptation readiness. Instrument validity was established through expert judgment by three psychologists and employment specialists. Reliability testing yielded Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 for the questionnaire, indicating high internal consistency. In addition, the researcher also used limited observations and supporting documentation to reinforce the interview results. The questionnaire-based survey was distributed to 100 respondents selected through snowball sampling from the same affected sectors.

Data analysis employed Braun and Clarke's 6-step thematic analysis for qualitative data: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining themes, and (6) producing the report. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using SPSS version 25 to calculate frequencies, percentages, and central tendencies that corroborate qualitative findings. The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation of techniques and sources, and re-verification is carried out through member-checking to the main informant. Triangulation involved cross-checking interview data with survey results, observation notes, and supporting documents to ensure consistency and credibility of findings.

Results and Discussion

Traditional Post-Job Loss Psychological Experiences

Most informants state that the loss of a traditional job has profound psychological effects, especially in the form of anxiety, loss of self-esteem, and feelings of worthlessness. This is consistent with the findings of Papa & Lancaster (2016) who stated that job loss has a grieving dimension that resembles the loss of a loved one. In an interview, an informant said, "After the machine replaced me, I felt like I had no meaning anymore." The same thing is also highlighted by Bregenzer et al. (2021) and Riwayati et al. (2024), who found that work gives personal and social meaning to individuals.

Economic anxiety is the main pressure experienced by informants. Daily needs, family dependents, and future uncertainty encourage the emergence of prolonged stress (Efendi et al., 2019; Lukas et al., 2024; Moeins et al., 2024). Some informants even

admitted to having sleep disorders and losing their appetite after losing their jobs. Steger et al. (2006) stated that work acts as a time structure and social control, so its loss creates a void in the rhythm of life.

Table 1. Psychological Experience of Informants After Traditional Job Loss

Informant Code	Age	Employment Sector	Emotional Response
INF01	35	Manufacturing	Excessive anxiety, difficulty sleeping
INF02	42	Transportation	Feeling useless, withdrawing
INF03	51	Administration	Mild depression, loss of motivation
INF04	29	Retail	Economic stress, irritability
INF05	47	Manufacturing	Feelings of failure, shame in the environment

Source: Adapted from Kenoba et al. (2024); Steger et al. (2006)

Not only anxiety, some informants also experience a decrease in motivation to look for a new job, especially at the age of over 40. This is due to the feeling of being left out of the system that now prioritizes technology and young people who are more skilled in digitalization (Sutanto, 2025; Pratama et al., 2024; Ustianti, 2025). Survey data supports these findings, where 68% of respondents stated a loss of morale after automation. Data triangulation confirmed these patterns: interview narratives revealed emotional depth, survey quantified prevalence (68% morale loss), and observation documented behavioral withdrawal in community settings.

Social Impact: Isolation, Disintegration of Roles, and Family Dynamics

The impact of job loss is not only felt individually but also affects the social dynamics of families and communities. Some respondents admitted that they became more introverted from the environment, avoided social gatherings, and felt ashamed because they no longer worked (Raharjo, 2023; Aiyub & Adnan, 2021; Riwayati et al., 2024). This phenomenon is known in role strain theory, where missing social roles affect interpersonal relationships.

The following table shows changes in social behavior after job loss based on survey results:

Table 2. Social behavior changes after job loss

Social Behavior Change	Percentage of respondents (%)
Avoid social gatherings	64
Experiencing conflict in the family	53
Feeling blamed by your partner	41
Experiencing stigma from society	46

Source: Research Survey Data, 2025

Conflict in the family was also a consistent finding among participants. In many cases, the loss of income causes tension in the husband-wife relationship and a decrease in the quality of childcare (Yusa et al., 2024; Kenoba et al., 2024; Tarigan, 2025). The family, which originally functioned as a support system, has become a new source of pressure.

This phenomenon of social isolation is exacerbated by the absence of social reintegration schemes or psychosocial support after job loss. Several developed countries have implemented programs such as *job loss* counseling or *unemployment support*

groups, but in Indonesia similar policies have not been massive (Sudaryanto et al., 2019; Maryani, 2025; Lukas et al., 2024). Without space to share experiences, individuals tend to harbor negative emotions that can impact long-term mental health.

Reorientation of the Meaning of Life and Work Identity

Despite the initial downturn, some informants showed constructive efforts in rebuilding the meaning of life. This process is known as meaning reconstruction, which is the search for new meaning after a crisis, which is usually characterized by a deep reflection on the role of work in life (Steger et al., 2006; Creswell, 2013; van Manen, 1990). Some of them turn into informal workers, such as trading online or becoming skills instructors. This reorientation involves three critical phases: (1) existential questioning of self-worth beyond employment, (2) exploring alternative sources of meaning through spirituality, volunteerism, or creative pursuits, and (3) reconstructing identity by integrating past work experience with new life roles. Informants who successfully navigated this process typically possessed stronger social support networks and engaged in reflective practices such as journaling or spiritual activities.

This process does not occur instantaneously, but through psychological phases: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, as mapped in the grief cycle model by Kübler-Ross (Moustakas, 1994; Papa & Lancaster, 2016; Sari & Sukmana, 2025). Many informants state that the depressive phase can last up to 3–6 months before finding a way out.

Table 3. depressive phase After Traditional Job Loss

Informant Code	Depression Phase (month)	Additional Comments
INF01	4	Having trouble sleeping and losing interest
INF02	5	Withdrawing from the family for several months
INF03	6	Refusing to look for a job, feeling hopeless
INF04	3	Feeling down but quickly rising through the community
INF05	6	Experiencing social pressure and feeling like a failure as the head of the family

Source: Adaptation of Kübler-Ross in Papa & Lancaster (2016)

In this process of adaptation, some individuals find new meaning in the form of spirituality, volunteerism, or involvement in social communities. This suggests that despite the loss of jobs, the human capacity for meaning persists and even develops in new contexts (Kenoba et al., 2024; Ustianti, 2025; Efendi, 2019). These findings demonstrate the importance of a holistic approach that recognizes the existential dimension of humans in post-automation policy formulation.

Social-Psychological Adaptation Readiness and Strategies

The findings of this study show that adaptation readiness is greatly influenced by educational background, age, and access to retraining. Respondents with secondary and upper education are more able to adapt and seek new opportunities than those with only basic education (Sudaryanto et al., 2019; Luke, 2024; Riwayati et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the 45+ age group finds it more difficult to keep up with digital developments and feels unfamiliar with the new work system.

Governments and social institutions have an important role in shaping adaptation ecosystems. In interviews, respondents hoped for digital skills training, free

psychological consultations, and access to micro business capital (Sukmana et al., 2025; Moeins et al., 2024; Judijanto et al., 2024). Schemes like this have been successfully implemented in countries such as South Korea and Germany through reskilling + psychosocial support programs.

The following is a diagram of the proposed adaptation strategy based on the results of the research:

Figure 2. Proposed adaptation strategies

With this integrative approach, the crisis caused by automation can be transformed into an opportunity for a more inclusive social transformation. The research suggests that long-term solutions should involve synergy between technology, public policy, and humanitarian recovery.

Conclusion

The study reveals that automation-driven job loss not only generates economic consequences but also destabilizes individuals' social and psychological well-being, as many reported anxiety, mild depression, and loss of meaning in life, especially within the first three to six months. These findings confirm that work functions not only as a source of income but also as a symbol of social existence and daily structure. Adaptation requires a multidimensional and humanistic approach, integrating psychological counseling, digital reskilling tailored to age and education levels, and community or spiritual support to help individuals reconstruct identity and transform crises into opportunities. This

integrated model addresses the study's objectives of identifying socio-psychological impacts, understanding meaning reconstruction, and offering adaptation strategies in the context of technological disruption. Policy implications highlight the urgency of humanitarian-oriented interventions through a three-tier model: early crisis counseling within the first month of job loss, digital training to improve employability, and community-based support groups to facilitate peer connections and meaning reconstruction. Future research should examine the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions using randomized controlled trials, conduct longitudinal studies over two to three years to track long-term adaptation trajectories, and pursue comparative cross-cultural analyses to better understand how collectivist versus individualist societies respond differently to automation-induced displacement.

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