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From Industry Hype to Emerging Criticism: Analysing Chilean News Media Coverage of Artificial Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

AI has become (again) a matter of public interest, and it is crucial to investigate how the news media intervenes in the hype and publicity around AI in different countries. At the intersection between Media Studies and Science and Technology Studies (STS), this article examines portrayals of AI and related technologies in the Chilean news media. We curated a corpus of nearly 7000 AI-related news articles from 2008 to 2023 from four Chilean newspapers. We combined an LDA topic modelling with an analysis with dictionaries of the key actors and critical issues discussed around AI. The analysis shows the explosive growth of the media coverage of AI in recent years, as well as the diversity of topics associated with AI in Chile. We found a high prominence of topics related to industry and technology, a high visibility of international actors, mostly U.S. tech companies, and a low level of mentions of critical issues around AI. Moreover, we also discuss the low coverage of the State's AI use, the emergent use of generative AI in tech journalism, and the prominence of topics such as the arts and humanities that appear as emerging spaces for the problematisation of AI in Chile.

KEYWORDS

Artificial intelligence; news media; Chile; AI hype; science and technology studies; topic models

Introduction: The Mediatisation of AI

AI has (again) captured global media attention. Hailed as a "source for good" or "existential threat," AI has moved from being a matter of laboratories and research centres to becoming a highly contested issue or "super-controversy" of a societal scale (Marres et al. 2024). Large language models and synthetic media are increasingly part of daily life, sometimes leading to controversies and raising concerns about human rights, *prompting* society to come to terms with its societal implications.

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The news has become a key part of this AI expansion. Whether incorporating data-driven and algorithmic techniques into the process of reporting (Dodds et al. 2024), monitoring audiences (Saridou 2024), or covering the latest development of AI, the press is encountering AI not without frictions, framing it in specific ways and, in the process, shaping the potential, risks and imaginaries around AI. Now, in recent years, news media have faced criticism for promoting inflated expectations about AI's impact, a phenomenon Elish and Boyd (2018, 58) describe as "the manufacturing of hype and promise" around AI.

In this debate, it is important to consider a more historical and comprehensive perspective on the relationship between science and technology and the media. Scholars in Science and Technology Studies (STS) have discussed for decades how the press often promotes an uncritical and "promotional hype" of technology (Bareis, Roßmann, and Bordignon 2023; Nelkin 1995). It commonly falls prey to the manipulation of its sources of information (either academia, governments, or industries), emphasising the "breakthrough" discoveries of specific personalities rather than covering the institutions, risks, funding sources, or research routines involved in technological developments. More than mere intermediaries of information, the media take an important part in mediating contemporary controversies around AI and translating it into a matter of public concern (Latour 2005), promoting enthusiasm, scandal, or outrage at innovations or closing off and "freezing out" the debates (Brause et al. 2023; Dandurand, McKelvey, and Roberge 2023; Marres et al. 2024).

But how does the press put artificial intelligence on centre stage? Or, to put it Latourian way, what "tests of strength" are applied to AI in the news media setting? What are the main framings and critiques? Are there differences in media coverage of AI over time? Which AI developments generate more criticism, and which are less commented upon? What kinds of actors are most salient? In this article, we present findings on the plural forms of covering, framing, and problematising AI in the Chilean press.

Recent studies have addressed the role of the press in covering AI, exploring how the media shapes perceptions, imaginaries, and futures of AI (Brennen, Howard, and Nielsen 2018, 2022; Bunz and Braghieri 2022; Crépel and Cardon 2021; Nguyen and Hekman 2024; Vergeer 2020). However, most studies have been conducted in the Global North. It is important to understand how actors, themes, and framings are hybridised in dynamics where hegemonic discourses are articulated within local contexts and cultures. Considering that journalism in Global South countries has often fewer resources and tend to follow frames focused on economic development (Chattopadhyay 2019; Nguyen and Tran 2019; Suk et al. 2024), it is important to interrogate the local hybridizations and media assemblages in countries of the Global South.

In this research, we combine computational techniques with an interpretative approach of a corpus of nearly 7000 news items from four Chilean newspapers on keywords associated with AI. Following a "text-as-data" approach, we employed natural language processing techniques to identify the main topics, actors, and issues in the corpus (Benoit 2020; Grimmer and Stewart 2013). In parallel, we selected representative news stories for inspection and built a dictionary of AI critical issues to gain an understanding of the AI critiques in its media coverage. Through this analysis, we

show that the Chilean AI coverage is strongly driven by the industry, with little but growing emphasis on critical issues. Our work seeks to advance towards a better understanding of the frames and critiques of AI in the media and to critically evaluate their changes over time and across newspapers.

Hype Cycles, Media and Science and Technology

The hype around AI is nothing new. Drawing on Bareis, Roßmann, and Bordignon (2023), hypes around technologies usually combine rhetorical and dramatic strategies like using emotionally charged language, overpromising, bold assertions, superlatives, and exaggerated claims; highlighting opportunity costs in a way that limits reflections on the past; and narrows visions of future possibilities. The current AI hype fits neatly into this pattern. Therefore, it is crucial to situate AI in a historical and comparative perspective in the intersection between Media Studies and STS. STS has continuously foregrounded the importance of how knowledge is tested, witnessed, and made public (Haraway 1996; Latour 1987, 2005; Shapin and Schaffer 1985). As Haran et al. (2007, 124) have argued, particularly discussing the media portrayals of genomic science and human cloning, "science *has been made* and *is being made* in the media." And here the expectations and hype promoted by the media are key. As the sociology of expectations has highlighted, the dynamics of hype and disappointment are crucial to the development of science and technology (Borup et al. 2006; Rip 2006). Initial promises are decisive in attracting the attention of industry partnerships and government funding programs.

Media studies have long highlighted the significant influence of media coverage on political agendas, public opinion and accountability (Bennett 2009; McCombs and Valenzuela 2021; Soroka 2002). Particularly, studies have emphasised the critical role of media frames in shaping societal understanding of public interest issues, including political choices, scientific advancements, and technological innovations (Rabitz, Telešienė, and Zolubienė 2021; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Media outlets are never neutral observers but select, articulate, and influence certain perceptions and attitudes toward technology (Nguyen and Hekman 2024). How the press covers and frames technologies shapes how their problems are understood and what interventions are needed, provoking exaggerated responses of either great enthusiasm or moral panic.

So far, little attention has been paid to the media in the study of controversies surrounding AI. It is usually the case that the role of media is bracketed or mentioned only as a secondary source to account for controversies. However, as Noortje Marres (2021) suggests, there is *no issue without media* to foreground the role of media, broadly speaking, in how attention, interest, or outrage is co-produced in contemporary controversies around innovations, including AI. As this literature has been discussing, the media can contribute to increasing the controversiality of AI (Marres et al. 2024) or even "freezing out" controversies in strategic ways (Dandurand, McKelvey, and Roberge 2023). In this way, media settings like the press are active sites where sociotechnical controversies around technologies take place.

Thus, the media coverage of new technologies has always been shaped by long-standing relationships and frictions between journalism and science and

technology. Decades ago, Nelkin (1995) showed multiple examples of technology hype fuelled by journalism and researchers themselves, identifying a particular promotional "style" or "frame" of covering science and technology. This framing usually covers science in terms of "competition" or "race," promoting imagery that often replaces the content and reporting isolated dramatic events and incredible discoveries under a "breakthrough syndrome" rather than as a cumulative process. Also, suggests Nelkin, incentives for both journalists and scientists promote reporting that emphasises an optimistic image to increase support for research. In this sense, news coverage would tend to "retail" or "sell" the latest developments, rather than investigate and challenge them, with journalists coming to identify with their sources or adopting their frames, even when scientists are biased in how they present their findings. However, Nelkin argued that this pattern was changing during the 1990s with more critical or sceptical reporting of science in the US context: "The end of the Cold War brought a search for new and newsworthy villains, scientists among them. Incidents of scientific misconduct, the costs of megascience, and bioethical dilemmas are sure to attract current media attention" (90). This suggests developments not just around hype cycles that go beyond news or social media mentions, and speaks to the relation between science and technology with journalism, always situated in historical contexts.

With the emergence of new digital communication technologies, such as social media, new ways of disseminating this promotional frame are becoming possible. The rapid spread of media content contributes to an environment that fosters hype by eloquently appealing to emotions, thus provoking impulsive reactions rather than a critical examination of the potential and risks of AI (Bareis, Roßmann, and Bordignon 2023). Moreover, the development of AI has historically been shaped by alternating cycles of "winters" and "summers" driven by different definitions and expectations (Sartori and Theodorou 2022). Suchman (2023) suggests that the inherent ambiguity of the term may account for these recurrent surges of interest, as it allows for multiple interpretations of AI. In today's AI hype, media coverage, which often relies on striking visuals, poses a normative challenge, especially in terms of fostering public trust in the technology (Vrabič Dežman 2024).

AI in the Press Between North and South

The representation of science and technology in the press has been a key concern in STS (See Schäfer 2012). Recent studies highlight AI's increasing visibility, often portraying it positively and driven by industry. For instance, Brennen, Howard, and Nielsen (2018) analysed six UK mainstream news outlets and found a focus on industry products and initiatives, indicating an industry-led debate. Similarly, a computational analysis of Canadian newspapers revealed that one-third of AI coverage appeared in the business section, promoting the narrative of AI as a national resource for building a world-class industrial ecosystem (Dandurand, McKelvey, and Roberge 2023). Bunz and Braghieri (2022) conducted a qualitative content analysis of UK and US news articles from 1980 to 2019, noting an emphasis on technology-driven discourse, even in healthcare coverage. Meanwhile, German media coverage would balance economic and societal implications according to Fischer and Puschmann (2021), offering a more nuanced view of AI's impact. However, a recent survey across several countries (Brause

et al. 2023) found that AI is positively portrayed, with business and economic topics and industry actors particularly prominent.

Another key point is the lack of recognition of AI's risks and detrimental effects in the press (Brause et al. 2023; Brennen, Howard, and Nielsen 2018; Chuan et al. 2019). According to Nguyen and Hekman (2024), the media tends to cover the economic benefits over actual or potential societal, ecological, and individual harms. However, these authors note that the press in countries like the US, England or Netherlands is starting to become more critical of AI, either by using more negative words over time or by covering the "dark side of AI" (Vergeer 2020, 387) and mentioning more frequently the risks associated with AI (Nguyen and Hekman 2024, 13).

Related to this point, research in the UK suggests that the press tends to create an expectation of a pseudo-Artificial General Intelligence that tends to obscure rather than clarify the debate around AI (Brennen, Howard, and Nielsen 2022). For Bunz and Braghieri (2022), it was common to find representations of AI in the medical field as a superior entity of greater precision than doctors' judgment. AI is also repeatedly enacted as replacing or taking over human jobs, along with a certain anthropomorphisation that can lead to oversimplifications and negatively influence people's perception of AI in healthcare. This framing of the superiority of AI versus humans, as discussed by Nguyen and Hekman (2024, 3), would be highly problematic because it obscures that AI is constituted as a socio-technical achievement involving human and non-human actors and, in turn, inhibits key questions about accountability and responsibility of such actors. Considering these points, recent research has called for an inquiry into the modes of critiquing AI. By analysing a large corpus of almost 30,000 press articles, Crépel, and colleagues (Crépel et al. 2021; Crépel and Cardon 2021) identified two dominant regimes of criticism of AI: fear of robots of a distant future; and criticism of algorithms for their biases or discriminations anchored in the present.

These studies have illuminated common patterns in different ways of covering AI in the press in various countries. However, this research is very much focused on Western contexts and, in particular, on English-speaking countries, and is predominantly based on the English-language press (Brause et al. 2023). This bias is reproduced in the media coverage of science more broadly, as Schäfer (2012) finds that less than 2% of studies deal with non-Western countries. This raises the question of how journalists in a Global South country like Chile report on AI, and how this media coverage shapes perceptions and expectations of AI in such contexts, whether they are in the business of selling it, overinflating expectations and reproducing the hype, or problematising claims and promoting a more critical stance on the risks and harms of AI.

Previous studies of science coverage in the Global South point to specificities that may be relevant. In these contexts, scientific issues tend to receive less coverage, journalism has fewer resources which may lead to a replication of transnational news frames, and media tend to follow a "developmental journalism" by concentrating on policies and agendas that promote national development and economic growth (Chattopadhyay 2019; Nguyen and Tran 2019; Suk et al. 2024). Moreover, attention must be paid to the high concentration of media ownership in the Global South, particularly in Latin America (Mastrini and Becerra 2011). In addition, it is important to consider how AI and science and technology more broadly, is constituted in

transnational cultural dynamics within "cross-overs" or global-local relations (Canclini 1995; Hall 1990; Kraidy 2002), in what we may call "hybrid assemblages" that articulate tech companies and research centres, with National AI policies, ethics frameworks, bills of regulations and news outlets between the Global North and South. Therefore, it is crucial to interrogate the particularities and hybridizations in the news coverage of AI in countries like Chile. From this perspective, rather than a linear import of AI from North to South, we can expect plural forms of AI coverage that emerge from the hybridisation of news coverage.

Methods: Curating a News Corpus

To analyse how the Chilean press has covered AI, we curated a corpus of news articles using the research platform Nexis Uni (formerly LexisNexis Academic), that provides access to the content of the LexisNexis database, the most widely used database for news media research analyses (Buntain, Liebler, and Webster 2023). Following the literature, we delimited the search to key concepts associated with AI to cover news items broadly.[1] The search was limited to the four Chilean newspapers available in the LexisNexis database: Diario Financiero, El Mercurio, La Cuarta and La Tercera.[2] Although Nexis Uni gives access to more sources than other news databases (Buntain, Liebler, and Webster 2023), it has geographic disparities. While we were constrained by the availability of Chilean media sources in the database, and these four newspapers do not cover the entire political spectrum of the media in Chile, they are the most relevant news sources from the biggest historical media conglomerates (Fernández and Núñez-Mussa 2024) and have the largest circulation in the country. Most of the studies of mainstream media coverage of the Chilean press include these outlets (e.g., Hallin and Mellado 2018; Harlow and Bachmann 2024; Saldaña 2022). El Mercurio and La Tercera are usually viewed as quality newspapers and widely recognized as key agenda-setters in Chile, while La Cuarta is regarded as popular press. El Mercurio is a conservative newspaper aligned with the elite, considered the nation's newspaper of record (Fernández and Núñez-Mussa 2024), while La Tercera has positioned itself as more liberal, albeit centre-right (Mellado and Van Dalen 2017). Diario Financiero, on the other hand, specialises in financial news and is highly influential among the elites (for a longer history of these news outlets). These news media greatly influence public opinion and political agendas (Gronemeyer and Porath 2017; Sepúlveda 2024). Therefore, they were deemed the most relevant for analysing how the media is shaping the AI discussion in Chile.

The coverage of these newspapers was not homogeneous in the LexisNexis database, as El Mercurio has been covered since 2005, while La Tercera, La Cuarta and Diario Financiero have been covered since December 2019 (For a discussion of other limitations of news aggregators, see Buntain, Liebler, and Webster 2023). This involved an overrepresentation of El Mercurio, being the only news media for the period 2008–2019 but we decided to keep these news items to allow a wider range of years to be analysed, although other analyses were concentrated on the last few years (2020–2023) due to the rise of AI.

The news items were collected during April 2024, forming an initial sample of 7234 news items. Subsequently, the dataset was cleaned to only contain news articles

mentioning AI and related technologies.[3] We ended with a total sample of 6784 news items, mostly from El Mercurio and Diario Financiero, as shown in Table 1.

For our analysis, we combined computational methods techniques with an interpretative approach. We conducted a topic modelling, a computational method particularly useful for the analysis of large corpora of news articles (Gruber 2023; Jacobi, van Atteveldt, and Welbers 2016; Rabitz, Telešienė, and Zolubienė 2021; Saldaña 2022). This unsupervised classification technique identifies "hidden" semantic structures or "topics" based on term co-occurrence, with each topic represented as a probability distribution of words (DiMaggio et al. 2013; Grimmer and Stewart 2013; Günther and Quandt 2016). Specifically, we applied the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model (Blei 2012), a popular and general-purpose model (Jacobi, van Atteveldt, and Welbers 2016; Maier et al. 2018). LDA assumes that each document contains a mix of topics estimated by term co-occurrence. Since LDA treats text as a "bag of words," i.e., ignoring word order, we manually reviewed and included within the model the most frequent collocations or sequences of words.

We followed a relatively standard pre-processing in the literature (Günther and Quandt 2016; Maier et al. 2018): First, we tokenized the text by separating it at each space. Afterwards, we included the relevant multi-word expressions in the model and created a document feature matrix. Finally, due to the characteristics of any linguistic distribution, it is expected a large proportion of very frequent words in the set of terms. Therefore, we applied a relative pruning, removing all terms that appeared in more than 95% or less than 1% of all documents. After this, we obtained a vocabulary of 3192 terms (95.06% sparse).

As it is still under discussion how to define appropriate number of topics (K) in LDA (Rabitz, Telešienė, and Zolubienė 2021), we ran separate models with different K ranging from 2 to 100 and reviewed their metrics offered in the R package LDAtuning. Based on these metrics, the most optimal model was between 25 and 35 topics (See Figure 1). We then performed a manual comparison of results on 5 topics ($K = 20$, 25, 30, 35 and 40). We, then, interpreted what the topics were about and wrote labels to each of them. Finally, we concluded that a K of 30 topics allows us to identify the most relevant and coherent topics.

Second, we conducted a close reading of relevant news to interpret what each topic was about and named each one. To do this, we read the first 30 news items with the highest association to the topic according to the model. From our reading we became aware of frames that cut across the topics, as well as national and international key actors and critical issues around AI, that were important to explore in more depth. To do this, we created a dictionary of critical AI issues and a dictionary of key actors. For the former, we drew on the literature that have assembled

Table 1. Study's corpus and token descriptives by newspaper.

Newspaper	Texts	Tokens	Mean	Min.	Max.	*SD*
Diario Financiero, Chile	2019	1,399,352	693.1	70	4261	395.6
El Mercurio, Chile	3584	2,784,272	776.9	36	17,397	678.5
La Cuarta, Chile	291	168,697	579.7	121	9259	893.5
La Tercera, Chile	890	984,169	1105.8	21	5708	765.1
Overall	6784	5,336,490	786.6	21	17,397	646.9

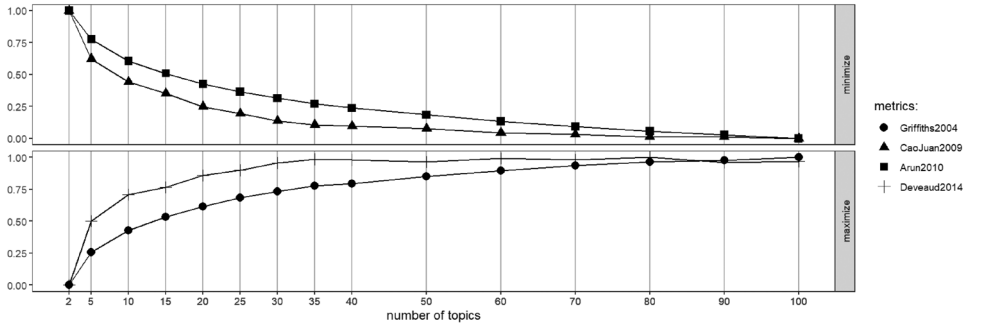

Figure 1. Metrics comparison of LDA topic models using LDAtuning.

taxonomies of risks and critical issues around AI. For the second, we relied on Named Entity Recognition computational technique to identify key actors automatically as well as press clippings on key AI milestones. Rather than attempting to create generic dictionaries representing AI coverage in general, the dictionaries are specific to the press in Chile and our corpus, and were useful to analyse and visualise the prominence (and absence) of certain actors and critical issues and how they are framed in media coverage of AI in Chile. Thus, we followed a mixed methods approach to examine our news corpus, in which computational techniques indicated relevant news, and qualitative analysis led us to key AI actors and critical issues that allowed us to analyse how the Chilean press covers AI.

Results

The Chilean media coverage of AI has risen continuously over the past years. As can be seen in Figure 2, there is a significant increase in 2023, likely due to the popularization of ChatGPT, introduced at the end of 2022. Previously, El Mercurio and Diario Financiero covered the topic more extensively than other newspapers. Notably, La Cuarta remains a minor player in terms of AI coverage. Before 2020, we only had data from El Mercurio, where there was a rather gradual increase in coverage starting in 2008.

Topics

Table 2 shows the topics with the labels we assigned after inspection of the most representative terms and articles of each topic. In addition, we categorised the topics into different thematic groups or "meta-topics" (Dandurand, McKelvey, and Roberge 2023): Technologies; Industry; AI applications; Art and humanities; State and politics; and Other. We also included the topic proportions and their associated number of news items (see the most likely terms and news articles in the Appendix). Rather than describing all topics in detail, we will discuss the meta-topics and their most relevant topics.

The first meta-topic is news about the diverse range of technologies that fall under the AI term. It includes news about the launch of new devices (Topic #30)

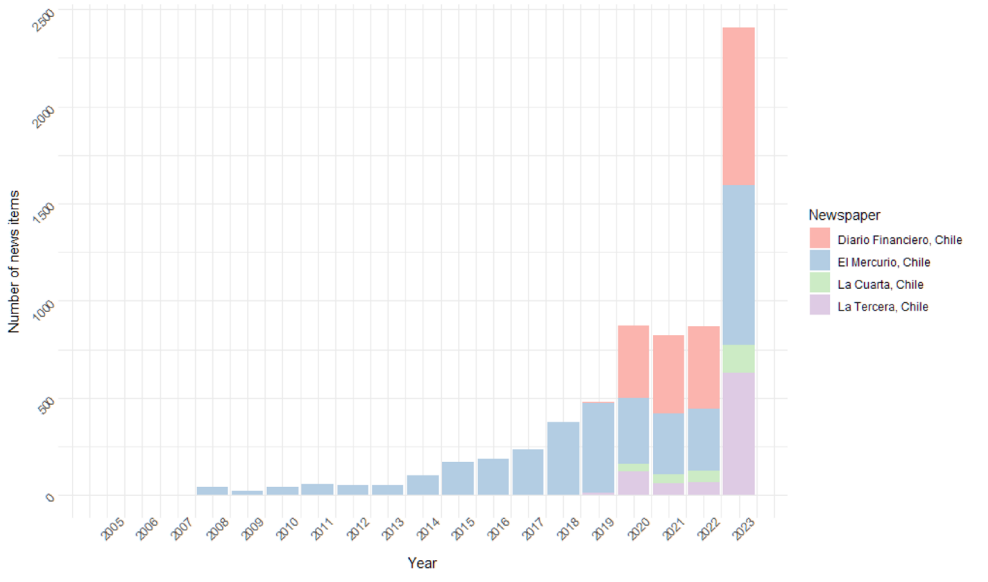

Figure 2. News items per year.

like smartphones, tablets, televisions, or notebooks at corporate events or technology trade fairs, and news on technological trends (#19) such as the metaverse or the 5 G network, data centres, and cloud computing. It also covers news about social media and search engines (#13), and generative AI (#22). Additionally, technology comprises news about robotics (#27), and data and algorithmic decision-making systems (#20).

Exploring the topic #22 on generative AI, ChatGPT appears as a key term, commonly framed as "the trendy robot" or the AI "everyone's talking about." Interestingly, here we came across a particular way of framing AI as an oracle or predictor of a future. Examples are news about generative AI answering questions as varied as: How would Madeleine McCann look like today, how would Chile look like if the Spaniards had not arrived or how Chilean cities would look like in 2100 with the impact of climate change. Several outlets reproduced this news, adding words such as "really shocking" or "devastating" to the headlines. In this news, it is reported not only what a technology, such as Midjourney, is, but also explicitly describes how it can be used, adopting a promotional and hype-driven coverage. Other news follows the same speculative and testing approach but with ChatGPT asking about the factors that explain Chile's economic performance, arguments for and against pension withdrawals or lithium mining, or who are the best Chilean football players. These articles suggest a sort of "generative journalism" which degenerates the basic principles of journalism. Rather than covering news, part or the whole text is generated using AI to *create* the news. This kind of journalism uses AI to prospect, make comparisons, and enact certain futures without questioning the articulation and values embedded in these technologies. Instead, the journalists test whether the machine "gets it right." We can say that this generative journalism does not focus on reporting technology development but directly on testing it, positioning the journalist as a user, and considering the outputs as something newsworthy.

Table 2. Topic ranking.

ID: Topic label	Meta-topic	% Topic	# news (most likely topic)
19: Technological trends	1. Technologies	3.9	335
20: Data and algorithmic decision-making	1. Technologies	3.5	144
22: Generative AI	1. Technologies	3.5	333
30: New devices	1. Technologies	3.4	251
13: Social media and search engines	1. Technologies	3.3	303
27: Robotics	1. Technologies	3.2	169
11: Stock markets	2. Industry	3.5	276
17: Investment and entrepreneurship	2. Industry	3.9	427
28: Retail and logistics	2. Industry	3.6	292
15: Economic development	2. Industry	3.5	220
14: Automation of labour	2. Industry	3.3	235
08: Labour market	2. Industry	3.3	108
07: Banks and FinTech	2. Industry	3.2	201
12: Urban mobility	3. AI applications	3.4	285
10: Agriculture and mining	3. AI applications	3.3	305
29: Education and AI	3. AI applications	3.1	245
25: Healthcare and AI	3. AI applications	3.0	212
05: Sports and videogames	3. AI applications	2.8	117
02: Arts and AI	4. Arts and Humanities	3.4	353
16: Philosophy and AI	4. Arts and Humanities	3.4	184
24: Books and writers	4. Arts and Humanities	3.2	189
09: Laws and regulations	5. State and politics	3.5	216
18: State subsidies	5. State and politics	3.2	160
26: Government and Congress	5. State and politics	3.2	214
06: Police and crime prevention	5. State and politics	3.0	159
01: Public events	6. Other	3.6	271
03: Not clear	6. Other	3.7	157
04: Not clear	6. Other	3.1	60
23: Scientists and universities	6. Other	3.2	195
21: Trade war between EEUU y China	6. Other	3.0	168

Within the meta-topic of technologies, in line with the findings of Crépel et al. (2021), we also observed a difference between robotics applications (Topic #27) connected to the concept of the future, and the topic of data and algorithms (#20) more focused on current predictive models on rainfall, product demand, or floods. An exemplary item that combines both topics is headlined *"Machine learning advances in cybersecurity, but real artificial intelligence is still far away."* Moreover, news on robotics commonly focuses on the comparison between humans and robots, under the question of whether robots will surpass human intelligence or be able to experience emotions, as well as the risks and benefits of anthropomorphising machines. For example, one headline reads *"Human-like robots could make the leap to being multi-functional and cheaper."* Within this topic, it is also important to note that several news items enact the human-machine relationship firmly: "Robots will never surpass humans," "Human intelligence will never be surpassed or controlled by artificial intelligence" or "Who's afraid of AI." Some headlines suggest a rather techno-optimistic view of AI, while others are critical of a catastrophic view of AI.

Another prominent meta-topic is industry. Here, we include topics on economic development (topic #15), automation of labour (#14), investment and entrepreneurship (#17), banks, anf fintechs (#7), retail (#28), and stock market (#11). Considering the prominence of technologies and the industry, the AI media coverage in Chile is highly motivated by private corporations. Not surprisingly, the first two terms in our corpus

are precisely "tecnolog" (11,895) [technology] and "empres" [business] (10,010). Moreover, in our exploration of news about these topics, AI is often framed enthusiastically as a "national resource that ought to be exploited," as discussed in Dandurand, McKelvey, and Roberge (2023, 8).

A third meta-topic we categorised as "AI applications" corresponds to news about AI applied in areas like education (#29); agriculture and mining (#10); urban mobility (#12), sports and videogames (#5), especially football; and healthcare (#25). On the latter, we found news about how AI detects diseases or predicts the evolution of cancer. Similar to what Bunz and Braghieri (2022) discuss, some news frame a competition between humans and machines with headlines such as "*Sometimes, AI beats doctors in breast cancer detection*" or news about AI beating skilled players in games such as Chess or Go. Now, something not considered in the literature is the topic of agriculture and mining, in which news highlights how AI, sensors, and satellites can help optimise energy and water use in vineyards, dairy farms, or mines, as well as news about how AI can contribute to the promotion of carbon neutrality and reverse the effects of climate change, preventing fires and tackling drought. In this sense, the media coverage of AI emphasised its resource-maximising applications, which can certainly contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change. However, these news articles do not address the significant ecological costs of AI itself (Crawford 2021). Precisely, these ecological costs have been recognized as one of the main invisible effects underpinning the AI hype, often overshadowed by the promises of efficiency and innovation (Markelius et al. 2024).

Beyond these expected meta-topics, another one that is prominent in the corpus corresponds to the Arts and Humanities, manifesting their significant role in the configuration of the imaginaries on AI. Here we include topics on Arts and AI (Topic #2), books and writers (#24), and philosophy (#5). While Topic #2 focuses on the use of generative models by artists and in the cultural industries broadly speaking, Topic #24 centres on reviews of science fiction novels and plays or news that critically address the subject of AI. Notable examples of arts and humanities shaping AI coverage include reviews of Benjamin Labatut's *Maniac*, Fernanda Ponce de León's AI-generated paintings replicating Caravaggio, futuristic plays like "6 P NB 1 A" by Javier Ibarra and Lía Misraji, and novels such as *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro and *The Blazing World* by Siri Hustvedt. Topic #16, which we interpret as Philosophy and AI, includes book reviews and interviews with public intellectuals. However, aside from a few mentions of Argentinean Flavia Costa and professor Wendy Chun, the media coverage of AI notably lacks women, with foreign male authors dominating the discourse.

Another meta-topic involves topics about the Chilean *State and politics*. In this meta-topic, we included laws and regulations (Topic #9), where we found reports and op-eds by lawyers discussing issues such as algorithmic transparency, protection of gig economy workers, and underlining the urgency of replacing the current privacy and data protection law in the country. Also, in this meta-topic, we included Topic #26 which combines news about government initiatives, and parliamentary and constitutional discussions around AI and uses of AI to monitor political preferences. Also, we included topic #6 on the use of AI in crime prevention and policing, as well as Topic #18 with news on the delivery of subsidies or state aid through automated processes.

The meta-topic categorised as *Other* includes Topic #1 on public events (e.g., AI-related summits, congresses and committees), Topic #21 on the US-China trade war where AI is identified as a key area of competition; Topic #23 dealing with scientists and universities, with several news items on the use of AI in astronomy and the launch of new AI research centres; as well as other topics of difficult interpretation that we excluded from the analysis (Topic #3 and #4).

Topics Over Time

Analysing the topic distribution over time in Figure 3, we noticed some variation in the first years, which can be explained by the low number of news items in those years. What stands out is the consistent distribution of topics since 2015. As expected, the topic of generative AI (#22) notably increases its share in 2023, aligning with the widespread adoption of Chat-GPT. However, the proportions of other topics remain relatively stable. This indicates that the approach to reporting on AI in Chile has remained largely unchanged in recent years despite significant evolution in the AI discourse itself. Clearer variations emerge when examining the predominant topics each year. The most interesting change is that, since 2019, the coverage of the topic of automation of labour, which deals directly with the consequences that AI may have on job replacement, has decreased.

Newspapers

Comparing topic distribution by newspapers during 2020–2023 in Figure 4, we found that the editorial line of newspapers influences which AI-related topics are covered more extensively. For example, Diario Financiero, which focuses on business, presents a higher proportion of news on investment and entrepreneurship (Topic #17), stock markets (#11), and technological trends (#19). At the same time, the popular newspaper La Cuarta covers more social media (#13) and the Arts (#2) when covering AI. The conservative-leaning El Mercurio covered more AI applications in agriculture (#10) and education (#29) compared to the other newspapers. Meanwhile, the centre-right La Tercera, tends to publish more about generative AI (#22) and new devices (#30) but also covers more on philosophy and AI (#16) and the Government and Congress (#26), suggesting an AI coverage closer to political matters than the other newspapers.

Critical Issues Dictionary

While the topic modelling allowed us to have a distant analysis of the news corpus, it was not as fruitful in identifying framing and criticality. Therefore, a close reading of the news was necessary to gain a thicker understanding of the media coverage of AI. For this, we created a list of keywords and phrases indicating relevant issues and actors. Instead of looking for a ready-made list that may not apply to every context (Günther and Quandt 2016, 82), we created our own dictionaries by combining external sources and Concordance searches on the corpus itself.

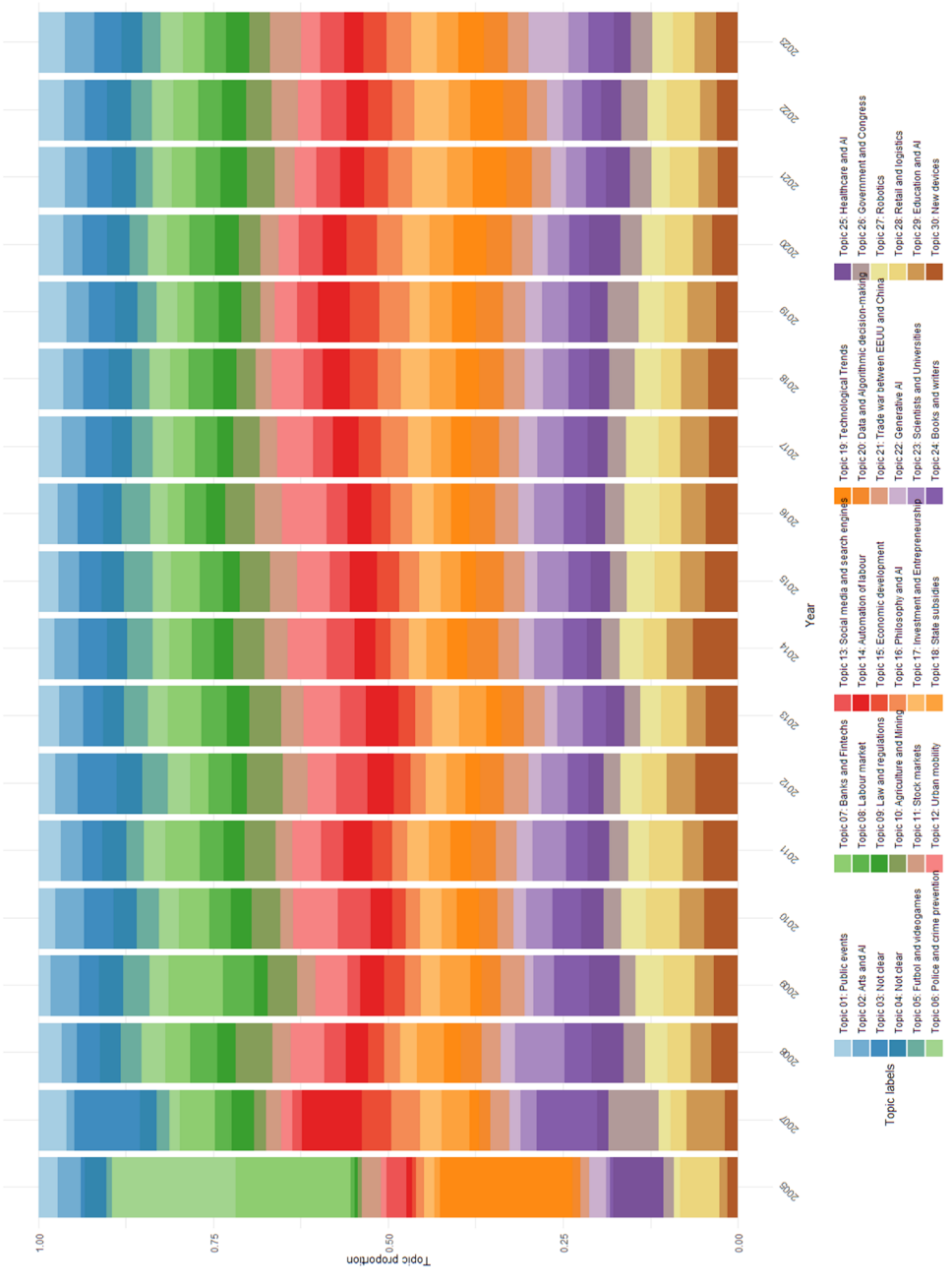

Figure 3. Topic proportions per year.

We created a *dictionary of critical issues* around AI to identify news covering major criticisms of AI, drawing from three main sources: (1) the oppressive AI framework (Varon and Peña 2022), (2) Data Justice Lab's Data Harm Record (Dencik et al. 2022), and (3) Nguyen and Hekman (2024) work on "data risks." From this literature-informed approach, we extracted key terms that indicate the presence of the following critical

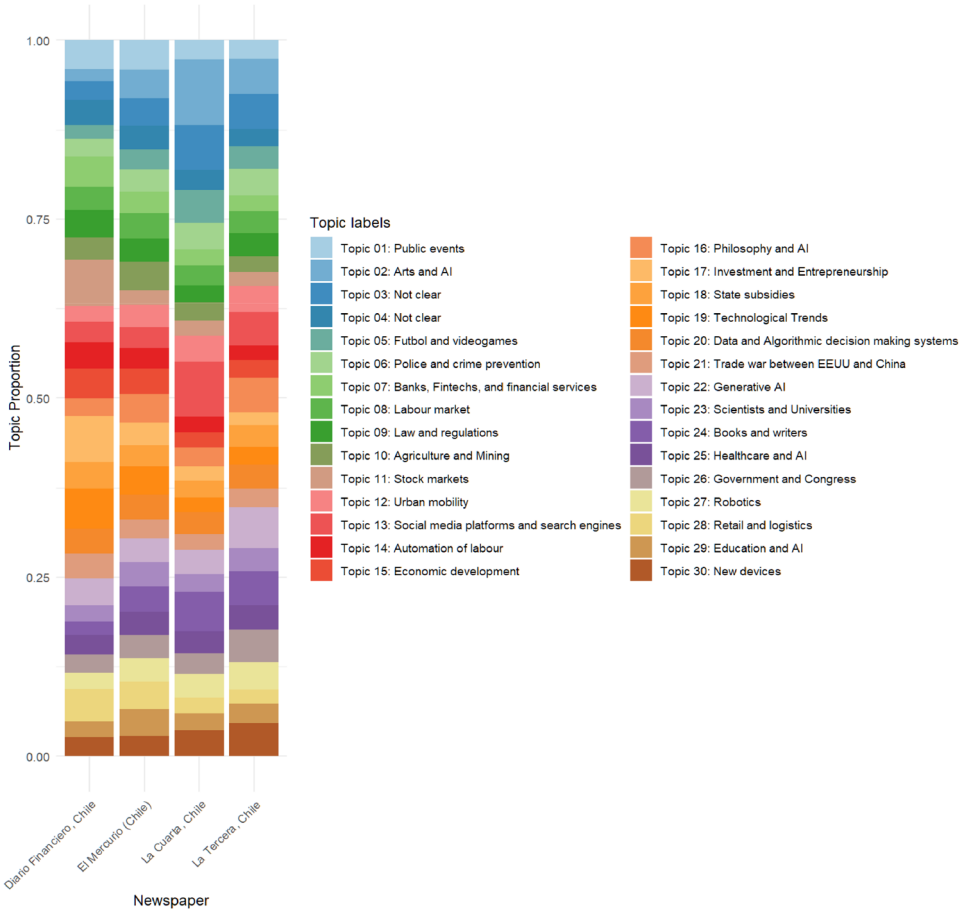

Figure 4. Topic proportions across newspapers.

issues: algorithmic transparency and accountability, ecological issues, ethics, ethnic and racial discrimination, gender discrimination, labour precarisation, manipulation and information disorders, and privacy and data protection. While these categories may reduce the emerging issues of a datafied world (Tironi and Valderrama 2022), they were analytically useful for detecting prominent categories in media coverage. We then performed keyword-in-context searches within our news corpus to review similar or differently phrased mentions of these issues for inclusion in the dictionary. We then carried out a close reading of the articles with the most mentions of these issues to get an idea of how they are framed or problematised by the Chilean press.

As can be seen in Figure 5, and perhaps unsurprisingly, mentions of *ethics* were quite frequent, but other issues have also been covered in recent years such as *privacy and data protection,* with mentions of the concept of cybersecurity standing out, often linked to Topic #9 on Law and regulations. *Ecological issues* were also salient but mainly with mentions of climate change. From our close reading of these news items, AI is usually framed as a "solution" to climate issues, as seen in headlines like read "Technological solutions that seek to combat climate change," "Google bets on AI to adapt the world to climate change," and "Initiative seeks to apply Data Science to tackle

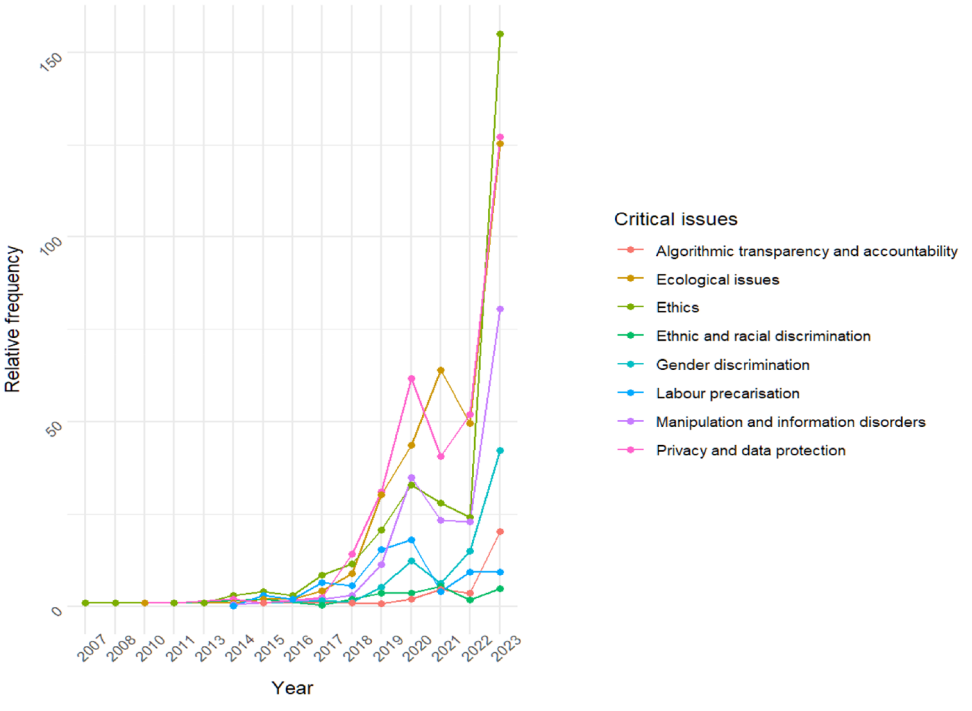

Figure 5. Mentions to critical issues around AI over the years.

climate change." Other key terms like extractivism are rarely mentioned, reflecting a tendency to portray AI as beneficial without discussing its ecological costs. Mentions of *information disorders and manipulation* were initially low, spiking in 2023 with prominent terms like disinformation and fake news, especially in reports on social media scandals involving emotional contagion experiments, algorithm manipulation and deepfakes. A peak in July 2023 aligns with the formation of the government's disinformation commission. *Gender discrimination*, though less covered overall, has seen increased media coverage, partly due to policies from the Ministry of Science to reduce gender gaps in science and technology. However, issues like *ethnic or racial discrimination, job precarity, and AI transparency and accountability* remain minimally discussed, though the latter gained some traction in 2023. Overall, there is still a notable absence of "mass reporting on AI's harms to society" (Marres et al. 2024, 3) in the Chilean newspapers.

Actors Dictionary

We also developed a dictionary of prominent actors using Named Entity Recognition, a computational technique that identifies frequently mentioned names in text, following Dandurand, McKelvey, and Roberge (2023) approach. From this list, we selected key actors who are frequently referenced or hold particular relevance in Chile's AI discourse, including those tied to significant milestones and institutions associated with peaks in media coverage. As a qualitative criterion, we only included actors who have contributed to AI advancements or who could substantially impact the AI discussions in Chile and beyond. The final list comprised 145 names, covering both

individuals and organizations, which we then analysed to confirm that our queries comprehensively captured these actors. To better understand media representation, we organized these actors by scope (national and international) and by type (political, legislative, intergovernmental, industry, civil society, and academia). While this categorization introduced some rigidity—especially for actors with roles across multiple sectors—it provided valuable understandings into how the Chilean press differentiates between national and international actors when covering AI.

Figure 6 demonstrates that when covering AI, the Chilean press predominantly covers international figures, particularly from the industry, with a significant focus on US companies. Interestingly, however, this highly concentrated coverage of international actors contrasts sharply with the more diverse coverage of national actors, where the role of academia and civil society stands out. The national industry is poorly covered, except for a few exceptions, such as NotCo, Codelco, or multinational companies owned by Chilean capital, such as Falabella or Entel. This observation may suggest either a lower level of AI development by national companies or a tendency for the press to focus less on domestic developments than international ones.

Discussion

This study sought to understand how the media coverage of AI is hybridised or assembled in a local context from the Global South like Chile. In particular, we combined computational techniques with an interpretative approach to analyse the Chilean news coverage of AI using a corpus of nearly 7000 news items from four major news media outlets that include the most widely circulated and recognised newspapers, often considered the main agenda-setters in the country.

From our analysis, six main points can be drawn: First, as suggested by Nguyen and Hekman (2024), we found that AI ceased to be a niche topic, permeating varied areas of social life. This indicates that, like the digital, AI is establishing itself as a "total social fact" (Lury and Marres 2015), extending and mediating various areas of society. The diversity of themes and applications in which AI is being covered by the Chilean press (including arts, stock market, crime prevention, economic development, and labour automation) evidence this expansion of AI in contemporary societies.

Second, in line with the literature, the Chilean newspapers covered mostly topics related to the industry, focusing on issues such as economic growth or investments in tech companies, particularly about international characters. The relative prominence of the industry also raises questions about the lack of visibility of AI initiatives by the State, universities, and civil society organisations. While there is a meta-topic about the State and politics, how the state actually uses algorithmic systems or AI has been notably absent from public discourse in the media. This is particularly relevant given the increasing integration of AI into public services and the recent bills discussed in Chilean Congress to develop a regulatory framework for AI. This media's silence raises questions about the role of the press in the expansion of AI and its implications for citizen welfare at different scales.

Third, rather than suggesting that all Chilean press uniformly adopts an industry-led or a promotional frame discussed by Nelkin (1995), our analysis reveals more nuance in AI coverage. While the distribution of AI-related topics has shown surprising consistency, the

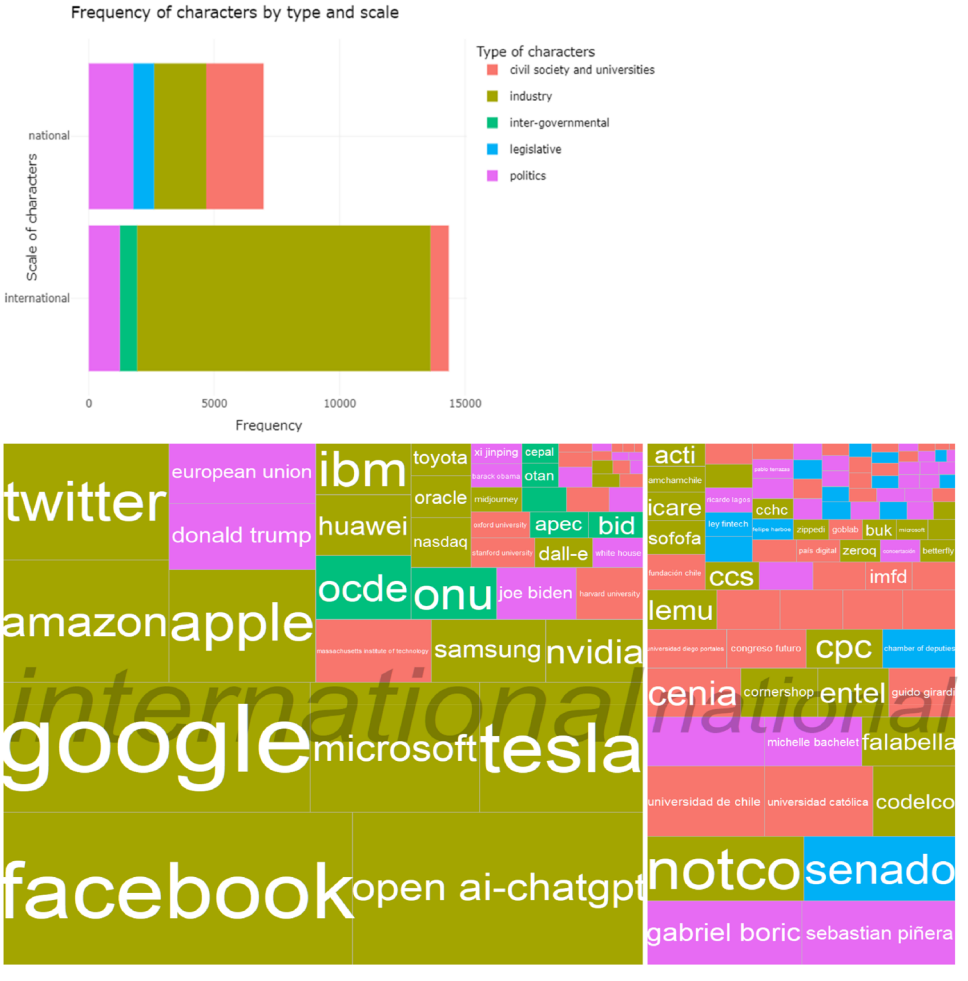

Figure 6. Treemap and frequency of mentions of actors by scope and type.

framing has become increasingly critical in recent years. From our close reading of the news, it is the arts, humanities, and law that are promoting modes of critiquing AI and putting it to the test rather than reproducing the promotional hype around AI. Newspapers' political orientations and target audiences may also be shaping AI coverage. Right-leaning *El Mercurio* covered more economics, innovation, and agriculture, while newspaper closer to the centre highlighted more on ethical issues. *Diario Financiero* prioritizes financial topics over politics, unlike *La Tercera*. Notably, popular or tabloid press such as La Cuarta does not cover AI much, and popularises AI by reporting on the entertainment industry that intersects with the Arts, which is striking considering that the people who read this newspaper could be the ones who can be more heavily affected by AI and automation.

Fourth, we found a clear predominance of international characters, particularly US companies, and a low level of mentions of critical issues when it comes to reporting on AI in Chile. This indicates that despite hybridisation, more coverage is given to actors from the Global North. Despite a relatively high and constant mention of the usually vague concept of "ethics," the more concrete conflicts surrounding AI have

not been extensively covered by the Chilean press. As Dandurand, McKelvey, and Roberge (2023, 8) suggest "reports on AI 'ethics' rarely question—and to some extent defend—the technological visions of AI promoters" (Dandurand, McKelvey, and Roberge 2023, 8). However, we also show how certain key critical societal issues have been growing in the media lately. While issues such as invasion of privacy and disinformation are strongly mentioned, we could notice how these mentions are not necessarily given to problematising AI but rather can be mobilised to promote its use. Moreover, except for the topics of the arts, humanities, and law, we observed a low level of criticism within the topic model. Nevertheless, the importance of the arts in news about AI suggests that therein lies an interesting avenue for how governments can foster greater awareness, new imaginaries and critical thinking about the implications of AI in society. At the same time, it is important to note that in other countries, the role of investigative journalism has been key in making visible forms of algorithmic discrimination that do not seem to be occurring in the media coverage of AI in Chile.

Fifth, from our qualitative analysis of news content, we found that, in general, there is an enthusiastic view of AI that may suggest a techno-solutionism in how the press frames AI in Chile. As we explored the news corpus, we came across not only classic promotional framings or discussing a kind of competition between humans and machines but also new framings, such as AI as an oracle or speculator that positions journalists as users of these technologies, which we refer to as generative journalism. Rather than approaching AI and related technologies as a solution and journalists as mere users, their design and societal implications should be problematised. There are now signs that the Chilean press is becoming slightly more critical of AI. Following the mentions over time of critical issues, we expect Chilean media coverage to become more critical in the coming years, especially with large natural language models and critical issues appearing more strongly.

Finally, the AI imaginaries produced by the Chilean press tends to be reduced to the vicissitudes of the human being in both its critical and celebratory aspects. Following the framework proposed by Markelius et al. (2024), the industry's anxieties and the proliferation of AI experts that sustain the AI hype tend to overlook the planetary costs of data centres and their water or energy consumption. While terms like "ecology" and "climate change" appear frequently in the corpus, a more qualitative analysis reveals they are typically framed solely as issues AI can solve, reinforcing the techno-solutionism mentioned earlier.

Limitations

This study has several limitations and does not claim to be the final word on AI coverage in Chile. Future research could expand the sample to more diverse media platforms, including digital-native outlets, TV, and radio, and consider variations in political ideology, target readership, and economic ownership. Our analysis was limited to 2008–2023, with data for 2008–2019 only available from El Mercurio, due to limitations of the LexisNexis. While this database is widely used for news content analysis (Buntain, Liebler, and Webster 2023) and includes the most influential Chilean news media in shaping public debates (e.g., Gronemeyer and Porath 2017; Saldaña 2022), it does not cover all Chilean media. Future studies could include a

longer time range and sample to other news outlets. Also, the news aggregator does not specify syndicated content; therefore, future studies could explore more in-depth the presence of syndicated content that might indicate how specific framings of AI travel to Chilean newspapers from more resourceful foreign news outlets.

Other limitations include the systematicity of the historical data, which could have facilitated comparability over longer periods. Furthermore, although we included collocations for names and multi-word expressions, future research could analyse the press with more sophisticated computational techniques sensitive to word embeddings. Moreover, we did not analyse the images or videos in the news items, so other studies could explore the imagery promoted by the press when covering AI. Also, our analysis does not consider in great detail the valence or the whole context in which critical issues were mentioned, future studies should explore this context and the reception of these journalistic messages on AI and evaluate how they are decoded or reinterpreted by local audiences. Other studies could also deepen on some of our findings, such as the underrepresentation of women or the influence of newspaper's political leanings and readership in AI reporting.

Conclusion

In the midst of the increasing mediatisation and hype around AI, we have argued that we need to consider the relations and tensions between journalism and science and technology beyond Western contexts. In this paper, we have explored how the Chilean press has covered AI, finding several resonances with what has been found in other countries, where the press presents a framing of the promotion of AI and related technologies. Now, rather than suggesting that the Chilean press has been dedicated only to selling AI, this paper offers a more complex picture. In analysing topics, actors, and critical issues covered by the Chilean news outlets and the differences between them, we have found both forms of promotion and hype about AI, as well as forms of problematisation of it, while mostly covering the international industry. We also found as a distinctive feature of the Chilean case the emerging critical engagement of the arts and humanities in AI media coverage. It follows from this the importance of the press in giving media visibility to these initiatives that may activate problematizations that counterbalance the excessive industry-driven coverage of AI. And here, precisely, the role of the arts and humanities in shaping imaginaries about AI could be crucial to recognise. In this way, this research contributes to the discussion on how the media represent AI, expanding the focus beyond Western countries and media outlets.

Notes

1. Following examples from the literature (Crépel et al. 2021), after several iterations, we defined the following query that allowed us to capture a larger volume of news: "inteligencia artificial" or "algoritm*" or "aprendizaje automatizado" or "redes neuronales" or "aprendizaje profundo" or "automatiza*" or "artificial intelligence" or "algorithm" or "machine learning" or "deep learning" or "neural network" or "automated decision" or "automation".

2. Chile has a high media concentration, with a few major, conservative-leaning conglomerates (Monckeberg 2011). *El Mercurio*, founded in 1900 by Agustín Edwards Mac-Clure, is owned by the Edwards family's El Mercurio S.A.P. *La Tercera* and *La Cuarta* are owned by COPESA, founded by the Picó Cañas family and now led by Álvaro Saieh. *Diario Financiero*, founded in 1988 by former *El Mercurio* journalists, is owned by the Claro Group, established by Ricardo Claro Valdés.
3. News articles not dated were excluded and incorrectly formatted symbols were corrected. Articles that corresponded to "minute-by-minute" news were excluded because of their length and lack of focus on AI.

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