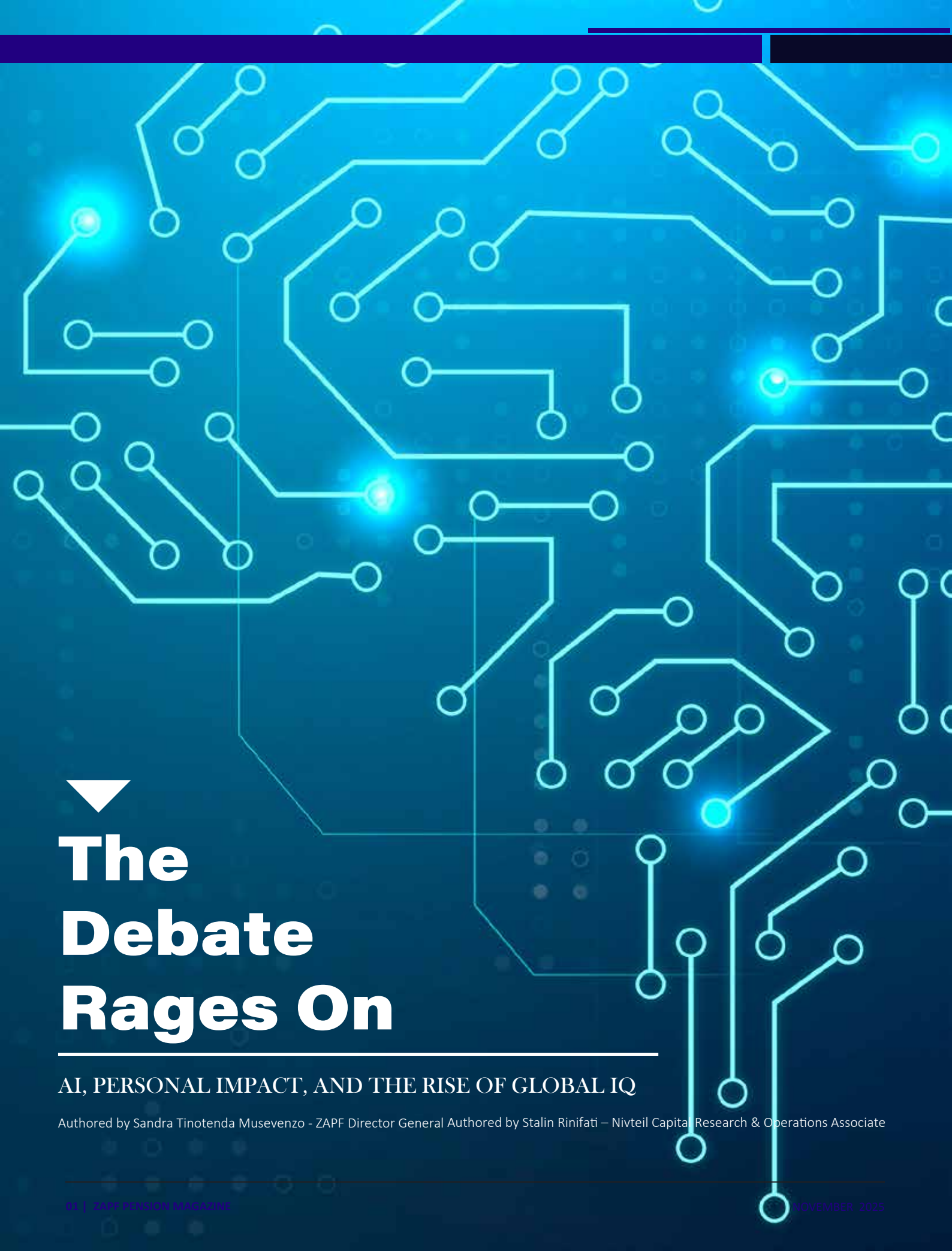




▼ The Debate Rages On

AI, PERSONAL IMPACT, AND THE RISE OF GLOBAL IQ

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) has ignited passionate debates across WhatsApp groups, dinner tables, classrooms, and boardrooms. Some argue it threatens traditional skills, especially writing. Good writers feel displaced, while those who once struggled now effortlessly produce articles and posts with AI's help. My own sister often quips, "Why should I crack my head and think when there's AI?"

Critics claim AI is lowering individual IQ and creating a lazy society. They worry that people no longer think deeply or wrestle with ideas. But the reverse is true. AI has revolutionized how we communicate, solve problems, and express ourselves. It has reduced the time spent agonizing over reports and elevated the quality of arguments. It's not a shortcut, it's a catalyst.

Personal Impact: From Routine to Revolution

AI is no longer futuristic, it's embedded in our daily rhythms, transforming how we live, work, and think:

- Smarter decision-making: From financial planning apps to health diagnostics, AI helps individuals make informed choices.
- Boosted productivity: Virtual assistants, automated scheduling, and smart systems reduce cognitive load and free time for strategic reflection.
- Creative empowerment: AI-powered writing aids and design tools help users overcome anxiety and express ideas with clarity and confidence.
- Emotional resonance: AI companions offer conversational support. You can teach AI to speak Shona, and it will greet you with warmth. I smile every time it says, Mangwanani akanaka, Mbeva Hwesa Chiwambu. May your morning be as focused and purposeful as your leadership. No human has ever greeted me like that.

The Rise—and Redefinition—of Global IQ

While traditional IQ scores are reportedly declining in some regions (a phenomenon known as

the Reverse Flynn Effect), AI is reshaping how we define intelligence:

- Cognitive outsourcing: AI handles memory, calculations, and even reasoning, raising concerns about attention span and deep thinking.
- Augmented intelligence: AI doesn't replace human intellect, it amplifies it, enabling complex problem-solving and strategic foresight.
- New metrics: Emotional intelligence, adaptability, and digital fluency are emerging as more relevant indicators of global competence than raw IQ scores.

For visionary leaders, this revolution demands more than technical adaptation, it calls for ideological grounding:

- Ubuntu and Pan-Africanism remind us that intelligence must serve humanity, not isolate or dominate.
- Decolonised governance insists on ethical AI integration that respects cultural identity and community agency.
- Trustee training must now include digital literacy and AI ethics to prepare leaders for a tech-augmented future.
- Investment Opportunities for Pension Funds – Global tech titans are making bold, long-term bets on artificial intelligence, and pension funds must take note. Mark Zuckerberg is reportedly committing hundreds of billions of dollars to build expansive AI data centres and scale Meta's machine learning capabilities. Meanwhile, Elon Musk's SpaceX has invested \$2 billion into xAI, his artificial intelligence venture aimed at competing with the likes of OpenAI and Google DeepMind. These moves signal more than just technological ambition, they reflect a seismic shift in how value will be created, stored, and monetized in the digital economy. AI data centres are not just hardware, they are the backbone of future productivity, automation, and intelligence-driven services. For pension funds seeking resilient, future-facing investments, this infrastructure offers exposure to long-term growth, diversification, and relevance. So the question arises: what are these billionaires

seeing in AI that pension trustees, regulators, and asset managers might be overlooking? Is it time we recalibrated our risk appetite and investment lens to include the very engines of tomorrow's economy? Food for thought.

- Further just across the border in South Africa, Nedbank acquired iKhokha, FirstRand (FNB) invested in Optasia (AI & Innovation - the investment supports FirstRand's strategy to tap into cutting-edge fintech solution), and Old Mutual acquired 10X Investments to expand their digital capabilities and reach underserved markets. Each move reflects a strategic push into fintech to enhance SME support, financial inclusion, and passive investment solutions. These acquisitions reflect a broader trend: traditional financial institutions are embracing fintech to stay competitive, reach underserved markets, and modernize their offerings.

AI's Role in Elevating Human Potential

AI democratizes access to knowledge. A student in rural Zimbabwe can now access world-class education; an entrepreneur can analyze markets using predictive models once reserved for global firms. This empowerment reflects a rise in collective intelligence, a "global IQ."

AI is not just a tool, it's a mirror of human potential amplified. It transforms curiosity into a global network of shared intelligence. While it sparks debate about ethics and control, its greatest contribution may be in how it elevates the world's intellectual capacity.

We then look at the strategic imperative to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Zimbabwe's pensions ecosystem. It aims to stimulate dialogue, guide policy innovation, and position the sector for sustainable transformation aligned with national development goals and global best practices.

Context and Rationale

- Demographic shifts and informal employment patterns challenge traditional pension models.
- Digital transformation is accelerating across financial services, yet pensions lag behind.
- AI offers tools to enhance governance, member engagement, risk management, and operational efficiency.



Area	AI Application	Impact
Member Services	Chatbots, voice assistants, predictive analytics	24/7 support, personalized retirement planning
Data Management	Intelligent document processing, anomaly detection	Reduced fraud, improved compliance
Investment Oversight	AI-driven portfolio analysis, ESG screening	Smarter asset allocation, ethical investing
Actuarial Modeling	Machine learning for longevity, contribution trends	More accurate projections and funding strategies
Trustee Training	Adaptive learning platforms, scenario simulations	Ideologically grounded, digitally fluent trustees

Governance and Ethical Considerations

- Transparency: AI must be explainable and auditable.
- Bias mitigation: Algorithms must reflect inclusive values and avoid discrimination.
- Data sovereignty: Local data must be protected and governed ethically. While POTRAZ provides a national framework, industry-specific regulation is imperative.
- Ideological alignment: AI systems should reflect Ubuntu, Pan-Africanism, and decolonised governance principles.

Recommendations

1. Establish an AI-Pensions Innovation Taskforce under ZAPF to guide adoption and policy alignment. Research and development must anchor the 2026 strategy.
2. Pilot AI tools in member engagement and data processing with selected pension funds.

3. Develop trustee modules on AI ethics, governance, and strategic application, ZAPF should collaborate with national universities to ensure relevance and rigor.
4. Engage regulators to update compliance frameworks for AI-enabled operations. ZAPF is already contributing to national skills development through IPEC.
5. Mobilize academia and tech hubs to co-create indigenous AI solutions for pensions. Funding and resource mobilization are critical to success.

Call to Action

Let us embrace AI not as a threat, but as a tool for justice, efficiency, and dignity in retirement. By embedding ideological clarity and technical excellence, Zimbabwe can lead Africa in building pension systems that are intelligent, inclusive, and future-proof.