E-ISSN : 0000-0000

OIKONOMIA Journal of Management Economics and Accounting

P-ISSN : 0000-0000 Vol. 3. No. 2, February 2026
E-ISSN : 3047-602X
Available : https://jurnalhafasy.com/index.php/oikonomia
DOI : https://doi.org/10.61942/oikonomia.v3i2.546

The AI revolution in Accounting Practice : Threat or Opportunity for the Accounting Profession?

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Received: December 25, 2025
Revised: January 22, 2026
Accepted: February 17, 2026
Published: February 26, 2026

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***Abstrak*:** *This study explores whether the rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into accounting practice represents a threat or an opportunity for the accounting profession. AI technologies such as Robotic Process Automation, machine learning, and predictive analytics are transforming traditional accounting tasks by automating routine processes, enhancing audit procedures, and enabling real-time reporting and decision support. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed through a systematic literature review and semi structured interviews with accounting practitioners who actively use AI-based tools in their work. The findings indicate that AI significantly reduces repetitive manual work, improves accuracy, and enhances fraud detection and analytical capabilities. At the same time, AI creates challenges related to skill gaps, ethical concerns, and data governance. However, most practitioners perceive AI as a complementary tool that shifts accountants' roles toward data analysis, strategic advisory, and AI governance rather than replacing them. The study concludes that AI represents a professional transformation opportunity, provided that accountants adapt through upskilling, ethical awareness, and technological competence. The future of the accounting profession depends not on resisting AI, but on integrating it to enhance value creation and decision-making capabilities.*

Keywords : Artificial Intelligence, Accounting profession, Automation, Professional competencies,

E-ISSN : 0000-0000

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INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the landscape of accounting practice by automating routine tasks, accelerating reporting cycles, and expanding analytical capabilities. Activities that once required intensive manual effort data entry, reconciliation, invoice processing, tax preparation, and basic audit procedures are increasingly executed by AI-enabled systems with higher speed and accuracy (Odonkor et al., 2024; Tang, 2025; Brândaș & Minda, 2025; Wang, 2025; Jejeniwa et al., 2024). Technologies such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA), machine learning, and natural language processing now support real-time reporting, predictive analytics, and advanced risk assessment, transforming accounting from a backward-looking recording function into a forward-looking decision support system (Ahmed et al., 2025; Hossain et al., 2024; Kundhadia, 2025).

This transformation is particularly visible in audit and internal control practices. Traditional audit methods relying on sampling and manual review are increasingly replaced by full data scanning and anomaly detection algorithms capable of identifying fraud patterns and irregularities with greater precision (Odonkor et al., 2024; Hossain et al., 2024; Singh, 2025). As a result, the technical nature of accounting work is changing. The profession is moving from routine data processing to analytical interpretation and strategic advisory roles (Ahmed et al., 2025; Tang, 2025; Qian & Hu, 2025).

However, this technological shift generates a central dilemma for the accounting profession. While AI increases efficiency and enhances analytical depth, it also raises concerns about job displacement, especially at entry and junior levels where routine tasks are predominant. Several studies highlight fears that automation may reduce the demand for traditional accounting roles, create skill gaps, and introduce new risks related to data security and algorithmic errors (Odonkor et al., 2024; Tang, 2025; Wang, 2025; Hasan, 2022). This tension forms the core phenomenon underlying the present study: whether AI should be interpreted as a threat to the accounting profession or as an opportunity for professional evolution.

Research indicates that AI does not eliminate the need for accountants but rather redefines their competencies and responsibilities. Accountants are increasingly expected to function as data analysts, business advisors, and managers of AI systems rather than mere record keepers (Leitner-Hanetseder et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2025; Hussin et al., 2024). New competencies such as predictive modeling, data analytics, AI literacy, and technological proficiency are becoming essential (Ahmad, 2024; Wang, 2025; Moran, 2025). These competencies enable accountants to interpret AI outputs, validate algorithmic decisions, and provide strategic insights based on data driven evidence.

At the same time, professional skepticism, ethics, and governance become more critical in the AI era. Issues such as algorithmic bias, transparency, accountability, and explainability of AI systems require accountants to exercise judgment beyond technical knowledge (Odonkor et al., 2024; Nordiansyah et al., 2025; Pandey, 2025). This indicates that human roles in accounting are shifting toward areas that require critical thinking, communication, and ethical reasoning, capabilities that AI cannot fully replicate.

Delphi studies and professional surveys confirm that core accounting functions remain, but the way they are performed changes significantly. Machines handle repetitive processing, while humans focus on problem solving, interpretation, and advisory tasks (Holmes & Douglass, 2021; Boritz & Stratopoulos, 2023). This suggests that AI may not replace accountants but will fundamentally alter the nature of accounting work.

Despite the growing body of literature on AI in accounting, most studies focus either on

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technological efficiency or skill requirements without addressing the broader professional implications. Some emphasize automation benefits, while others focus on skill gaps and risks, but few studies systematically examine the dual narrative of AI as both a threat and an opportunity within a single analytical framework. This creates a research gap in understanding how the accounting profession can strategically position itself in response to AI transformation.

The novelty of this study lies in framing the AI revolution in accounting not merely as a technological development but as a professional turning point that requires reinterpretation of accounting roles, competencies, and value creation. By integrating perspectives on automation, professional competence, and ethical governance, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of how AI reshapes the accounting profession.

Based on this background, the objective of this study is to analyze whether the AI revolution in accounting practice represents a threat or an opportunity for the accounting profession by examining how AI transforms accounting tasks, reshapes professional competencies, and redefines the value contribution of accountants in contemporary organizations.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature based and practitioner informed design to examine whether the AI revolution in accounting practice constitutes a threat or an opportunity for the accounting profession. Data collection is conducted through two primary techniques. First, a systematic document review is performed on recent academic publications, professional reports, and industry guidelines related to AI applications in accounting, audit, taxation, and financial reporting. These documents are selected based on relevance, recency, and credibility to capture current developments in AI driven accounting practices. Second, practitioner perspectives are gathered through semi structured interviews with accounting professionals, auditors, and finance managers who have experience using AI tools such as RPA, machine learning systems, and AI based analytics in their work environment. These interviews aim to explore how AI affects daily tasks, decision making processes, and required competencies in accounting roles.

Data analysis follows a thematic analysis approach. Collected documents and interview transcripts are coded to identify patterns related to automation of tasks, transformation of roles, skill requirements, ethical challenges, and perceptions of AI as a threat or opportunity. The themes are then categorized into three main dimensions: transformation of accounting processes, evolution of professional competencies, and implications for the future of the accounting profession. Pattern matching is used to compare literature findings with practitioner experiences to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation. This analytical process allows the study to develop a comprehensive understanding of how AI reshapes accounting practice and how the profession can strategically respond to these changes.

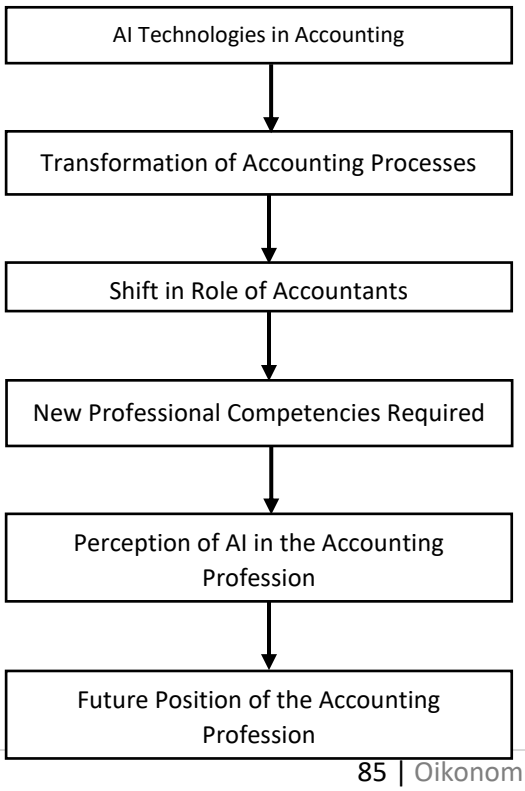

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Figure 1. Diagram Conceptual Research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table summarizes findings from the literature review and practitioner interviews regarding how AI affects daily accounting practices, changes the role of accountants, and shapes perceptions of AI as either a threat or an opportunity for the profession.

Table 1. Impact of AI on Accounting Practice and Professional Perception

Accounting Aspect	AI-Driven Practice	Impact on Accounting Work	Professional Perception
Routine data entry	Automated through RPA and intelligent systems	Reduces repetitive manual workload	Opportunity
Reconciliation & invoicing	Real-time automated matching and processing	Improves speed and accuracy	Opportunity
Audit procedures	Full data scanning and anomaly detection	Enhances audit quality and fraud detection	Opportunity
Financial reporting	Real-time reporting and predictive analytics	Supports strategic decision making	Opportunity
Role of accountants	Shift to data analyst and business advisor	Transforms traditional professional roles	Opportunity & Threat
Required competencies	Data analytics, AI literacy, and ethical judgment	Creates skill gap and need for upskilling	Threat
Data security and ethics	Exposure to AI bias, transparency, and data risks	Raises governance and accountability challenges	Threat

The table indicates that AI significantly transforms accounting work from manual processes to automated and analytical systems. Most practitioners perceive AI as an opportunity due to improvements in efficiency, accuracy, and audit quality. However, concerns remain regarding emerging skill gaps, ethical challenges, and data security risks. This dual perception confirms that AI represents both a threat and an opportunity, depending on how well the accounting profession adapts to new competencies and governance demands.

Discussion

This study aimed to determine whether the AI revolution in accounting practice represents a threat or an opportunity for the accounting profession. The empirical patterns summarized in the table show a consistent transformation: AI automates routine processes, enhances analytical depth, and shifts accountants' roles toward higher value activities. When interpreted alongside the literature, these findings strongly indicate that AI is more accurately characterized as an opportunity for professional transformation rather than an existential threat.

A central finding is the automation of routine accounting tasks such as data entry, reconciliation, transaction processing, and standardized reporting. This aligns with extensive evidence that AI and RPA significantly improve efficiency, accuracy, productivity, and cost control in accounting operations (Adeyelu et al., 2024; Odonkor et al., 2024; Hasan, 2022; Pandey, 2025; Türegün, 2025; Altawalbeh et al., 2025; Tang, 2025). The removal of repetitive manual workloads allows accounting staff to reallocate time and cognitive resources toward tasks that require interpretation and judgment. Rather than diminishing the profession, this redistribution of effort elevates the nature of accounting work.

The transformation is particularly visible in audit and fraud detection. Traditional sample-based audit approaches are increasingly replaced by continuous auditing supported by full data scanning and anomaly detection algorithms. Studies show that AI enables real-time fraud detection and internal control monitoring far beyond the capability of manual procedures (Adeyelu et al., 2024; Odonkor et al., 2024; Kokina et al., 2025; Barna et al., 2025; Hu, 2025). The findings in this study confirm that practitioners perceive this enhancement as a major opportunity because it improves audit quality and organizational trust.

AI also expands accounting's role into predictive analytics and decision support. Real-time reporting and forecasting tools enable accountants to contribute to risk management, planning, and strategic decisions (Ahmed et al., 2025; Guan, 2025; Hu, 2025). This supports prior evidence that AI shifts accounting from a backward-looking recording function to a

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forward-looking advisory role (Adeyelu et al., 2024; Odonkor et al., 2024; Pandey, 2025). Accountants thus become interpreters of data insights rather than processors of transactions.

However, the study also reveals legitimate concerns regarding job displacement at junior levels. Automation of entry-level tasks generates anxiety about reduced demand for traditional roles, confirming findings that AI creates perceived threats in early career accounting positions (Yassin et al., 2025; Hasan, 2022; Qian & Hu, 2025). Yet, the literature consistently emphasizes that these concerns are transitional rather than permanent, as new roles emerge in analytics, AI system management, and strategic advisory (Ahmed et al., 2025; Tang, 2025; Kholladi, 2025). The profession is not shrinking but evolving.

A major dimension highlighted by the findings is the emergence of a competency gap. AI adoption requires new skills in data analytics, AI literacy, and technological proficiency. Studies show that resistance to change and lack of digital competence can hinder accountants from fully benefiting from AI integration (Yassin et al., 2025; Odonkor et al., 2024; Guan, 2025). This supports the table's indication that skill gaps are perceived as threats if not addressed through upskilling initiatives.

Ethics and governance also emerge as critical issues. AI introduces risks related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, opacity, and overreliance on automated outputs. These concerns are widely documented in the literature as emerging governance challenges in AI-enabled accounting environments (Adelakun et al., 2024; Areiqat & Jaber, 2025; Frumusachi, 2025). Practitioners in this study echoed these concerns, emphasizing the need for professional standards and ethical frameworks to guide AI usage.

Despite these risks, there is a clear consensus across studies that AI is a complementary tool rather than a replacement for accountants. Surveys and field studies consistently report the perception that "accountants with AI will replace accountants without AI," rather than AI replacing the profession entirely (Hasan, 2022; Türegün, 2025; Doko, 2025; Boritz & Stratopoulos, 2023; Kholladi, 2025). This perspective reframes AI as a catalyst for professional upgrading.

The key condition for turning AI into an opportunity lies in education, training, and collaboration. Literature emphasizes the need for curriculum reform, continuous professional development, ethical standards, and cooperation between academia, professional bodies, and industry (Yassin et al., 2025; Odonkor et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2025; Barna et al., 2025). The findings support this by showing that practitioners who receive AI training perceive fewer threats and more opportunities.

Importantly, AI enables accountants to move toward value added services. Advisory roles, risk analysis, forecasting, and governance oversight become central professional functions. This transformation aligns with the evolution of accounting toward strategic business partnership rather than transactional support (Adeyelu et al., 2024; Qian & Hu, 2025). The profession's relevance thus increases rather than diminishes.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that while AI introduces transitional challenges in skills, ethics, and job structure, its dominant impact is the elevation of accounting practice. By automating low value tasks and enabling advanced analytics, AI allows accountants to focus on areas requiring human judgment, communication, and strategic thinking.

These findings directly answer the research objective by showing that AI is more accurately understood as an opportunity for professional transformation. The perceived threats are largely contingent on inadequate adaptation, whereas proactive skill development and governance turn AI into a powerful enhancement tool for the accounting profession.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that the AI revolution in accounting practice is more accurately characterized as an opportunity for professional transformation rather than a threat to the accounting profession. While AI automates

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routine and entry level tasks, it simultaneously enhances audit quality, analytical capability, and decision support functions, enabling accountants to transition from data processors to strategic advisors. The primary challenges identified—skill gaps, ethical concerns, and governance issues—are transitional and can be addressed through upskilling, curriculum reform, and the development of professional standards for AI use. Evidence from both literature and practitioner perspectives confirms that AI complements rather than replaces accountants, with the profession's future value lying in interpretation, judgment, and advisory roles supported by AI technologies. Therefore, the extent to which AI becomes a threat or an opportunity depends largely on the profession's capacity to adapt, innovate, and embrace new competencies in the evolving digital accounting environment..

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express sincere appreciation to the accounting professionals, auditors, and finance practitioners who shared their insights and experiences regarding the use of AI in accounting practice. Their perspectives were invaluable in understanding the practical implications of technological transformation in the profession. The authors also acknowledge the support of academic colleagues and institutional resources that facilitated access to relevant literature and discussions, which contributed significantly to the completion of this study.

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