Contextual Hurdles in AI Adoption: Insights from Librarians in Zimbabwean University Libraries

Section 1: Contribution Details

Contribution	Detail
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Section 2: Abstract Text

The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in African libraries faces unique challenges, threatening to widen the technological gap. Libraries in developing economies struggle with inadequate internet, outdated technology, and limited access to current software and algorithms. In Zimbabwe and other African countries, libraries serve diverse communities with varying digital literacy levels, necessitating tailored training programs. Concerns surrounding data privacy, ethics, and algorithmic bias are significant, particularly since many applications rely on data that may not accurately represent local populations. This can result in biased outcomes, exacerbating the digital divide. The lack of trained personnel in AI and data management further complicates the operation and maintenance of AI systems. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to explore the challenges of adopting AI in Zimbabwean university libraries. The findings revealed that securing funding and resources for AI initiatives remains a significant obstacle. The rapid evolution of AI, combined with a lack of clear policies, skills, and adoption frameworks, creates substantial challenges. To overcome these challenges, the study recommends that policymakers, library administrators, and educational institutions collaborate to create a supportive framework for AI integration. This joint effort is crucial for enhancing the role of libraries as vital knowledge hubs in Zimbabwe, while addressing issues of bias and ethical concerns. By working together, we can ensure that African libraries remain relevant and effective in the digital age.