

Robot peer pressure and why we may need to fear ‘artificial stupidity’

When the robot revolution arrives, we all know the plot: Smarter machines will supersede human intelligence and outwit us, enslave us and destroy us. But what if it's not [artificial intelligence](#) we have to fear, but artificial stupidity? What if it isn't robot overlords that pose the greatest risk but our willingness to trust robots, even when they are clearly wrong?

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A new study published in [Science Robotics](#) reveals how easily robots can influence the judgment of children, even when the robots are clearly in error — raising warning flags for parents and anyone thinking about the need for regulation. In the experiment, two groups of children, between 7 and 9 years old, were asked to complete a simple task: choose which two of several lines are the same length. One group did the task alone, and the other did the task while seated at a table with three autonomous robots that gazed at the same puzzle, paused and answered the question — incorrectly. The children who faced misleading robot peer pressure did less well, and three-quarters of their wrong answers were the same as the robots' bad answers.

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“Children are known to suspend disbelief,” said Anna-Lisa Vollmer, a researcher at Bielefeld University in Germany, who led the study. “Rather than seeing a robot as a machine consisting of electronics and plastic, they see a social character.”

Read full, original post: [Children can be swayed by robot peer pressure, study says](#)