

Artificial Intelligence and Social Data Analysis

الذكاء الاصطناعي وتحليل البيانات الاجتماعية

¹ Bilal Elhamza

bilal.elhamza@univ-constantine2.dz
<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0490-464X>

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Article abstract:

This study demonstrates that artificial intelligence has become a central tool in social data analysis amid the significant expansion of digital spaces and the exponential growth of data circulating within them. It has provided advanced capabilities for processing big data, extracting behavioral patterns, and understanding social phenomena with greater accuracy and depth compared to traditional methods. Furthermore, AI has contributed to enhancing the interpretation of public opinion and predicting social trends through techniques such as machine learning, natural language processing, and social network analysis.

However, this technological development is accompanied by several fundamental challenges related to privacy, algorithmic bias, and the lack of transparency in AI models. These challenges necessitate approaching artificial intelligence within a critical framework that balances its analytical power with the sociological and humanistic dimensions in understanding social phenomena.

Key words : Artificial Intelligence; Social Data Analysis; Big Data; Ethical Challenges; Evidence-Based Policy.

ملخص المقال :

توضح هذه الدراسة أن الذكاء الاصطناعي أصبح أداة مركزية في تحليل البيانات الاجتماعية في ظل التوسع الكبير للفضاءات الرقمية وتزايد حجم المعطيات المتداولة عبرها، حيث أتاح إمكانيات متقدمة لمعالجة البيانات الضخمة واستخراج الأنماط السلوكية وفهم الظواهر الاجتماعية بشكل أكثر دقة وعمق مقارنة بالمناهج التقليدية، كما أسهم في تطوير قدرات تفسير الرأي العام والتنبؤ بالاتجاهات الاجتماعية من خلال تقنيات مثل التعلم الآلي ومعالجة اللغة الطبيعية وتحليل الشبكات الاجتماعية، غير أن هذا التطور التقني يرافقه عدد من التحديات الجوهرية المرتبطة بالخصوصية، والتحيز الخوارزمي، وضعف شفافية النماذج، وهو ما يفرض ضرورة التعامل معه ضمن إطار نقدي يوازن بين القوة التحليلية للذكاء الاصطناعي والبعد السوسيولوجي والإنساني في فهم الظواهر الاجتماعية.

كلمات مفتاحية: الذكاء الاصطناعي؛ تحليل البيانات الاجتماعية؛ البيانات الضخمة؛ التحديات الأخلاقية؛ صنع السياسات المبنية على الأدلة.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the rapid expansion of digital technologies has profoundly reshaped economic, social, and cultural structures across the world. At the core of this transformation lies data, which has become a fundamental resource in the digital age. Contemporary societies continuously generate vast and heterogeneous volumes of information through everyday interactions with digital environments, particularly social media platforms and online communication systems. This unprecedented data proliferation has opened new methodological opportunities for understanding social reality and human behavior with greater depth and precision.

Within this context, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a key technological paradigm that is redefining the ways in which data is processed and interpreted. Beyond simple automation, AI systems are capable of learning from data, identifying complex patterns, and generating predictive insights from large-scale and unstructured datasets. This represents a significant shift in analytical practices, particularly in the social sciences, where phenomena are inherently dynamic, context-dependent, and multidimensional.

Social data produced in digital environments increasingly reflect individuals' opinions, interactions, values, and cultural orientations. These data sources include social media posts, comments, reactions, digital surveys, and online behavioral traces. However, the sheer volume and complexity of such data have rendered traditional analytical approaches insufficient, highlighting the need for more advanced computational tools capable of handling big data environments.

Accordingly, AI-based methods—particularly machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), and social network analysis—have become central to contemporary social data analysis. These techniques enable researchers to extract meaning from textual, visual, and behavioral data, identify public opinion trends, detect social patterns, and anticipate emerging phenomena within digital societies. As a result, AI has increasingly positioned itself as a powerful support tool for evidence-based decision-making in fields such as sociology, political science, media studies, and public policy.

Despite these advantages, the integration of AI into social research raises critical ethical and methodological concerns, particularly regarding data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and potential biases embedded in computational models. These challenges highlight the necessity of critically examining not only the capabilities of AI, but also its limitations and implications for social knowledge production.

Within this framework, the present study is guided by the following research question:

- How can artificial intelligence, through NLP and sentiment analysis, contribute to understanding and predicting social behavior in digital social networks?

From this main question, several sub-questions emerge, including:

- How do artificial intelligence techniques contribute to the processing and analysis of massive social data?
- To what extent does artificial intelligence help interpret social phenomena and predict their future trends?
- What are the main ethical challenges associated with the use of artificial intelligence in social data analysis?

2. Research Objectives:

To clarify the role of artificial intelligence in social data analysis and demonstrate the extent of its contribution to understanding and predicting social phenomena, while highlighting its value as a modern research tool in the social sciences compared to traditional methods.

To define the concept of artificial intelligence and its basic techniques used in social data analysis, and to explain their operational mechanisms in processing massive data (Big Data) and detecting patterns of social behavior, relationships, and interactions between individuals and groups.

To analyze the contribution of artificial intelligence to the prediction of social phenomena and its role in supporting decision-making and formulating data-driven social policies, while specifying the limits of its accuracy and its future potential.

To shed light on the ethical and legal challenges accompanying the use of artificial intelligence in social data analysis, and to call for the adoption of ethical and regulatory frameworks ensuring the responsible use of these technologies in a manner that preserves privacy and human values.

3. Methodological Approach:

This study adopts a critical qualitative literature review approach in order to examine the role of artificial intelligence in social data analysis. Rather than merely describing existing knowledge, the study aims to systematically analyze, compare, and critically evaluate the main theoretical and empirical contributions in this field, with particular attention to their methodological assumptions and epistemological implications.

The corpus of analysis consists of a purposively selected set of recent academic sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, scientific reports, and specialized books published between 2015 and 2025. The selection of studies was guided by their relevance to three main analytical dimensions: (1) artificial intelligence techniques applied to social data analysis, particularly machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), and social network analysis (SNA); (2) their role in understanding and predicting social phenomena; and (3) the ethical, technical, and epistemological challenges associated with their use.

The analytical procedure follows a thematic and interpretative strategy. The selected literature was coded and organized around key analytical categories in order to identify recurring arguments, conceptual convergences, and methodological divergences across studies. This approach allows for a comparative examination of how different authors conceptualize the contribution of artificial intelligence to social research, as well as how they address its limitations and potential biases.

More specifically, the analysis focuses on three interrelated objectives: first, identifying the added value of artificial intelligence compared to traditional sociological and statistical approaches; second, highlighting the limitations of algorithmic models, particularly in relation to bias, transparency, and data dependency; and third, examining the epistemological implications of relying on computational methods in the production of social knowledge.

By combining descriptive, comparative, and critical perspectives, this methodological approach enables a deeper understanding of artificial intelligence not only as a technical tool, but also as a socio-technical system that influences the production and interpretation of social reality. However, it should be noted that this study remains limited to secondary sources and does not include empirical fieldwork or primary data analysis, which may restrict the scope of generalization of its findings.

4. Concept of Artificial Intelligence:

Although Artificial Intelligence (AI) is embedded in a historical perspective spanning more than sixty years, marked by successive cycles of progress and stagnation (the "winters" and "springs" of AI), its current dynamism is unprecedented. This contemporary resurgence relies primarily on the exponential growth of computing power and the emergence of Big Data. Today, AI has established itself as the essential engine of digital transformation and the renewal of business models. (Benmehdi & Chouali, 2024, p. 253)

From a terminological standpoint, the concept, initially introduced by John McCarthy, refers to a scientific discipline whose ambition is to replicate, through computer systems, cognitive functions and reasoning qualified as intelligent. However, the definitional exercise remains complex due to the transversality and evolving nature of this technology.

As early as 1956, Marvin Lee Minsky proposed a functional vision that continues to inspire research: for him, AI consists in designing programs capable of executing tasks traditionally assigned to humans, as they require complex mental processes such as learning, memory structuring, or critical thinking.

More recently, definitions have converged toward two complementary axes: (Jacob & Souissi, 2022, p. 16)

- **Technical simulation:** It is perceived as an arsenal of theories and methods aimed at endowing machines with a capacity to simulate human intelligence.

- **Decision-making operability:** It encompasses devices enabling a machine not only to imitate intelligence but also to perceive its environment, learn from its data, and make decisions autonomously.

In organizational and public sector contexts, artificial intelligence is increasingly regarded as a transformative driver of administrative modernization. It enhances decision-making processes through data-driven analytics, improves the efficiency of public services, and enables more responsive and personalized interactions between institutions and citizens. (Wirtz, Weyerer, & Geyer, 2019, p. 604).

5. Analyzing Social Behavior and Data Using Artificial Intelligence:

In recent years, artificial intelligence has become one of the most important modern tools driving the advancement of social data analysis. This is particularly true given the ongoing digital transformation and the proliferation of social media networks, which generate massive and diverse volumes of data on a daily basis. Analyzing social phenomena no longer relies solely on traditional methods such as surveys or field interviews. Instead, AI now offers extensive capabilities for understanding social behavior and uncovering patterns and relationships within digital communities with greater accuracy and depth.

AI-powered social data analysis draws on a range of advanced techniques, most notably machine learning, which enables computers to learn from social data and extract recurring behavioral patterns without direct human intervention. Through classification and prediction algorithms, researchers can analyze trends among individuals and groups, monitor social changes, and forecast future behaviors—such as the likelihood of deviance, school dropout rates, or engagement with various societal issues. Numerous studies have demonstrated that machine learning represents a paradigm shift in social data analysis, as it can handle large, complex datasets far more efficiently than traditional statistical methods. (Alba Gutiérrez , Norat Roig, Nuria Chaparro, & José, 2024)

Additionally, Natural Language Processing (NLP) plays a pivotal role in analyzing textual social data—such as comments, posts, tweets, and public discourse. This technology enables AI to comprehend human language, analyze its content, and extract the underlying meanings and connotations embedded within it. Thanks to advanced models like BERT and RoBERTa, it has become possible to analyze social

sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) and understand public opinion trends on topics ranging from educational policies to social phenomena like school violence or dropout rates. Moreover, this technique allows researchers to study social discourse and track cultural and ideological shifts within society, making it an essential tool in digital sociology. **(Andra , Liviu-Adrian , Aurelia , & Camelia , 2024)**

The third key technology is Social Network Analysis (SNA), which focuses on studying the relationships and connections between individuals and groups within society. A community is not merely a collection of isolated individuals, but rather a complex web of social ties that shape behavior and interaction. Through network analysis, researchers can identify the most influential members within a group and understand how ideas, values, or even negative behaviors—such as deviance or school dropout—spread through social channels. SNA also helps explain phenomena like social pressure, peer influence, and the role of one's environment in shaping individual decisions. This analytical approach has become essential for understanding modern societies that rely heavily on digital communication. **(Michelle , Lewis , Jonathan , & Matthew , 2020, p. 909)**

Despite the significant value that AI brings to social data analysis, there are ethical and methodological challenges that cannot be overlooked. These include privacy concerns, the protection of personal data, and the potential for algorithmic bias in interpreting social phenomena. Consequently, researchers emphasize the need to deploy AI within clear ethical frameworks that safeguard human values and prevent the misuse of data. **(Mohamed Alkhuzamy , 2023, p. 19)**

Based on the above, artificial intelligence has become an essential methodological and analytical tool in contemporary sociology. It enables the processing of large-scale and complex social data, allowing researchers to identify hidden patterns and analyze social phenomena in more dynamic and predictive ways than traditional methods. By combining techniques such as machine learning, natural language processing, and network analysis, AI enhances the understanding of both individual behaviors and broader social structures, particularly within digitally mediated societies.

Moreover, AI supports evidence-based decision-making by providing more accurate and timely insights for the formulation of social and educational policies. However, its use also raises important methodological and ethical concerns, especially related to bias, data representativeness, and the interpretability of results. Therefore, the value of AI in sociology depends on its responsible integration within a critical framework that balances computational power with sociological interpretation.

6. The Contribution of Artificial Intelligence to Understanding, Predicting, and Addressing Challenges in Social Phenomena:

Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most powerful analytical tools in contemporary social research, particularly for understanding complex social phenomena and digital interactions within online environments. Its importance lies in its capacity to process vast volumes of unstructured data—such as texts, comments, and user interactions on social media platforms—thereby uncovering behavioral patterns and social dynamics that are difficult to detect using traditional research methods.

Recent studies show that AI, through techniques such as Natural Language Processing (NLP) and sentiment analysis, enables the identification of public opinion trends, monitoring of cultural transformations, and classification of large-scale social interactions. A systematic review of sentiment analysis research demonstrates that the integration of machine learning and NLP significantly improves classification accuracy and enhances the prediction of audience behavior compared to conventional statistical approaches, thus strengthening the analytical capacity of social data research. **(Atikur , Md Shah , & Sabbir Hossain , 2025, p. 79)**

Beyond descriptive analysis, AI also plays a significant role in forecasting social phenomena. Machine learning-based predictive models utilize large datasets to anticipate individual and collective

behaviors, as well as to assess the likelihood of social crises or shifts in public opinion before they occur. These models are increasingly recognized for their ability to detect hidden patterns and produce more reliable forecasts than traditional analytical methods, thereby supporting evidence-based decision-making in public policy formulation. **(Pedrawi, 2025, p. 21)**

However, the growing reliance on AI in social research raises profound ethical and epistemological concerns. Privacy remains a central issue, particularly when sensitive personal data is collected and analyzed without explicit informed consent, requiring robust legal and regulatory frameworks. Another critical challenge is algorithmic bias, which can reproduce and amplify existing inequalities embedded in training data, thereby compromising the neutrality and fairness of analytical outcomes. In addition, the opacity of complex AI systems—often described as the “black box” problem—limits interpretability and raises questions about accountability and scientific validity. These challenges underscore the need for clear ethical governance frameworks to regulate AI use in social research and ensure the protection of individual and collective rights. **(Faicel, 2024, p. 15)**

From a broader sociological perspective, AI should not be viewed merely as a technical instrument, but as a transformative force embedded within the social and cultural structure of societies. It reshapes how individuals perceive reality, influences cognitive and professional practices, and may even reproduce forms of cultural dominance if contextual and cultural specificities are neglected in system design. This perspective calls for treating AI as an integral component of social construction rather than an external analytical tool, thus requiring stronger interdisciplinary collaboration between social sciences and computer science. **(Safinaz , 2023, p. 12)**

Moreover, algorithmic bias represents not only a technical limitation but also an epistemological challenge. It affects not only the accuracy of analytical results but also contributes to the reproduction of existing social inequalities within computational systems. In this sense, AI systems may unintentionally reinforce discriminatory structures embedded in data, rather than revealing or correcting them.

In conclusion, AI constitutes not merely a tool for data analysis, but an advanced methodological framework that significantly enhances the understanding and prediction of social phenomena. Nevertheless, its scientific value remains contingent upon strict ethical regulation, methodological transparency, and careful alignment with real-world social contexts. Only through a balanced integration of computational power and sociological interpretation can AI contribute effectively to a deeper and more critical understanding of contemporary societies and support the development of informed and responsible public policies.

7. Conclusion:

In the era of digital transformation, where social data are generated at an unprecedented scale, artificial intelligence has emerged as a transformative paradigm in the analysis and interpretation of contemporary social phenomena. This study has shown that AI is no longer a supplementary technical tool within the social sciences, but rather a methodological framework that reshapes the ways in which social reality is understood, modeled, and predicted.

The findings of this research indicate that AI, through machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), and social network analysis (SNA), significantly enhances the capacity to process large-scale and unstructured social data. These technologies allow researchers to identify behavioral patterns, analyze social discourse, and detect ideological and cultural shifts within digital environments with a level of depth and speed that surpasses traditional statistical approaches. In addition, predictive models based on machine learning demonstrate a growing capacity to anticipate social phenomena such as public opinion dynamics, school dropout risks, and social instability, thereby strengthening evidence-based decision-making in public policy.

However, despite these analytical and predictive advantages, the study highlights that the use of artificial intelligence in social research is accompanied by significant ethical and epistemological challenges. Issues related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the lack of transparency in “black box” systems raise critical concerns regarding the reliability, fairness, and interpretability of AI-generated results. In particular, algorithmic bias is not merely a technical limitation but an epistemological issue, as it may reproduce and reinforce existing social inequalities embedded within training data, rather than objectively representing social reality.

Furthermore, this study is subject to certain limitations. It is primarily based on a critical review of secondary literature and does not include empirical validation through fieldwork or original datasets. In addition, its broad analytical scope—covering multiple dimensions of AI applications in social data analysis—limits the depth of investigation into each specific domain.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to a deeper conceptual understanding of the intersection between artificial intelligence and social sciences by emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that integrates computational power with sociological interpretation. It argues that AI should not be viewed as a neutral or purely technical instrument, but rather as a socio-technical system embedded within broader cultural and institutional structures.

Finally, future research should move toward empirical and comparative studies focusing on specific social contexts such as education, political communication, or public health. It is also recommended to further investigate the performance, bias, and interpretability of different AI models across diverse datasets. Moreover, interdisciplinary approaches combining quantitative computational methods with qualitative sociological analysis are essential to better capture the complexity of social phenomena in the digital age and to ensure a more critical and responsible use of artificial intelligence in social research.

8. Recommendations:

Based on the results obtained, the following recommendations are imperative:

On the academic and methodological level, it is imperative to develop interdisciplinary training programs that bring social science researchers closer to technical skills in artificial intelligence and data science. Research institutions must invest in the acquisition of advanced analytical infrastructures while training researchers in the critical and enlightened use of these tools. The promotion of a hybrid methodology, combining algorithmic analysis and contextualized sociological interpretation, would preserve the hermeneutic richness of the social sciences while benefiting from the computational power of AI.

On the ethical and regulatory level, the elaboration of robust ethical and legal frameworks proves indispensable. These frameworks should guarantee strict protection of privacy, establish mechanisms for transparency and explainability of algorithms, and set up audit procedures to detect and correct discriminatory biases. The establishment of specialized research ethics committees for the use of AI in social data analysis would supervise research projects and ensure respect for the fundamental rights of individuals and studied communities.

On the political and institutional level, policymakers must promote responsible governance of AI in the public sector, ensuring that artificial intelligence systems deployed in social data analysis respect principles of equity, non-discrimination, and transparency. Encouraging research on Explainable AI and imposing standards of interoperability and openness for public algorithms will contribute to strengthening citizen trust and the democratic legitimacy of policies based on algorithmic analysis.

On the technical level, AI developers and engineers must prioritize the design of contextualized and culturally sensitive models, taking into account the sociocultural diversity of studied populations. The

development of algorithmic fairness techniques and methods for debiasing training data represents an essential path for reducing inequalities reproduced by automated systems.

Ultimately, artificial intelligence undeniably constitutes a methodological revolution for social data analysis, offering investigation and prediction capabilities hitherto unattainable. However, its added value crucially depends on the capacity of researchers, policymakers, and designers to deploy these technologies within a rigorous ethical, transparent, and socially responsible framework. The future of social research in the digital era lies in this fruitful alliance between computational power and sociological sensitivity, between technological innovation and preservation of fundamental human values. Only under this condition can artificial intelligence fully contribute to a deeper and more just understanding of contemporary societies and to the formulation of truly enlightened and humanistic public policies.

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