

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59092

Title: Digital Trauma in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Recommendation:

Accept as it is

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision

Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality			X	
Techn. Quality			X	
Clarity		X		
Significance			X	

Reviewer's ID: JPR- 212

Detailed Reviewer's Report

General Assessment:

This manuscript presents a timely and conceptually rich exploration of a phenomenon the author terms "digital trauma"—the cumulative psychological and social harm resulting from sustained exposure to AI-driven surveillance, algorithmic decision-making, and opaque digital systems. The paper's central argument, that AI restructures everyday life in ways that mirror the dynamics of traumatic experience (opacity, loss of agency, chronic vigilance, and erosion of trust), is compelling and original. The author demonstrates a strong command of trauma theory (Caruth, Erikson, Herman) and critical technology studies (Zuboff, Pasquale, Eubanks, O'Neil), and the synthesis of these two bodies of literature is both innovative and productive. The manuscript is well-written, engaging, and makes a significant contribution to the growing interdisciplinary field of critical AI studies. The concept of "digital trauma" is a valuable addition to the scholarly discourse and has important implications for the ethical design and governance of AI technologies.

However, the manuscript requires major revisions to strengthen its argumentation, address gaps in its engagement with the literature, and improve its structure and presentation. While the ideas are strong, the paper currently reads more like a provocative essay than a fully developed scholarly article. The author needs to deepen the theoretical analysis, provide more concrete evidence and examples, and more clearly articulate the paper's contribution to the existing literature.

Major Issues:

1. Need for a Clearer Methodological and Conceptual Framework:

- The paper does not have a clearly stated methodology. Is this a theoretical paper, a conceptual analysis, a literature review, or a critical essay? The author should explicitly state the nature of the paper and the approach taken. For example, is it a "conceptual analysis" that develops a new theoretical framework (digital trauma) by synthesizing existing theories? If so, this should be stated clearly.
- The paper would benefit from a more explicit conceptual framework that defines "digital trauma" in relation to existing concepts such as "technostress," "digital burnout," "surveillance capitalism," "algorithmic anxiety," and "epistemic injustice." How is "digital

International Journal of Advanced Research

Publisher's Name: Jana Publication and Research LLP

www.journalijar.com

REVIEWER'S REPORT

trauma" distinct from these other concepts? What does it add to our understanding? A section clarifying these distinctions would strengthen the paper's originality and contribution.

2. Deepening the Theoretical Integration:

- The paper draws on Caruth, Erikson, and Herman to analyze digital trauma. However, the integration of these theories could be deeper and more systematic. For example:
 - **Caruth's concept of "belatedness"** is mentioned, but the paper could more fully explore how the temporal disjunction between algorithmic decision-making and the individual's understanding of it produces a traumatic effect. How does the "deferred action" of trauma (Nachträglichkeit) apply to the continuous, real-time nature of algorithmic evaluation?
 - **Erikson's sociological account of trauma** as damage to the "social tissue" is highly relevant. The paper could develop this further by examining how algorithmic systems erode specific forms of social trust—trust in institutions, trust in experts, trust in the fairness of systems—and how this erosion affects collective life.
 - **Herman's concept of complex trauma** is useful, but the paper could more explicitly address the question of "escape." Herman emphasizes that complex trauma occurs in situations where escape is impossible or limited. Is escape from algorithmic systems truly impossible, or is it more a matter of the high costs of opting out? A more nuanced discussion of this point would strengthen the argument.

3. Need for More Concrete Evidence and Examples:

- The paper makes strong claims about the traumatic effects of AI, but it relies heavily on theoretical argumentation and general assertions. To be more persuasive, the paper needs more concrete evidence and examples.
- For instance, the discussion of educational surveillance (proctoring software, learning analytics) is a good start, but it could be expanded with more specific case studies. What have students reported about their experiences with these systems? What does the empirical research show about the psychological effects of algorithmic evaluation?
- The paper mentions India as a context where these effects are intensified, but this is not developed. A brief case study or example from the Indian context (e.g., the use of Aadhaar, facial recognition in schools, or algorithmic welfare distribution) would ground the argument in a specific socio-political context and strengthen the paper's relevance.
- The paper could also engage more with empirical research on the psychological effects of social media, surveillance, and algorithmic decision-making. While the theoretical framework is strong, it would be more convincing if supported by empirical evidence.

4. Structural and Organizational Issues:

- The manuscript would benefit from a clearer structure with section headings. Currently, it reads as a continuous essay without clear breaks. Organizing the paper into sections (e.g., Introduction, Theoretical Framework, The Four Dimensions of Digital Trauma, Case Studies/Illustrations, Implications for AI Design and Governance, Conclusion) would improve readability and help the reader follow the argument.
- The introduction is somewhat abrupt. It begins with a broad statement about AI and then moves to the concept of digital trauma. A more developed introduction that clearly states the paper's purpose, research questions, and contribution would be beneficial.
- The conclusion is brief and could be strengthened. It could more explicitly summarize the paper's key contributions, discuss the implications for policy and practice, and suggest directions for future research.

REVIEWER'S REPORT

5. Engagement with Counterarguments and Limitations:

- The paper presents a strong critique of AI-driven systems, but it does not engage with potential counterarguments. For example, some might argue that AI systems also enhance agency, provide new opportunities, and improve efficiency. The paper could acknowledge these benefits while maintaining its critical focus on the harms.
- The paper should also acknowledge its limitations. For instance, the concept of "digital trauma" is applied broadly, and there is a risk of overgeneralization. The author should be careful to distinguish between different types of AI systems, different contexts of use, and different populations, and acknowledge that the experience of digital trauma is not universal.

6. Minor Issues:

- **Typographical Errors:** There are several typographical errors (e.g., "accumulatedslowly" on Page 1, "seeneveryday" on Page 3, "shflaggutting" on Page 6). A careful proofread is needed.
- **Citation Style:** The citation style is inconsistent (e.g., "Erikson, K. (1976)" vs. "Erikson (1976)"; "Zuboff, S. (2019)" vs. "Zuboff (2019)"). The author should follow a consistent style.
- **Reference List:** The reference list includes "Buell, L. (1995). The environmental imagination," which does not seem to be cited in the text. The author should ensure that all references are cited and that all citations have corresponding references.
- **Title:** The title is clear and evocative. However, the paper might benefit from a subtitle that more precisely indicates its focus (e.g., "Digital Trauma in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Trauma-Informed Critique of Algorithmic Surveillance").

Specific Comments for the Authors (for a Major Revision):

This is a conceptually rich and timely paper that makes an important contribution to the critical study of AI. The concept of "digital trauma" is valuable and deserves further development. To prepare the manuscript for publication, the author should address the following major points:

1. **Clarify the Paper's Approach and Contribution:** Explicitly state the nature of the paper (conceptual analysis, theoretical synthesis, etc.) and its contribution to the literature. Define "digital trauma" clearly and distinguish it from related concepts.
2. **Deepen the Theoretical Integration:** More systematically integrate the theories of Caruth, Erikson, and Herman. Explore the specific mechanisms by which algorithmic systems produce traumatic effects.
3. **Provide More Concrete Evidence and Examples:** Use case studies, empirical research, and specific examples to ground the argument. Consider a focused case study from the Indian context.
4. **Improve Structure and Organization:** Add clear section headings and a more developed introduction and conclusion.
5. **Engage with Counterarguments and Limitations:** Acknowledge the benefits of AI and the limitations of the "digital trauma" framework.
6. **Proofread and Correct Errors:** Correct all typographical errors and ensure consistent citation style.

Conclusion:

This manuscript presents a compelling and original argument about the psychological and social harms of AI-driven systems. The concept of "digital trauma" is a significant contribution to the field and has important implications for the ethical design and governance of AI. However, the paper requires major revisions to strengthen its theoretical integration, provide more concrete evidence, and improve its structure and presentation. With these revisions, the manuscript could become a landmark contribution to the critical study of AI and its impact on human well-being. The recommendation is for major revision