United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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2024

COMMITTEE GUIDE

UNESCO

CCBMUN XXII

Contents

1. Presidents' Letter

Honourable Delegates,

It is truly a pleasure to welcome you all into our committee for CCBMUN XXII. We are Daniel Cano and Martina Urazán, 11th and 10th grade students at Colegio Bolivar. We both have various models as delegates, this is Martina's second time presiding at CCBMUN and Daniel's first. As delegates, we join the MUN in the hopes of socialising, improving our communication skills, and more importantly, learning about politics in a way that is meaningful. Therefore, we will try to make this committee enticing while also upholding a rigorous academic level. Aside from any award or recognition, take this upcoming model as an opportunity to grow; try to do things you normally wouldn't, and overall, try to have fun in the model.

Regarding our topics, we chose them as we believe they are of utmost importance given the current world circumstances. With AI being a rapidly growing tool, we believe it's important to debate and therefore educate students on the subject. Regarding journalism, given the amount of current ongoing conflicts, it is our belief that students should know more about the struggles journalists will go through in order to be able to report on events. It is important for students to consider possible ways to protect them as without journalists, news networks wouldn't work.

We will both be expecting great things from you delegates. If you have any queries or need some help, don't hesitate to contact us through the committee email (unesco@ccbcali.edu.co). We truly hope you find CCBMUN, and especially the UNESCO committee to be an exceptionally memorable experience for you.

Daniel and Martina
UNESCO Chair
unesco@ccbcali.edu.co

2. Topic 1: *Artificial Intelligence for education in rural zones*

I. History/Context

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in the United States, "34 percent of adults in rural areas had a high school degree." (NCES, 2022) However, in the same country, 90% of adults that live in urban areas graduated high school. This is the staggering reality of rural populations, in which the lack of urbanisation plays a fundamental role in the lack of education.

The Impact of Industrialization in the World

In 1760, the Industrial Revolution, according to History.com, was *"a period of scientific and technological development in the 18th century that transformed largely rural, agrarian societies - especially in Europe and North America - into industrialised, urban ones."* (History, 2009). There were various consequences of the Industrial Revolution including:

1. Societies became larger, due to the mass production of goods, people were more prone to giving birth to larger families, and more constantly. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution, Earth's population has increased an astounding 1035.9%; from 770 million in 1760, to 7.9 billion in 2022.

Figure 1: 7 Billion and Counting, New Security Beat

2. Communities became more urbanised, because of the increasing population in the world. Houses were more constantly constructed, shops

displayed more products, and the infrastructure in communities not only improved, but increased in area, causing towns to become cities.

3. Education evolved, in ways such as academic libraries expanding as a result of renewed interest in specialised fields of research, universities developing undergraduate and graduate degrees in these new fields, and the demand for teachers in schools increasing due to the growing population.

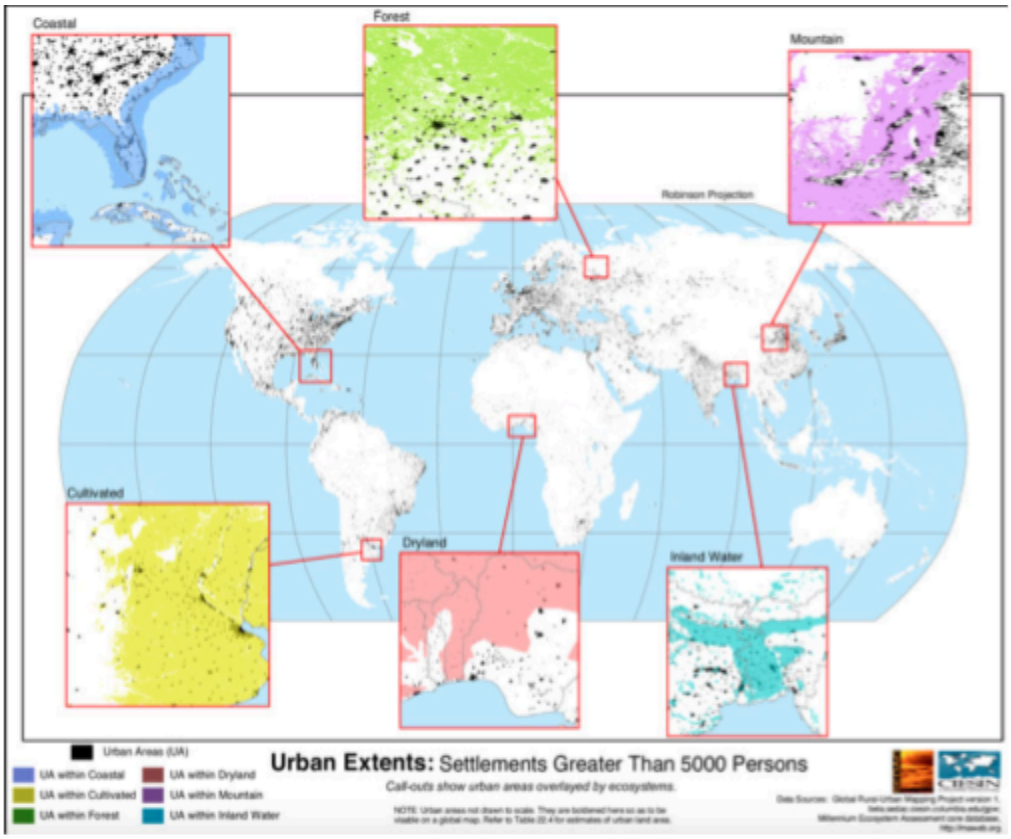

Figure 2: Urban Extents: Settlements Greater than 5000 Persons, NCES

The Industrial Revolution focused on developing already urbanised areas, in order to make them even more urbanised. This caused a concentration of population in urban parts of the world, and a less concentrated population in rural areas. Because of this, individuals who live in areas that weren't widely affected by industrialisation may live very archaic lifestyles, especially when it comes to education.

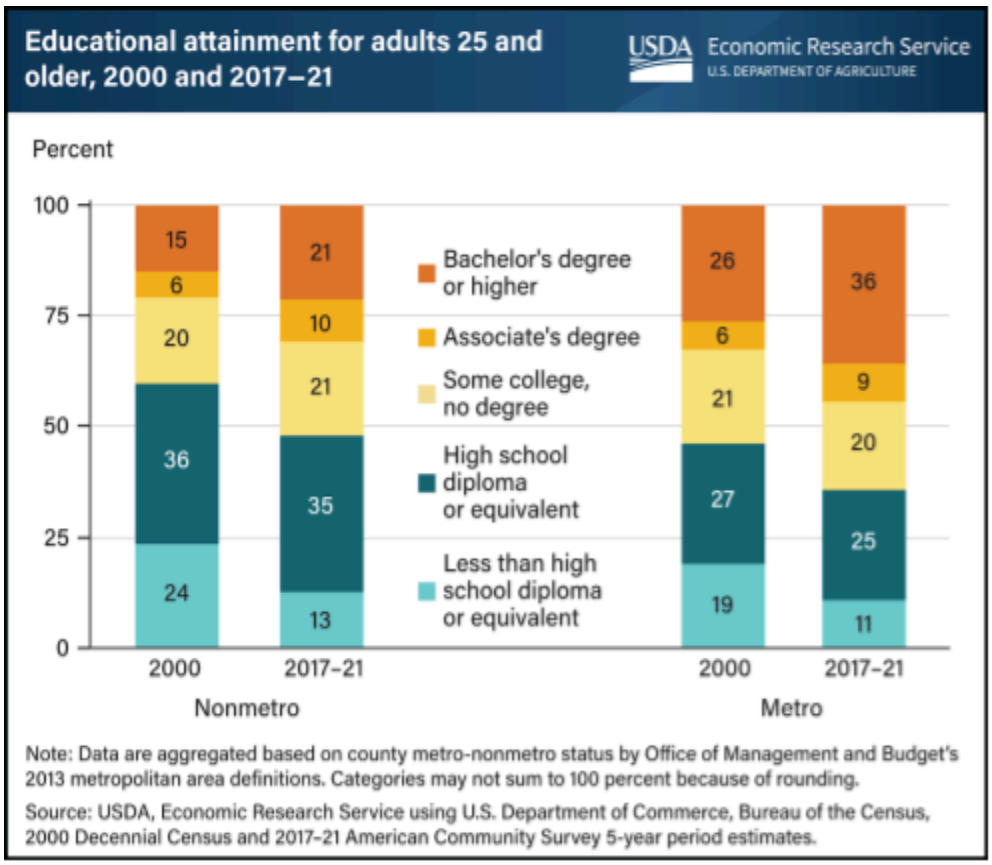

Figure 3: Educational Attainment, USDA ERS

Access to transportation may also be a problem for people who live in rural areas. This means that if a family lives hours from their local school, the children have to make a difficult journey to school on a daily basis. Additionally, due to the low levels of population in these areas, not every school can afford to have multiple teachers for every subject or individualised learning for students.

COVID-19 and Rural Education

In 2019, the Covid-19 Pandemic was the first large-scale pandemic since 1920. If education for children in rural areas was already difficult, the pandemic made it even worse. Many education centres were closed because of the pandemic. Due to this, numerous children who were learning to read and write weren't able to continue with their learning process, which especially affected low income

families. According to The Patatas Production Company, *"Before the pandemic, the widening educational gap was already a cause for concern. Over 72 million children of primary education age are not in school and 759 million adults are unable to read or write. Researchers in Canada estimate the pandemic could increase the gap by more than 30 per cent."* (The Patatas, N.D)

Apart from this, other consequences have occurred in rural areas because of the COVID-19 virus. The same article states, *"In rural communities, schools also provide children with extra resources, such as paid school meals and support systems. Closed schools stop such help from reaching the most vulnerable families in rural communities."* (The Patatas, N.D) Finally, the article also points out the difficulties that come with children with special needs. Education became difficult for special needs pupils in marginalised communities. More resources and attention are required for students with exceptional needs, such as those with dyslexia and autism. This means that since rural areas aren't always capable of providing these resources, as a result of COVID, there will be a greater educational disparity in rural areas, than in urban areas.

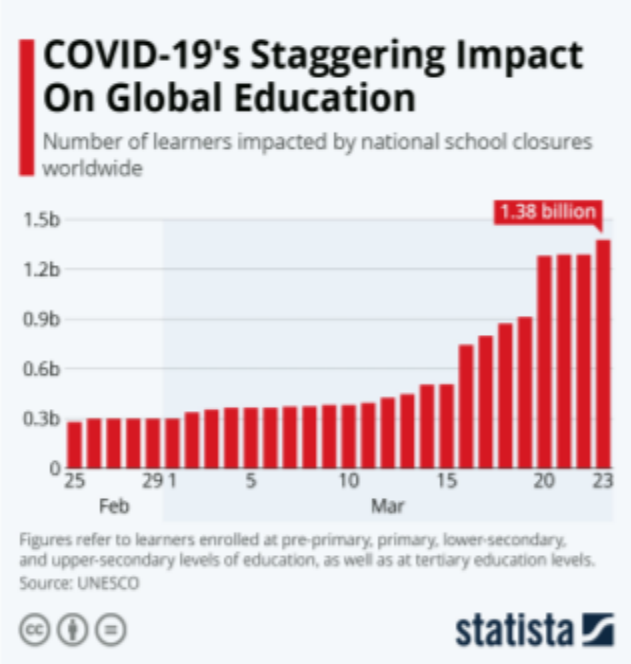

Figure 4: COVID-19's Staggering Impact On Global Education, Statista

What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a computer science discipline meant to develop systems capable of performing tasks like humans. The history of AI dates back to the mid-20th century when its development started, with some key milestones

such as the Dartmouth Conference that took place in 1956, which many consider the birth of AI. There are several types of AI: narrow AI that is used for specific tasks such as playing chess or recognizing speech; general AI that intends to mimic any human intellectual task; advanced types like machine learning (where systems learn from data); and deep learning (a subset of machine learning using neural networks). The reason behind the creation of AI was to help industries by making processes automated and efficient, thus enabling them to solve complicated problems easily. AI is already used in many sectors, including healthcare and finance, with the aim to augment human capabilities, making work faster and more accurate, often improving safety in the process.

AI in Education

AI is starting to be used in education as educators learn of its benefits. An example is personalised learning platforms, which use AI algorithms to come up with tailored educational content; this ensures that every learner gets an educational experience like no other, adjusting to their pace and style, since it meets their individual needs. Similarly, intelligent tutoring systems ensure that students receive feedback in real time; this helps them understand even the most difficult concepts and, at the same time, keeps them engaged throughout their learning

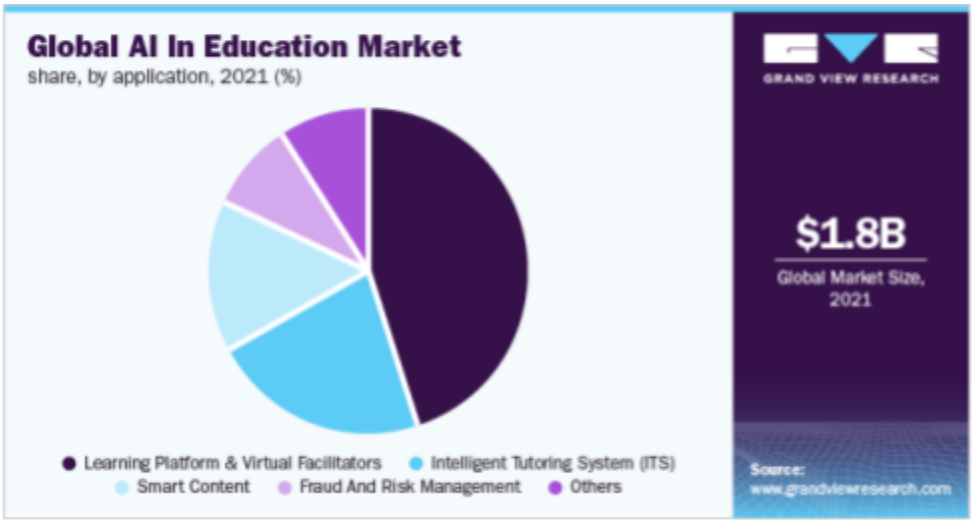

Figure 5: AI in Education Market Size & Share Report, Grand View Research

process. In addition, tasks such as administration are also automated through AI (consider grading or scheduling) so that educators can find time to free themselves for more important tasks. They should be spending more time on teaching and interacting with students, instead of having to focus on grading papers, which is a repetitive process that can easily be automated.

At-risk students are identified using predictive analytics, a technique that measures student progress to ensure that appropriate interventions are made to ensure academic success. Virtual classrooms, interactive simulations and collaboration tools are some of the components of remote or hybrid learning made possible by AI-driven technologies. These can significantly enhance the quality of the learning experience. Language apps benefit from AI technology to deliver instant translations and help with correct pronunciation, thus making it easier for learners to acquire a new language skill. Urban education systems introduce such innovative approaches that use AI-based systems leading not only to the improvement of educational outcomes but also increasing efficiency while ensuring equitable access to quality education.

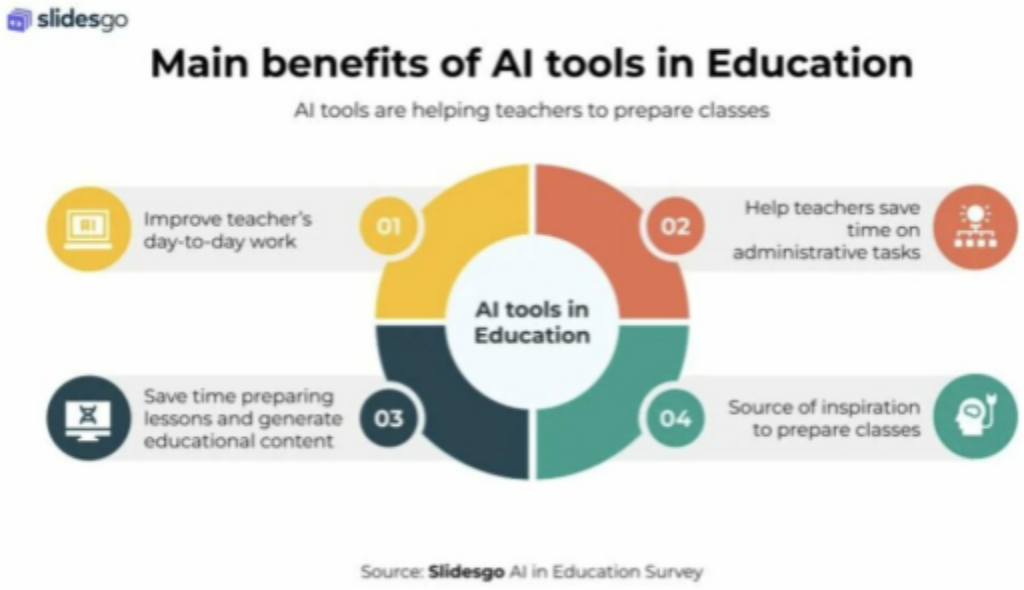

Figure 6: Benefits of AI in Higher Education, Graduate Coach

According to UNESCO, *"Through its projects, UNESCO affirms that the deployment of AI technologies in education should be proposed to enhance human capacities and to protect human rights for effective human-machine collaboration in life, learning and work, and for sustainable development. Together with partners, international organisations, and the key values that UNESCO holds as pillars of their mandate, UNESCO hopes to strengthen their leading role in AI in education, as a global laboratory of ideas, standard setter, policy advisor and capacity builder."* (UNESCO, 2022)

How AI tools such as chatGPT work

Chatbots such as chatGPT and Gemini have a lot of potential in education, operating by using Encoder-Decoder structures to analyse information and then to output a product. The systems used are; NLP (Natural Language Processing) and GPT (Generative Pre-Trained Transformer). These systems simulate and/or create text that resembles human speech.

The GPT engine process consists of two main steps. The first step is the pre-training process, which consists of the AI being exposed to a large amount of text, in the form of books, websites, research papers, articles, etc. It allows the AI to grasp the rules of language and speech, allowing it to predict the words that should follow a previous word in a sentence. This process is done without human supervision. This means that, during the pre-training stage, AI learns to imitate human speech and provide information from sources that already exist to the user. The next step, fine-tuning, consists of applying changes to the AI chatbot to make it more specific for the use it will have. As humans do the fine tuning, this is where biased positions may be integrated into the information given out by chatbots.

The NLP consists of the process used to make the AI learn the rules of grammar and speech in a way it can later use to simulate human speech. To make sure it learns, it is fed millions of sentences: *"To put this into perspective, ChatGPT, OpenAI's chatbot, was fed over half a trillion words from books, text, articles, and*

data from the open web. That's equivalent to almost 75 Wikipedias." (Alston 2024). After which it creates a deep learning algorithm, which forms the basis of its language model; this is what allows it to generate new text or answer questions. In summary, both of these systems serve the purpose of allowing the chatbot to gather information, however one is more focused in the informational aspect, while the other is more focused on the linguistic aspect, so while both the GPT and NLP processes have similar inputs, they serve completely different roles inside of an AI chatbot like ChatGPT.

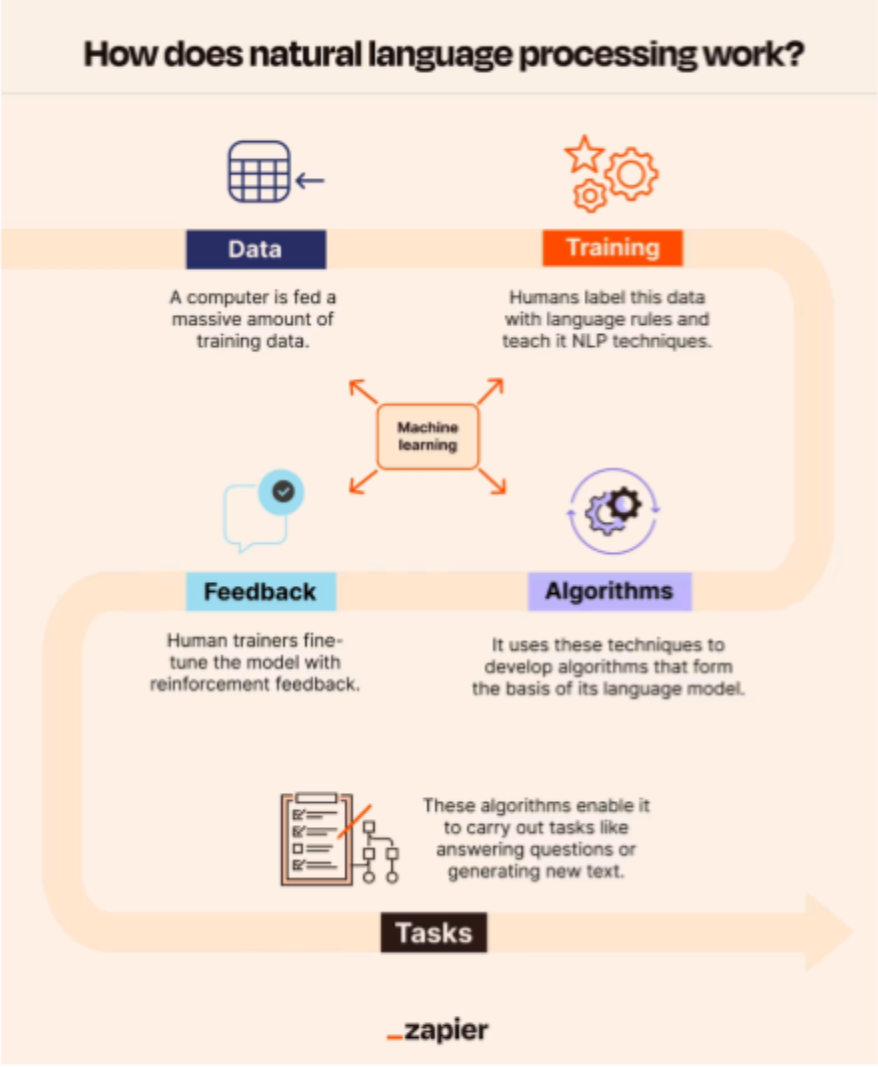

Figure 7: How does natural processing language work?

II. Current Situation

AI Education in Rural Zones

Figure 8: Student's learning journey with BYJU'S Classes, BYJU's

The use of technology for education is developing in areas such as the far corners of India, Kenya and Brazil which was once unimaginable. BYJU's is an adaptive AI-based education platform that delivers education to the students directly, irrespective of the location. According to its official website, *"Celebrating every type of learner, BYJU'S programs use technology to adapt to the needs of each student's style and pace. Engagement is at the core of every experience to drive improved cognition, understanding, and learning outcomes."* (BYJU's, nd).

In Kenya, mobile apps using artificial intelligence convert smartphones into interactive classrooms, which help in significantly improving literacy and numeracy skills. Brazil implements AI in distance learning programmes: virtual classrooms and intelligent tutoring systems ensure quality education reaches students located far away from urban centres. These implementations provide feedback in real

time and support tailored to each individual; moreover, they make it possible for rural students to receive an equal level of education as urban peers. AI goes Rural is a project in the state of Indiana in the USA which aims to support teachers and students in rural areas to use AI to enhance their learning. NEXTLAB.TECH is a learning platform from Romania that allows students in any part of the country to learn about advanced technologies such as robotics, something that rural teachers are not usually trained to teach. In India, the Infinity Learn platform helps students in rural areas to access educational material in their own language. In China, the Open University of China won a UNESCO prize for the way in which it has implemented AI in rural education.

AI in the present day

As much as artificial intelligence tools have existed for around 80 years, they have seen two major booms, or developments. The most recent one consists of the development of deep learning algorithms, which allow the AI to learn from its users and other information without the necessity of it being programmed directly into the algorithm. This is designed to simulate a human mind in the form of the ability to learn and self improve. AI tools that follow this model have seen a major growth, with various academically purposed AI tools, such chatGPT or Gemini being used more often.

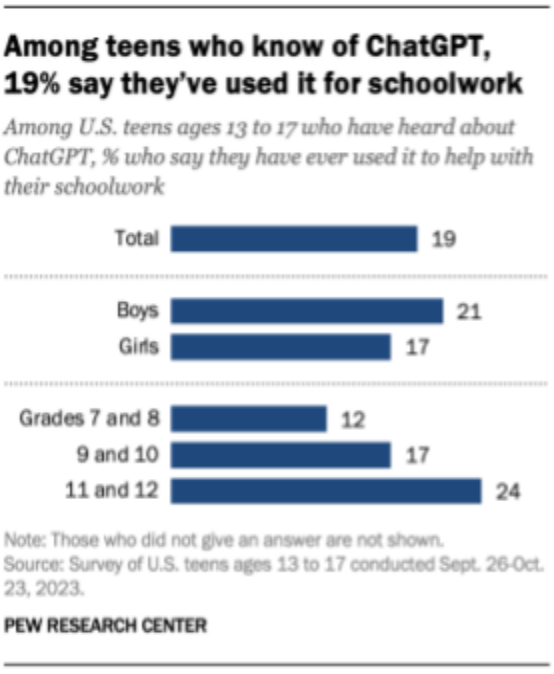

Figure 9: Among teens who know of chatGPT 19% say they've used it for schoolwork.

For education, it is necessary to use AI designed to self-improve and synthesise information. *"Roughly one-in-five teenagers who have heard of ChatGPT say they have used it to help them do their schoolwork, according to a new Pew Research Center survey of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17. With a majority of teens having heard of ChatGPT, that amounts to 13% of all U.S. teens who*

have used the generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot in their schoolwork.'' (Gottfried 2023) This study, among others, clearly shows the rise in AI usage in schools with an academic purpose behind it.

Positive uses of AI tools in education

ChatGPT and other tools of the same calibre offer a broad amount of benefits:

1. Improved accessibility to education. AI chatbots take information from all around the web, meaning they can synthesise it into almost any language in existence. This means that, as long as you have a device in which you can access these tools, you don't need to worry about a language barrier in information. Additionally, it can also help students who have fallen behind or have gotten ahead of the course material by helping them understand the topics in different ways.
2. Helps in schoolwork. The ability of these bots to synthesise information, provide sources, answer the question given in various ways, and provide vocabulary information to students greatly releases a burden from the students shoulders. With the appropriate use of these tools, students can get a starting point for a topic they are researching, and improve their work based on the corrections given by AI. This allows them to not only understand topics better, but also to have more free time in order to be able to enjoy their non-academic activities.
3. Assists teachers in their work. Teachers have to deal with many students in the same course at the same time, and it is relatively hard for them to be able to not only plan the entire course, but to also make sure all students are up to the same level and are given personalised feedback in a timely manner. This is where AI comes in, as tools such as Gemini can help the teachers in analysing students' work and providing feedback. They can also help the teacher develop a plan for the entire course, and also generate questions to be used in tests or pop quizzes, to ensure students are understanding the topic currently being studied, advising the teacher what to do if a student is falling too far behind.

Figure 10: What are the pros of using ChatGPT?

Misuses and challenges of AI tools in education

As much as AI tools can be helpful, it is necessary to acknowledge the potential negative effects that its prolonged use can have. The following are the main drawbacks of the prolonged use of AI without supervision or limitations inside of a school environment.

1. **Lack of Academic integrity.** ChatGPT, Gemini, ChatSonic and other AI chatbot tools directly synthesise information from all around the web to output a text given the prompt. This raises concerns, as most academic advisors assume that the usage of these AI tools will increase the amount of plagiarism and cheating done by students. Not only this, but since Chatbots generate a synthesis, it allows the user to skip most of the research process,

leading to a possible decrease in critical thinking, and creative thinking abilities.

2. **Lack of AI/understanding context.** Chatbots tend to take everything petitioned to them literally, which means that most of the time they do not take into account the context for the question asked to them, unless it is specifically stated by the user. Additionally, while tools such as chatGPT have the ability to fake emotions, they are completely lacking in emotional intelligence, meaning that not only might they make a wrong impression of emotions, while trying to sound sad or happy for example, but if tools like these are used for teaching, it might be difficult for the tool to understand the emotional profile of its students, which is necessary for attending students' emotional needs and helping them grow as people.

3. **Inaccurate information/biased responses**.

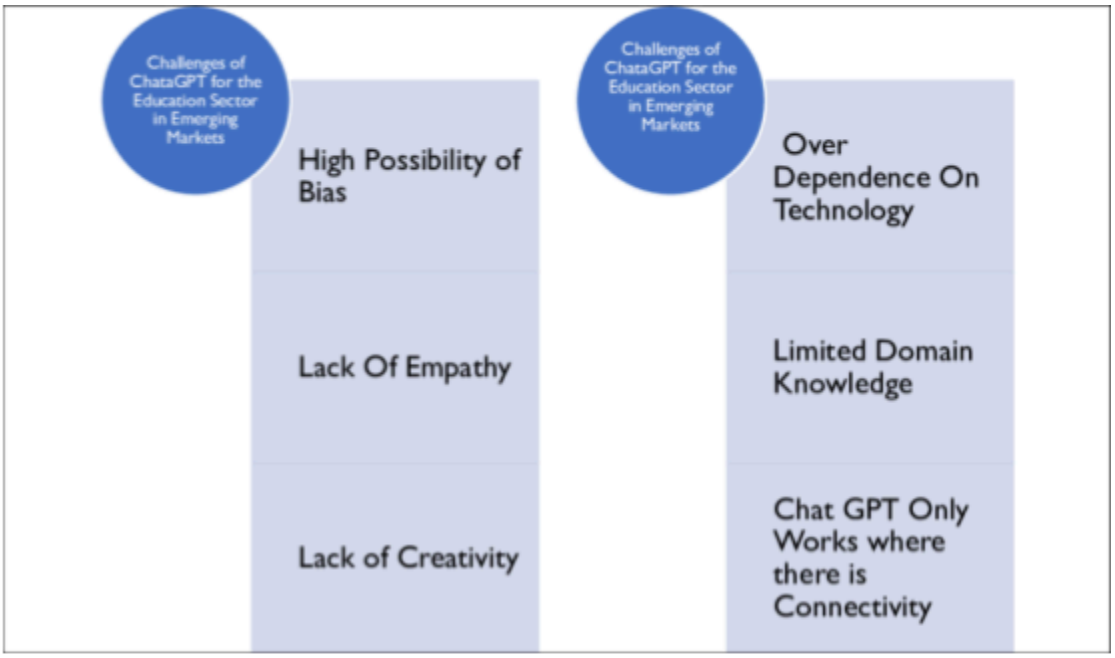

Figure 11: Challenges of using ChatGPT in the education sector of emerging markets.

As much as the information that comes from AI chatbots might seem reliable or accurate, it most likely will have some inaccuracies. This is due to the way these chatbots process information bases, which most likely already have bias in them, as well as the way it adapts to its user. For example, if a lot of users input a set of values or ideals to write about a certain topic, the chatbot will continue outputting this certain set of values/ideals, which is only one point of view. This can directly harm a student's understanding of the given topic they are researching, deteriorate their decision making capabilities, as well as promote a certain set of values or ideals. Not only this, but it is also very possible that the information given is outdated or incomplete, as it can not access newer databases.

Measures taken by countries and companies to limit AI

The limitation of AI is a very important subtopic in the debate. The first international law to regulate AI came in 05/21/2024 by the European Union, *"The law prohibits applications of AI that are considered "unacceptable" in terms of their risk level. Such applications feature so-called "social scoring" systems that rank citizens based on aggregation and analysis of their data, predictive policing and emotional recognition in the workplace and schools."* (Browne 2024). The goal of these countries is to limit AI before it gets too advanced for an optimal control over it. This means that the European Union is not in favour of AI taking over certain human jobs, an idea which has been proposed time and time again in science-fictional movies such as "The Terminator" or "The Matrix". The creation of this law marks an important milestone in the control of AI, given its nature of process learning, and its relative recency, barely any country had taken controlling action prior to this.

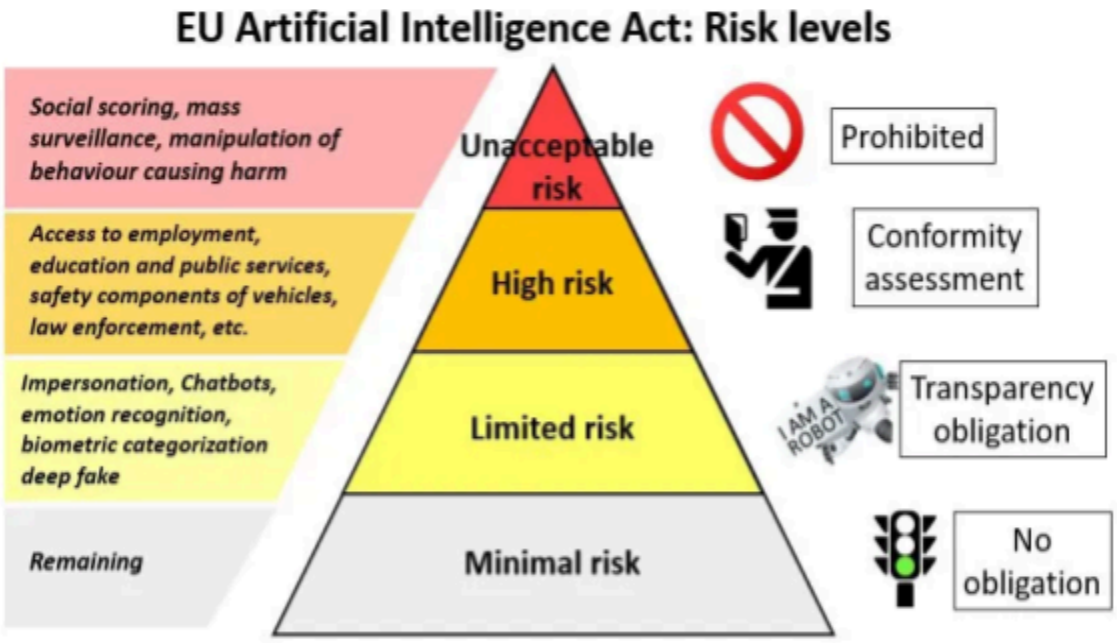

Figure 12: EUs new AI law guarantees the non violation of citizens universal rights, and promotes innovation and investment

AI usage in educational systems

AI is already being used in countries such as South Korea, China and Singapore to enhance children's learning in the classroom. Other countries are starting to implement this new tool into their systems, whilst others are banning the use of AI chatbots such as ChatGPT from their schools, saying that it reduces the students' ability to think critically. Some countries, such as France, are starting to control the amount of screentime students have in school due to problems with addiction and health issues. In France, this means that cellphones and other electronic devices are prohibited for younger students, not allowing any room for possible AI usage. Other countries in the European Union and the United States are instead opting for measures that only control the usage of AI, such as plagiarism checkers.

Challenges of bringing AI education into rural areas

Implementing AI into education is a daunting task in itself, with AI being such a recent technological advance, only a few countries have officially implemented some sort of usage and control of it in their educational systems. Taking this into account, bringing AI education to rural areas will be an even harder challenge, and will most likely only happen several years after the full implementation of AI in educational systems.

Figure 13: New tech could halt the decline of rural communities.

Many rural areas around the world have little to no technological capabilities in their schools. To bring AI education into them would mean to be able to first fund operations that are able to bring better technology into these areas. This in itself is a challenge, as many rural areas do not have proper digital technology infrastructure or even the power supply needed to run them. These are some important challenges that should be addressed when speaking about the potential use and benefits of AI technology in education systems in rural areas.

AI can be a potential game-changer for rural education, allowing many more students access to quality and personalised learning. It can free up time for the limited number of teachers in these zones to be able to concentrate on other aspects of education, such as pastoral care, which AI cannot deal with. However, the successful introduction of this innovative technology depends upon the infrastructure to be able to use it effectively, and proper control so that the information the students receive is correct and unbiased.

III. Key points of the debate

- Infrastructure: Rural areas often lack reliable internet and electricity.
- Cost: AI tools are expensive, and rural schools have limited budgets.
- Training: Teachers need specialised training to use AI effectively.
- Relevance: AI must be adapted to local languages and cultures.
- Engagement: Students may vary in tech familiarity and need user-friendly tools.
- Equity: AI could widen the gap between urban and rural education.
- Privacy: Data protection is essential for managing student information.

IV. Guiding questions

1. What are the current educational challenges faced by students and teachers in the rural areas of your county?
2. How does your country implement AI Education in urban zones and/or rural zones?
3. What are the obstacles and challenges that your country has faced while implementing AI in rural or urban education?
4. How can AI technologies address these challenges within the context of your country's rural education system?
5. Are there any successful case studies or pilot programmes in your country where AI has been implemented in rural education?
6. What policies and strategies should your country adopt to ensure the successful integration of AI in its rural education system?

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3. Topic 2: *Protection of journalists in conflict zones*

I. History/Context

The safety of journalists has been a priority of both the United Nations and the UNESCO agency for quite some time. UNESCO recognises outstanding journalists who promote freedom of expression, and it also does various studies and projects on a yearly basis in order to recognise which countries are struggling with this issue and what can be done about it internationally. The United Nations has made the deliberate targeting of journalists a war crime, and has taken measures to ensure that journalists have a relatively safe standpoint when reporting on ongoing conflicts.

UNESCO/Guillermo Cano award

Figure 1: UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize

The UNESCO or Guillermo Cano award for freedom of press is a monetary reward given to journalists or organisations who uphold the values of freedom of press, and continue its pursuit in difficult or dangerous circumstances. The official UNESCO description states the following: *"Created in 1997, the annual UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize honours a person, organisation or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and, or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, and especially when this has been achieved in the face of danger. The Prize was established on the initiative of UNESCO's Executive Board and is formally conferred by UNESCO, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, on 3 May. It is named in honour of Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist who was assassinated in*

front of the offices of his newspaper El Espectador in Bogotá, Colombia on 17 December 1986." (UNESCO).

This prize represents the importance of journalists´actions to uphold the truth, even if it means putting their lives at risk, as was the case with the Colombian journalist the prize is named after. In the past, winners of this award have been sentenced to jail due to the nature of their articles conflicting with the ideals of the government. The following are just a couple of the notable examples of prize winners: Kyaw Soe Oo, and Wa lone are both serving time in prison after being arrested for reporting human right violations in Myanmar; Dawit Isaak was arrested in Eritrea, his native country in 2001, as a traitor for writing articles criticising the dictatorial regime in Eritrea, and has been held in prison since then without a fair trial.

Freedom of press

Freedom of Speech is defined as the right to express one's personal ideas in a form of communication. This can be done through speaking, writing or any other method that conveys ideas. Freedom of Press takes the idea of freedom of speech and applies it to media-produced work. Censorship is when governments deny freedom of press. A lot of dictatorial regimes have used censorship in the past to suppress the truth or negative positions about their actions, in order to keep their citizens in check. A good example of this are the various dictatorships that happened around the same time period in South America. In many of these countries, if you were heard speaking negatively about the government, you would immediately be arrested and sentenced without a trial or any form of justice. For example, during the reign of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, many civilians and political leaders were tortured and killed.

In a recent study, UNESCO found that, *"The 10 countries with the highest levels of Freedom of Expression, according to V-Dem data, also enjoy a significantly higher level of protection of civil, political, economic and social rights, such as access to justice, a near absence of political killings and very low levels of exclusion across gender, socio-economic, urban-rural, political and social group indicators. At the*

same time the 10 countries with the lowest level of freedom of expression are associated with higher levels of exclusion by socio-economic group, and high levels of exclusion by gender and political groups." (Higher Levels of Freedom of Expression Have a Strong Relationship with the Protection of Other Human Rights, UNESCO Analysis of 180 Countries Finds | UNESCO, 2023)

Countries where there is restricted freedom of press

Almost every country has at one point in their history violated press freedom, however, it is most important to look at countries which historically have violated it the most, as well as countries which have not improved this statistic. Historically, countries such as China, Russia and Middle Eastern and South American countries have been known to restrict freedom of press. However, as can be seen in the Index of Press Freedom diagram, many regions of the world are not doing well.

Figure 2: The state of World Press Freedom

Conflict against non state actors

It is important to note that in this topic, a conflict zone may apply to non-formal armed conflict. This refers to the possibility of non-state actors being in a conflict with governments, or the conflict being a civil war. For example, in countries such as Colombia and Mexico, there have been various cases of assassinations directed by various drug cartels and while, in theory, it is the government's job to take responsibility for its citizens against such threats, in most cases governments have taken little to no action. This allows non-state actors to roam freely and target whoever tries to oppose them, or expose them, with no real repercussions.

II. Current Situation

High Risk

Journalists in conflict zones face significant dangers, including targeted killings, kidnappings, harassment, and injuries. Due to the large level of violence and death rates in zones of conflict, journalists are more prone to coming face to face with situations that could potentially end their lives.

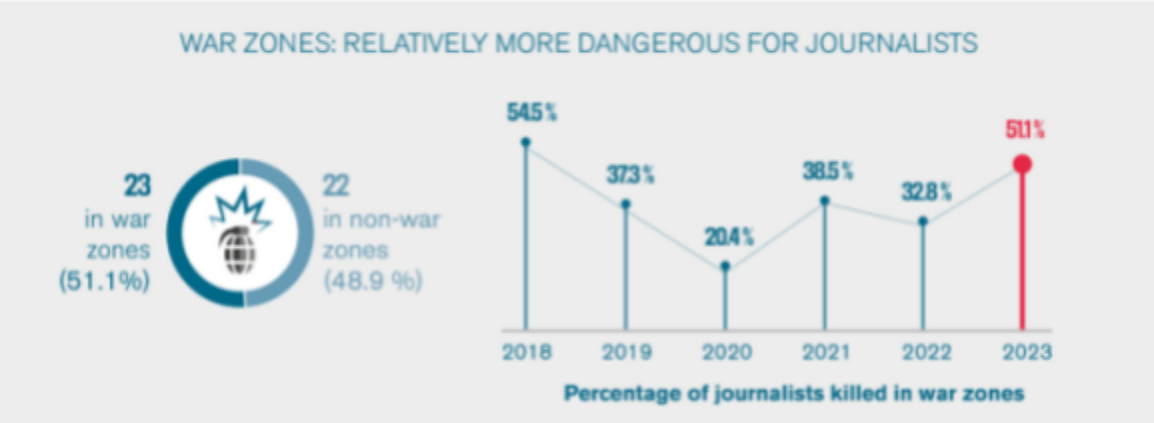

Figure 3: War zones deadlier than countries at peace for journalists in 2023, RSF

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, *"Journalists covering today's conflicts may confront specialised weapons, indiscriminate shelling, and damaged crucial infrastructure. Essential personal protective equipment may be difficult to*

obtain on the ground or to transport across borders. The emotional toll of living in and reporting on a conflict zone may also affect the mental health of journalists." (CPJ, n.d)

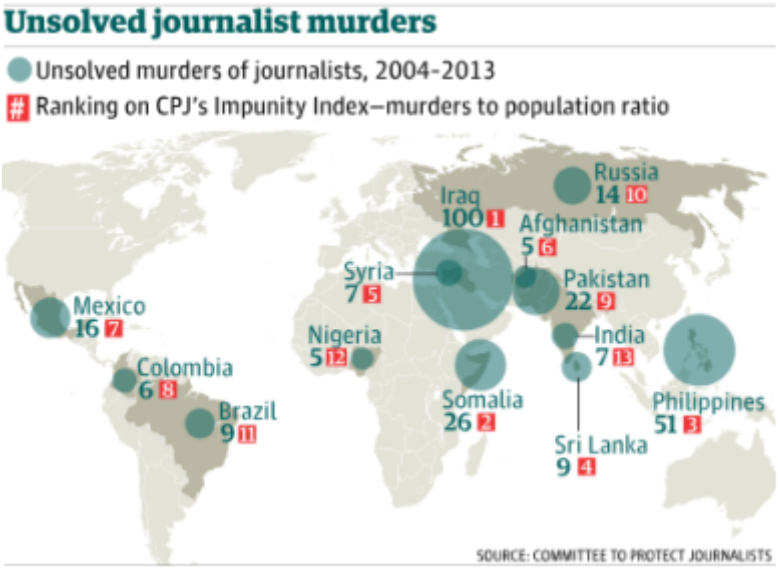

Figure 4: Unsolved murders of journalists

Apart from the constant violence and fear that journalists face while reporting situations in zones of conflict, if they are indeed victims of murder, the perpetrators often go unpunished for their deaths. This lack of accountability creates a climate of impunity, where not only the worker rights, but the human rights of journalists are put in jeopardy; their right to life is stripped away whilst the ones responsible continue their lives with no repercussions. According to CPJ, in Haiti, *"Ten years after the United Nations declared an international day to end impunity for crimes against journalists – and more than 30 years after CPJ began documenting these killings – almost 80% of their killings remain unsolved."* (Getz, n.d)

Currently, journalists face these risks all around the world, especially in Palestine, Russia, Mexico, Iraq, and the Philippines.

Palestine-Israel War: Journalists covering the Palestine-Israel conflict face severe risks, including direct attacks, arrests, and obstruction from both Israeli forces and Palestinian militants. The volatile environment and frequent clashes make it extremely dangerous to report from the ground, with several journalists injured or killed in recent years. According to The Intercept, *"The deaths represent 10 percent of the journalists in Gaza, according to Shuruq As'ad, a spokesperson for the syndicate."* (Osman, Taweel, Jallad, 2024)

Russia-Ukraine War: Journalists in the Russia-Ukraine war face significant dangers from military operations, targeted attacks, and detention by both Russian and Ukrainian forces. The conflict's intensity and the presence of various armed groups further complicate journalists' safety, leading to numerous incidents of harassment, injury, and death. According to CPJ, *"Eighteen journalists and media workers are listed as of 1 June 2022 as having been killed in the Russo-Ukrainian War"* (CPJ, n.d)

Mexico: Journalists in Mexico are frequently targeted by drug cartels and corrupt officials, leading to a high number of murders and disappearances. The pervasive violence and lack of government protection make it one of the deadliest countries for journalists, who often face threats and attacks for reporting on crime and corruption. According to Amnesty International, *"Since the turn of the century, at least 141 journalists and other media workers have been killed, according to CPJ research; at least 61 of those killings were found to be directly related to their work."* (Amnesty, 2024)

Iraq: Journalists in Iraq operate under constant threat from militant groups, sectarian violence, and government repression. Kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations are common, making it extremely hazardous for journalists to cover the ongoing conflict and political instability. According to The Guardian, *"At least 282 journalists have been killed in Iraq since 2003, according to estimates by the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, with most killed by anonymous gunmen or armed factions, and others by the Iraqi forces."* (Almashat, 2023)

Philippines: In the Philippines, journalists face significant risks from both government forces and insurgent groups, particularly in conflict zones and regions with high levels of political violence. Intimidation, harassment, and killings are frequent, making it one of the most dangerous countries for journalists in Southeast Asia. According to Statista, *"In 2022, there were four journalists in the Philippines who were killed in the line of duty. This brings it to a total of 140 journalists killed from 2000 to 2022."* (Balita, 2023)

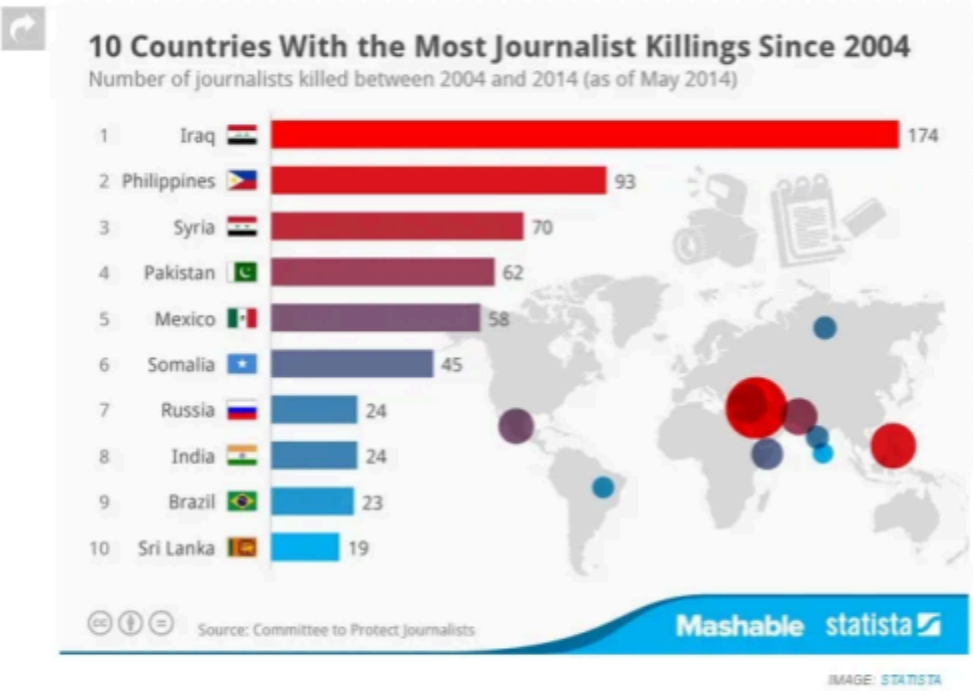

Figure 5: Top 10 Countries with the most Journalist Killings, Statista

Restrictive Measures

In conflict zones, governments and non-state actors often place stringent restrictions on journalists, which severely limits their ability to report in a free and accurate manner. These restrictions consist of censorship on a large scale; information is tightly controlled by the authorities, and news that puts them in a negative light, or discloses critical details about military actions, is censored, thus handicapping journalists from delivering comprehensive and truthful reports. Imprisonments happen frequently; journalists are taken into custody under questionable charges such as espionage or dissemination of false news, sometimes facing brutal interrogation or torture aimed at extracting information or compliance. Press credentials are also withdrawn as another strategy, where governments withhold or withdraw these credentials, thereby barring journalists from accessing important areas and events.

In addition, journalists also suffer continuous intimidation from physical attacks plus targeted violence, which creates an environment that breeds self-censorship

because the fear is real. Legal and administrative challenges make their work more difficult. For example, there may be laws that stifle dissent and reporting by criminalising criticism. Additionally, there may be a lot of bureaucratic red tape, making it difficult to obtain the necessary permits and licences. These repressive actions place the lives of journalists at risk, and also deprive citizens of their right to information. They also hinder global comprehension of situations in conflict

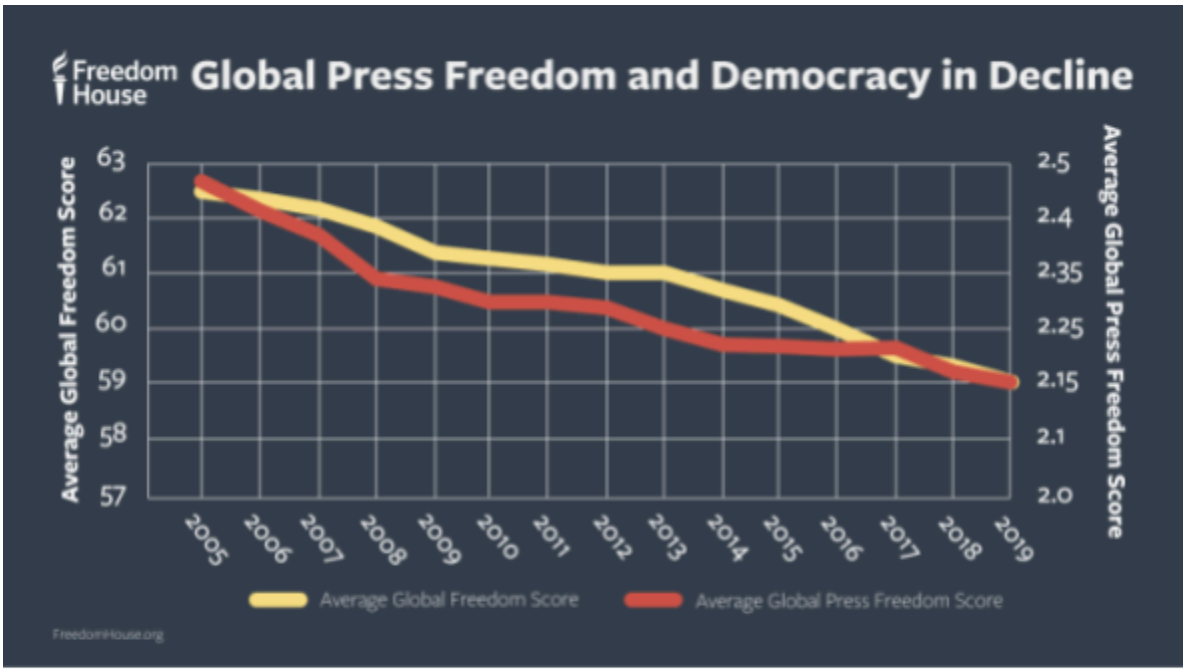

Figure 6: Freedom House, press freedom

areas and thwart efforts toward conflict resolution.

Protecting Journalists

According the Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, *"Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."* (United Nations, 1966). However, it comes with certain conditions; freedom of expression may not be allowed if it does not respect the

rights or reputation of others, or if it affects national security, public health or morals. This means that governments may arbitrarily suppress information if they say it comes under these categories, especially in times of conflict.

War correspondents should be treated as civilians and given the same protections. If they are accompanying the army of one of the countries involved in the conflict (embedded journalism) and are caught by the opposing side, they should be treated as prisoners-of-war. Military groups should not news media outlets directly, and they should give advance warning if they do intend to attack this type of installation. Reporting equipment and stations are also regarded as civilian objects and should not be attacked unless they are being used as part of the hostilities, for example, by producing propaganda that incites war crimes.

Resolution 1738 (2006) was adopted by the UN Security Council at its 5613th meeting, on 23 December 2006, and was supposed to emphasise the importance of giving protection to journalists in conflict zones. Embedded journalism provides better protection as the military has security protocols, but it means that the journalists can only report on one side of the conflict. They may also have more protection if there is a presence of non-government organisations (NGOs) in the zone such as the Red Cross.

Some countries, such as the USA and the UK have special “hostile environment training” for journalists who go to war zones so that they can be better prepared. These journalists are more likely to be from more developed nations, and will be given safety equipment as well as training before they leave for the war zone. Countries with strong freedom of press institutions, such as Sweden, are more likely to help journalists who have been captured during hostilities.

Reporters without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) are two organisations that work at an international level to defend and protect journalists around the world.

III. Key points of the debate

- Measures taken by nations to protect journalists
- Importance of freedom of the press
- Responsibility to protect journalists in conflict zones
- Threats by non-state actors against journalists
- Is reporting on the truth more important than a journalist's life?

IV. Guiding questions

1. Does your nation have any internal laws regarding the safety of journalists?
2. Is your nation in an ongoing armed conflict? If so, how many journalists have died due to conflict in your country?
3. What is your country's stance on freedom of press?
4. According to your country, are the lives of journalists important?
5. How do violations of international laws connect to journalists' deaths?
6. What can be done to help journalists in dangerous situations?
7. What possible measures should the UN take regarding the safety of freedom of press and the international law violations regarding journalists?

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