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Beyond Automation: Exploring Employees' Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence, Job Insecurity, and Workplace Identity in The Modern Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a part of every organisation's day-to-day operations and is a factor in the way work is being assigned, done, directed and checked. Discussions about this change have primarily been around automation, efficiency and jobs, but also about how an employee's sense of security, competence in their role, independence and sense of identity at work is affected by AI. In this article, we delve into the interconnections between employees' attitudes toward AI, their feelings of job insecurity, and workplace identity. The study was of qualitative, interpretive, documentary design and secondary data analysis was done using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) based on peer reviewed studies, systematic reviews and reports of international organizations such as ILO and OECD. The five interrelated themes were: (1) Ambivalence about the use of AI: some experiences it as a tool to augment their work while others worry about being monitored, deskilled, and displaced; (2) Anticipatory fear of loss: fear of job loss can occur even if the number of jobs does not decrease; (3) Remediated and reinforced professional identity: when AI is used to complement their job, it enhances their sense of competence, while when it digitises their core job, it threatens it; (4) Algorithmic management reconfigures autonomy: when automating parts of their job, employees' autonomy is reassigned, while when parts of their job are kept by humans and coded into algorithms, they lose some autonomy; (5) Algorithmic management experiences depend on the organizational support, the transparency of communication, participation, and reskilling. From a theoretical perspective, the study synthesizes the concepts of job insecurity, social and/or organizational identification, technology acceptance and resistance, sociotechnical systems and human capital, and is able to articulate a framework beyond the deterministic replacement stories. The reality is that HR teams and leaders need to approach the integration of AI as a transformational journey rather than simply a technological fix, and have to do so. It concludes by proposing that although the technical difficulty is a consideration, a more important one is how well staff can feel secure, competent and valued as professionals in the context of the integration of AI.

Introduction

The world of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become more than just a component of an organisation's existence; it is now an integral part of the organisation's life. Now, tasks are assigned, performance is measured and expertise is applied using generative AI tools, AI-assisted decision systems, intelligent automation and algorithmic management. One of every four workers globally has some exposure to generative AI, most of whom are likely to have their jobs changed, not replaced, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Gmyrek et al., 2025). AI is not the end of occupations, but the new fit of occupation structures, skills and management (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

The prevailing stories of change, however, continue to be about productivity, efficiency, and labour markets. This framing doesn't take into account one of the most important aspects of AI: the human side – how its employees see and understand how AI relates to their work, their future, and themselves. The evidence at hand is not consistent in this regard, but there is no overall negative. In manufacturing, and in OECD in finance surveys of AI users with employers and workers, when respondents used AI, they reported many improvements in performance and working conditions, with mixed reports of job loss, and noted a positive relationship between training and worker consultation with performance and working conditions (Lane et al., 2023). AI can reduce repetitive and/or hazardous work for workers, but it can also have adverse effects on the quality of the work, and the meaning that workers attach to their work activities (Selenko et al., 2022).

These experiences are related to fear of losing one's job, but not to losing one's job itself (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Shoss, 2017). The difference is very important when it comes to AI. The fear of losing their job, losing skills, losing the status of their jobs, and losing opportunities to move up in their careers can happen before any restructuring begins and can impact the attitudes and well-being of employees, even if they have not actually lost a job, skill, job status, or a career opportunity.

Another area of professional identity that is disrupted by AI is the feeling of a professional's sense of contribution, organizational attachment, recognition, autonomy, responsibilities and expertise (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The experienced professionals may feel devalued, as it is the AI making decisions for them that they could have been making for themselves, and the younger may feel the same, as it is the AI making decisions for them that they couldn't make for themselves.Seasoned professionals may feel their worth is less because AI is making decisions for them and young people may feel the same way because AI is making decisions for a role where they have not yet made decisions. Erosion of professional identity, anxiety, felt betrayal by organizations have been documented in the case of Indian IT professionals affected by AI displacement or reassignment (Sharma et al., 2025). Algorithmic management also introduces new ways of monitoring and control, and its effect on autonomy and discretion (Kellogg et al., 2020).

These dynamics are so crucial that decisions made about organizations are critical. Indeed, technological consequences are organizationally rather than technologically determined, from a sociotechnical perspective, as technological outcomes depend on the joint design of technical systems and the social arrangements of work (Trist & Bamforth, 1951). The willingness to lead, communicate, involve employees, re-skill, organizational justice and responsible AI governance create the conditions for threat and/or resource to professional development in relation to AI (Bankins et al., 2024; Lane et al., 2023). If AI handles decisions in an opaque and unethical manner, then resistance and insecurities will follow suit.

There has been increasing literature on workers' attitudes towards AI, human-AI collaboration, algorithmic management and labour-market impacts, but these studies have largely been published separately (Bankins et al. 2024), and the impact of AI on the workers experience has been comparatively under-studied (Selenko et al. 2022). Few studies describe the experience of employees, the sense of job insecurity, and the employees' professional identity in one framework of organizational change. For this reason, this article, interpreting a qualitative, interpretivist and documentary synthesis of the existing scholarly and institutional evidence, will try to fulfill this gap.

The study aims to address five key objectives: (1) understanding the perception of the increased integration of AI into modern workplaces, (2) examining the impact of AI-driven changes in the workplace on perceived job security, (3) exploring the relationship between AI adoption and employee sense of identity, belonging, autonomy, and perceived occupational value, (4) investigating the relationship between technological adaptation, employee confidence, and organizational support, and (5) understanding organizational strategies that promote employee well-being, professional development, and responsible integration of AI.

Thus, it tackles five research questions:

RQ1: What is the attitude of employees towards the increasing use of AI in the workplace?

RQ2: What impact does AI transformation of the workplace have on employee perceptions of job security and employment uncertainty?

What are the implications of AI for workers' professional identity, autonomy and value?

Three factors that can influence employees' responses to AI-driven change are the nature of organizational support, communication, and professional development.Three factors that might influence employees' responses to change enabled by AI are organizational support, communication, and professional development.

RQ5: How can the technological development be balanced with employees' professional well-being in an organization's practice?

The research is of three types. It brings together the three approaches of job insecurity, job identity, technology acceptance, sociotechnical, and human capital in an interdisciplinary way and integrates them in an interpretative framework which links perception, insecurity, and identity. Organizational and managerial aspects present a clear picture of how choices of implementation impact employee experiences of AI. It offers practical advice and insights for HR professionals, HR leaders and policymakers, for the responsible use of AI with a human first approach.

Literature Review

The Future of AI: Trends for the Next Generation of Leaders

From rule-based automation to machine learning, generative AI and algorithmic management systems that allocate, monitor, and evaluate work, AI in the workplace has shifted from the simple to a more complex approach (Jarrahi et al., 2021; Kellogg et al., 2020). Raisch and Krakowski (2021) have started to distinguish between two notions of automation: automation (actually tasks carried out by machines) and augmentation (actually tasks carried out by humans and machines). The two are not mutually exclusive but complementary. This is supported by task-based evidence: Based on the ILO analysis, most occupations that might be impacted by generative-AI are likely to be reshaped, not eliminated, since human input is required (Gmyrek et al., 2025). The focus to the restructuring of the tasks and occupations is crucial, not just the loss of jobs.

The Research's Findings on Employees' Perceptions, Attitudes, and Responses towards AI

The acceptance models initially studied were those that explored the perceptions of usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989), but these models have some problems in the case of the use of AI as a decision-making tool and not as a decision-making entity. Trust is at the heart of it: Glikson and Woolley (2020) report that evidence primarily comes from short-term experimental contexts, and that this trust can take the form of cognitive or emotional trust in AI. Another aspect of opacity is how an AI is used by practitioners in the process of making a diagnosis. Lebovitz et al. (2022) showed that practitioners who trusted that they could challenge the AI's output mainly used the output in their decision-making process. Not all responses are negative. With respect to productivity, the least experienced customer-support employees benefited the most from generative AI, the most experienced only the least benefited, while quality decreased marginally but not all that much (Brynjolfsson et al., 2025). In experimental studies of professional writing tasks, the advantages of generative AI in boosting productivity and narrowing performance gaps among workers are also shown (Noy & Zhang, 2023). Positive perceptions of performance, like those reported in OECD surveys, are also reported with feelings of job loss (Lane et al., 2023), and employees can assess AI as a challenge or hindrance, with varying implications for job crafting, job insecurity and performance (He et al., 2024). Rather than being irrational, resistance is a reaction to perceived threats and is situated (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005). Interpretation of variation between occupations, skill levels and organizational climates should be done in context.

The Financial Sector and the Rise of Automation in Service Delivery.2.5 Artificial Intelligence and Job Insecurity.

Job insecurity is an individual perception of risk of losing a job, and is not the same as actual losing a job (Ashford et al., 1989; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Shoss, 2017). Brougham and Haar (2018) operationalized technology specific insecurity as “STARA awareness” and found it to be correlated with lower commitment and career satisfaction and higher cynicism and turnover intentions. AI-related job insecurity and AI awareness have also been linked to the attitudes among employees, job skills, and burnout in the hospitality industry (Kong et al., 2021; Koo et al., 2021). However the evidence on the large scale is not consistent, and in most cases, rather than jobs being lost, the large scale use of AI is followed by tasks being reconfigured, as is often reported in OECD case studies on AI (Milanez, 2023). Analytically this discrepancy between objective results and subjective expectations is important: insecurity can be induced by uncertainty over the relevance of skills, status and career trajectories, but not by objective redundancy. Additionally, qualitative data from Indian IT employees who are experiencing displacement or relocation because of

AI shows insecurity is also relationally significant as they think and feel insecure about their future and within the organization (Sharma et al., 2025).

AI and Workplace Identity

Professional identity is supported by knowledge, independence, recognition, acceptance, and a sense of contribution. Selenko et al. (2022) suggest that AI either could harm or help work-related identity depending on whether its function is to complement, replace, or create work tasks; and whether it affects the social structure of work. Mirbabaie et al. (2022) also list social change and loss of status as threats to AI identity, and Vaast and Pinsonneault (2021) demonstrate how the same digital technologies can be a facilitation and a threat to the occupational identity. There is empirical evidence in Strich et al., 2021, which examined loan consultants, experienced employees saw it as devaluing, while new hires saw it as bolstered their role identity. In platform settings, qualitative research reveals algorithmic control's reorganization of time, space and discretion (Zheng & Wu, 2022), and its restriction of autonomy and redefinition of competent work. Identity effects are therefore contingent and contested, and involve eroding as well as reconstructing.

Theoretical Foundations

These views describe various aspects of a transformation. Anticipatory threat can be captured by the Job insecurity theory, and the threat of self-definition and belonging can be explained by the Social and organizational identity theories (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Power and identity (Davis, 1989; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005) are not given much consideration in technology acceptance and resistance research that focuses on individual evaluation of AI. Technological determinism is corrected by the sociotechnical systems theory which focuses on the co-construction of technical and social systems (Trist and Bamforth, 1951). Human capital theory is the reason why reskilling is important (Becker, 1964); but in this approach the role of the symbolic function of the expertise by employees is not considered as rational. Combined, these theories propose that insecurities and threats to identity emerge from the intersection of AI devaluation of human capital in poorly designed sociotechnical arrangements.These theories overlap in proposing that insecurities and threats to identity emerge from the intersection of AI devaluation of human capital with poorly designed sociotechnical arrangements.

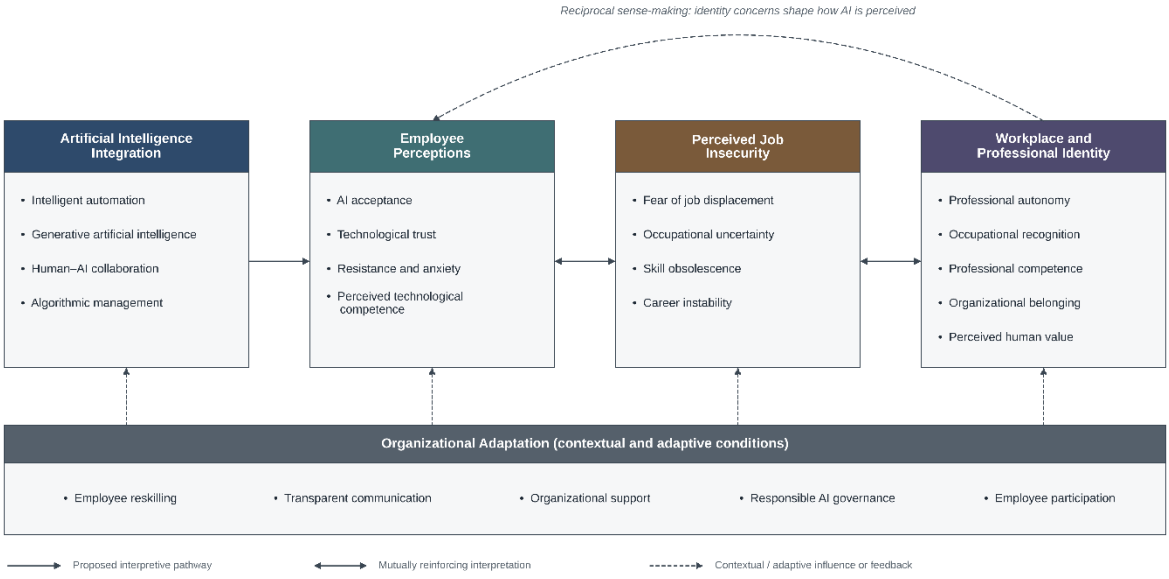


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of AI-Driven Workplace Transformation and Employee Experiences

Note. Arrows represent interpretive relationships synthesized from documentary evidence; they do not denote statistically validated causal effects.

Wishing you success on your trip to the mountains!

Organizational practice continually surfaces as a moderating condition. There is evidence that training and worker consultation are linked to positive outcomes for workers (Lane et al., 2023); Bankins et al. (2024) suggest that leaders should put workers' welfare at the heart of their implementation of AI. When decisions are made based on algorithms that are not transparent, procedural justice, distributive justice, and informational justice (Colquitt, 2001) are especially relevant. Work design research also highlights

the need to carefully consider the impact of automation on jobs, as the outcomes rely on how jobs are designed with automation (Parker & Grote, 2022). Unilaterally introducing AI will drive more insecurity and resistance, while a collaborative and informed approach can make it a developmental tool.AI can be a development tool if it is introduced collaboratively and transparently, but unilateral introduction will fuel insecurity and resistance.

Critical Research Gap

The research has been grouped in the following themes, as identified through a multilevel review by Bankins et al. (2024): Human–AI collaboration, perceptions of algorithmic capacities, workers' attitudes, algorithmic management, and labour-market impacts. Theories of insecurity seldom feature identity and theories of identity seldom include insecurity of employment, and models of acceptance seldom consider organizational power. Evidence is also clustered in certain areas and contexts, such as trust research, where the short-term experimental design is overrepresented (Glikson & Woolley, 2020). Thus, the relationship between employee perception, perceived job insecurity, and professional identity in organizational contexts has yet to be developed. This documentary study remedies that with a synthesis of evidence from various occupations, regions, and theories in an interpretive framework.

Research Methodology

The research in this study is qualitative, interpretivist, exploratory, documentary and secondary-evidence research. It reads the documented knowledge already available and not culls data from participants. This design is appropriate for the research problem as the employee's perception of the use of AI, experiences of employment uncertainty and changes in professional identity are complex, context dependent and socially constructed phenomena where interpretive synthesis rather than measurement would be more appropriate. The methodological framework is summarized in figure 2.

Research Philosophy

The study is based on interpretivism which focuses on the fact that people's constructs of social reality are based on meaning which they give their experiences. If viewed from this angle, AI's impact on employees is not deterministic, but is contingent on the norms of each occupation, the organizational contexts, power dynamics, and broader social discourses of technology and work. Interpretivism thus allows the study to focus on the published evidence for the reason that it reflects employees' sense making processes, instead of the establishment of causal laws (Saunders et al., 2019).

Research Approach

The relationship between AI, job insecurity, and professional identity is not yet fully understood, and a qualitative methodology is used to explore this concept. The method followed is a predominantly inductive one and the themes that emerge from the evidence inform the theory, which includes job insecurity, identity, technology acceptance, and sociotechnical and human capital perspectives. This type of combination facilitates an integrated interpretation of the data, not the testing of advanced propositions.

Research Strategy

The main strategy is documentary research. Documents are social, meaningful products that represent, explain and create social realities for an organisation (Bowen, 2009; Scott, 1990). The evidence base consists of peer-reviewed empirical and theoretical studies, qualitative investigations, systematic reviews, integrative reviews, international institutional reports, organizational documents and policy publications. Empirical evidence from these sources is used as secondary evidence and is clearly differentiated from the interpretative synthesis of the present study.

Secondary evidence comes in a number of different forms.

Evidence was found using publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (where available) with Google Scholar for discovery and cross-referencing. The search terms included Boolean operators between terms describing the technology (artificial intelligence, generative AI, automation, algorithmic management) and employee experience (job insecurity, employee perceptions, professional identity, occupational identity, identity threat, job displacement, trust, resistance) and the reference lists of key studies were scanned for additional relevant sources. Sources are peer-reviewed journals of organisational behaviour, human resource management, information systems and work psychology, reports of the ILO and OECD, seminal theoretical texts and academic books and respected institutional and organisational reports. The documents were evaluated based on the criteria of authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Scott, 1990), as well as on the reputation of the publisher of the document, whether it had undergone peer review and transparency of the methods reported.

Students will be able to select and evaluate documentary evidence.

Documents were included if they (a) focused on the context of AI, automation or algorithmic management in the workplace; (b) included content on employee perceptions, job insecurity, professional identity, autonomy or organisational support; (c) were published in a credible academic or institutional publication; (d) openly reported methods or reasoning; and (e) were relevant to at least one of the following research questions: Emphasis was placed on those works that appeared between 2020 and 2026, and earlier seminal works were kept for theoretical purposes. The records were duplicated, opinion pieces without evidential basis, non-verifiable sources, studies that are only about the technical performance of the system, and materials where the bibliographic information could not be verified were omitted. Selection was focused upon relevance to analysis and occupational and geographical variety, not statistical fullness. The final evidence base consisted of 35 substantive sources, of which 23 were empirical, review and institutional publications from 2020 to 2025, and 12 seminal theoretical publications prior to 2020. These were of two types: first, 29 peer-reviewed journal articles, four institutional working papers (one from the International Labour Organization, two from the OECD and one from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission), and two seminal books or book chapters (Becker, 1964; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Another seven methodological sources were used in the design and analysis of the study.

Data Analysis: Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2019) reflexive thematic analysis was utilized for analyzing the evidence through six phases as adapted to documentary material:

1. FAMILIARISATION: a second or subsequent reading of the chosen texts and recording of preliminary analytic notes.
2. Identification of initial codes: systematic coding of segments pertaining to perceptions, and feelings of insecurity, identity, autonomy, and organizational reactions.
3. Forming potential themes: grouping together codes that are related to each other to create candidate patterns of shared meaning.
4. Reviewing themes: to ensure themes are coherent and distinct by checking against the coded extracts and the complete evidence set.
5. Defining and naming themes: stating the scope of each theme, its boundaries and its theoretical significance.
6. Creating the analytical narrative: weaving themes together with the research questions and theory.

Shared patterns were seen in the recurring concepts, and contextual contingencies were considered in the contrasting findings, not rejected as abnormalities. Explicit consideration was given to differences across occupations, organizational settings and regions in explaining each theme.

Trustworthiness and Rigor in research

Rigor was achieved by using the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985) as adapted to thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Triangulation across source types, disciplines and contexts gave credibility. Documents of selection criteria and analytical phases were used to address dependability. Confirmability was enhanced by the reliance on sources to be verified and by separating findings reported from interpretive claims. Transferability is fostered by explicit references to the contexts in which the evidence was obtained, so that readers can make their own judgments about the appropriateness of the evidence to their own contexts. In order not to suffer from the confirmation bias, contradictory evidence was deliberately explored.

Ethical Considerations

The study does not involve human subjects and only relies on publicly available published material; therefore, no formal ethical approval is required. The responsibility for ethical conduct remained paramount and ensured that the research was conducted with a proper attributions, faithful reporting of original research and limitations thereof, avoiding selective or decontextualized reporting and strict avoidance of plagiarism.

Policies on organizational support and employee adaptation.

Organizational practice is always found to be a moderating condition. A recent OECD study found links between training and worker involvement and improved results for the worker (Lane et al., 2023), and Bankins et al. (2024) suggest that leaders need to take

worker health into account when implementing AI. When algorithmic decisions are opaque, procedural, distributive, and informational justice (Colquitt, 2001) are of special importance. Similarly, the impact of automation is strongly linked to the intentional job design that takes place around it, with work design research also pointing to this (Parker & Grote, 2022). Inclusive, transparent, and genuine reskilling will transform AI from a disrupting element to a growth factor; when reskilling is imposed unilaterally, it will further heighten insecurities and resistance.

Critical Research Gap

The review conducted by Bankins et al. (2024) reveals that studies have tended to focus on individual thematic areas: human–AI collaboration, perceptions of algorithmic capabilities, workers' attitudes, algorithmic management, and labour-market impacts. Theories on identity are rarely offered in insecurities studies, employment uncertainty is rarely discussed in identity studies and organizational power is rarely included in models of acceptance. Evidence is also focused in certain areas and contexts, such as short-term experimental designs in trust research (Glikson & Woolley, 2020). The conceptual integration between employee perceptions and perceived job insecurity and professional identity in organizational contexts is not sufficiently developed. This documentary study attempts to fill that void by bringing together a body of evidence from many occupations, various regions and theoretical perspectives within a single interpretive framework.

Research Methodology

The research method used in this study is qualitative with design of interpretivist, exploratory, documentary, and secondary evidence. Interpretive, not collecting new data from participants. The research problem involves the perceptions of employees towards AI, experiences of uncertainty within employment, and the transformation of professional identity, which are complex, contextual, and socially constructed, and can be better investigated through interpretive synthesis as opposed to measurement. The methodological framework is summarized in Figure 2.

Research Philosophy

The study is based on the interpretivism which states that social reality is created through the meanings given by people to their experiences. That is, from this viewpoint, the impact of AI on the working life of employees is not given but is rather mediated by occupational norms, organizational practices, power relations, and broader social narratives concerning technology and work. Interpretivism thus allows the study to analyse the published evidence, reflecting the sense making processes of the employees, without being able to draw causal laws (Saunders et al., 2019).

Research Approach

The exploratory qualitative approach is used because the connections between AI, job insecurity, and professional identity, are still conceptually fragmented in different disciplines. The method used is mostly inductive, with themes that emerge from the evidence, and guided by theories on job insecurity, identity, technology acceptance, sociotechnical and human capital. This pairing helps develop an integrated interpretation understanding as opposed to testing the predetermined propositions.

Research Strategy

The main approach is documentary research. Documents are seen as meaningful social products that capture, explain and elaborate organizational realities (Bowen, 2009; Scott, 1990). Sources of the evidence include peer-reviewed empirical and theoretical studies, qualitative studies, systematic and integrative reviews, international institutional reports, organizational documents and relevant policy publications. The information presented in these sources is second-hand and used as secondary data for the purposes of this study and is clearly separated from the interpretive synthesis of this study.

Secondary evidence can be obtained from various sources.

The evidence was located in the publications indexed by Scopus and Web of Science, if available, and used Google Scholar as a discovery and cross-referencer. The search terms were a mix of technology-related terms ("artificial intelligence," "generative AI," "automation," and "algorithmic management") and employee experience-related terms ("job insecurity," "employee perceptions," "professional identity," "occupational identity," "identity threat," "job displacement," "trust," and "resistance") and were limited to Boolean operators. Reference lists of key studies were screened for additional relevant sources. These come from peer-reviewed journals such as in the field of organisational behaviour, human resource management, information systems and work psychology; reports of the International Labour Organisation and OECD; theoretical work, and academic books, together with credible

institutional or organisational reports. The documents were evaluated based on the Scott (1990) criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, meaning; as well as on publisher reputation, peer-review status, and transparency of the reported methods.

Course requires document selection and evaluation

Documents were selected if they covered issues relating to AI or automation or algorithmic management in the context of employment, employee perceptions of AI and/or automation/algorithmic management, job insecurity, professional identity, autonomy, or organizational support, were published in a credible academic or institutional outlet, disclosed their methods and/or reasoning clearly, and spoke to one or more of the research questions. The works published from 2020 up to 2026 were prioritized, and works from the early seminal works were kept for theoretical foundation. Records were not included if they were duplicated, opinion pieces with no evidential basis, sources that could not be verified, studies that only addressed technical aspects of the system or materials that did not include enough bibliographic information to be confirmed. The selection was made based on the analysis of relevance and variety of occupational and geographical aspects, rather than on statistical completeness. The final evidence base consisted of 35 substantive sources, of which 23 were empirical, review and institutional sources that were published from 2020 to 2025, and 12 were seminal theoretical sources that were published before 2020. These were of various types, such as 29 peer-reviewed journal articles, four institutional working papers (one from the International Labour Organization, two from OECD and one from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission), and two seminal books or book chapters (Becker, 1964; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Seven more methodological sources contributed to the research design and research analysis.

In the next session, students will learn about Qualitative Thematic Analysis in Data Analysis.

Thematic analysis of the evidence involved adapting the reflexive thematic analysis approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019) to fit the type of material analysed, and consisted of six steps:

1. Familiarisation: rereading of the chosen documents and initial analytical observations.
2. Initial codes: systematic coding of segments with perceptions and feelings of insecurity, identity, autonomy and organizational reaction.
3. Building potential themes: Grouping codes together that may share a similar meaning.
4. Reviewing themes: examining the candidate's theme against the coded extracts and the complete evidence set to see if the theme reflects coherence and distinctiveness.
5. Defining and naming themes: Limiting and outlining themes and their theoretical importance.
6. Writing the analytical narrative: weaving in the themes and research questions and linking them to the theory.

Shared patterns were seen as recurring concepts, while conflicting results were considered as signals to look at contextual contingency instead of as anomalies. When interpreting each theme, differences across occupations, organizational settings and regions were explicitly addressed.

Trustworthiness and Research Rigor

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria were used to ensure rigor in the thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Triangulation of evidence from within the source, across the disciplines, and across the contexts enhanced credibility. Documentation of selection criteria and phases of analysis were done to address dependability. Grounding the interpretation in verifiable sources and avoiding interpretive claims to clarify of findings was a move towards confirmability (Nawaz & Ven, 2026). Transferability is facilitated by the contexts of the evidence being described, so that the reader can make a judgement about this. To avoid confirmation bias, contradictory evidence was deliberately considered.

Ethical Considerations

Since only publicly available published material is being used and there is no human participation involved, no formal ethical approval was necessary. But ethical responsibility was maintained in the research in terms of accurate attribution, faithful reporting of original findings and limitations, avoiding selective reporting, decontextualized reporting, and avoiding plagiarism.

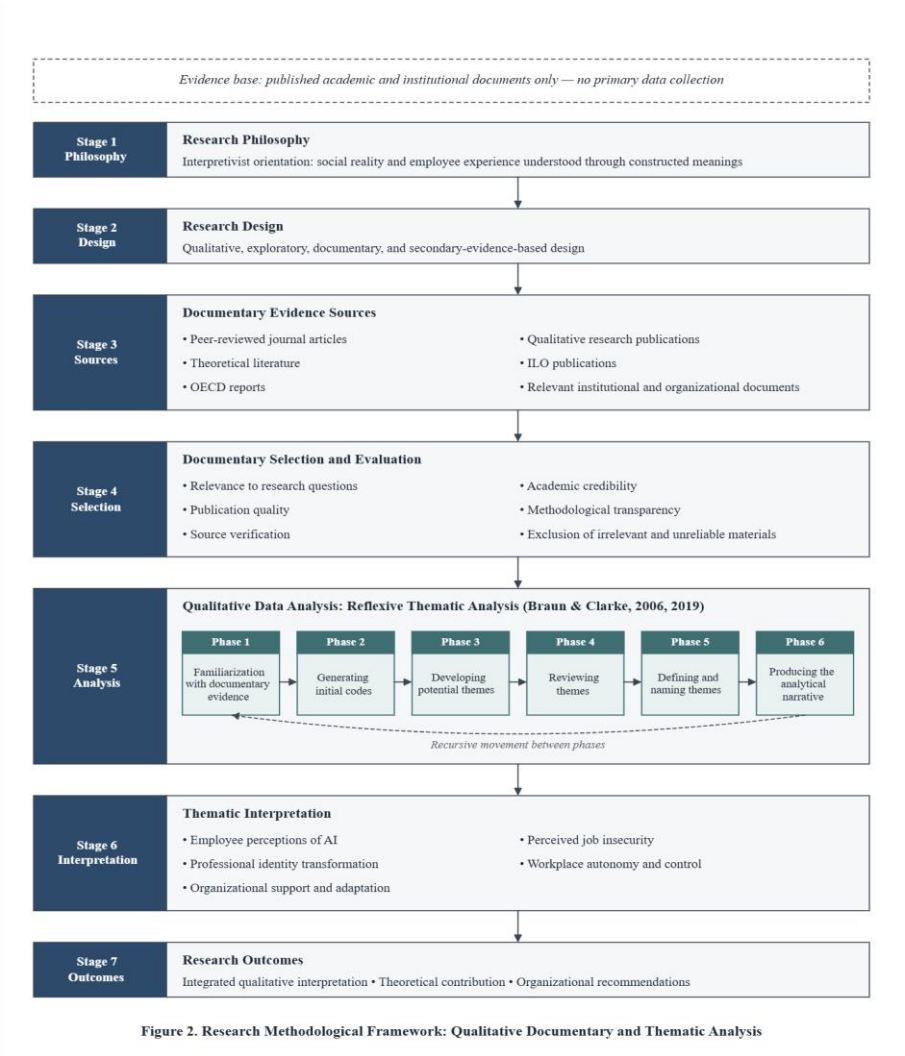


Figure 2. Research Methodological Framework: Qualitative Documentary and Thematic Analysis

Findings and Discussion

Documentary evidence was thematized into five interrelated themes. These are made up in an interpretative manner, based on published research rather than being collected anew.

Table 1; **Thematic Synthesis of AI-Driven Workplace Transformation**

Major Theme	Key Analytical Dimensions	Employee-Related Implications	Supporting Theoretical Perspective
1. Perceptions of AI	Opportunity, trust, apprehension, resistance	Ambivalent responses that vary with experience and position	Technology acceptance and resistance
2. Perceived job insecurity	Anticipated displacement, skill obsolescence, career uncertainty	Insecurity can arise without actual job loss	Job insecurity theory; human capital theory
3. Professional identity	Expertise, status, recognition, human value	Identity threat or enhancement, depending on task change	Social and organizational identity theories
4. Autonomy and control	Algorithmic management, monitoring, AI-assisted decisions	Reduced discretion; work intensification	Sociotechnical systems theory
5. Organizational support	Reskilling, participation, transparency, justice	AI reframed as a developmental resource	Human capital theory; organizational justice

AI in business communication is both an opportunity and a challenge, as well as a danger, to employees' perceptions

The key takeaway is that the attitudes of employees toward AI are largely mixed, with no single clear trend. The survey data in the OECD show that workers are feeling better about their performance and working conditions, but are also expressing concern about losing their jobs (Lane et al., 2023). This duality is confirmed by field evidence: the impact of generative AI assistance was seen to be greatest for the least experienced customersupport workers, and least experienced workers gained comparatively little (Brynjolfsson et al., 2025). This technology can then be used as a means of empowerment for some, but an equal disadvantage for others in terms of expertise. This ambivalence will be mediated by trust (transparency and reliability) and not by technophobia but by appraisals of threat (Lapointe & Rivard, 2005; Glikson & Woolley, 2020). Usefulness judgments are reflected in acceptance models, which are not sufficient to reflect how position, experience and identity shape perception. Perceptions in HRM should be seen as a source of diagnostic information, not something to be handled up and out of the way.

Theme Two: AI-Driven Transformation and Perceived Job Insecurity

According to the evidence, the concern about AI is largely anticipatory. Given the current situation, transformation instead of elimination is most likely for the exposed occupations, as per institution analysis, and task change but not job loss is frequently reported in OECD case studies (Milanez, 2023). However, insecurity related to technology is linked to lower commitment and higher cynicism and intentions to leave (Brougham & Haar, 2018). However, the apparent paradox is explained by the theory of job insecurity, that is, insecurity is an individual perception of threats and not an actual outcome (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Shoss, 2017). When it happens (as in the case of Indian IT professionals), the impacts of displacement are manifested through identity erosion and perceived betrayal (Sharma et al., 2025). In addition to the loss of jobs, insecurity is also due to the perceived degradation of skills, as per human capital theory. Companies which use general employment figures to comfort staff can thus be mistaken in their diagnosis.

Professional identity, human value and occupational recognition

AI does not necessarily have a negative impact on the professional identity; it's about how it reshapes jobs.The impact of AI is not necessarily detrimental to professional identity, it's about how AI reconfigures tasks. To support identity, tasks should be complemented, but not replaced, Selenko et al. (2022) state. This contingency is demonstrated by Strich et al. (2021): both the seasoned loan consultants and the new ones were undermined and accentuated by substitutive AI, respectively. Based on social and organizational identity theories, identity threat occurs when a person's status and identity to a group are defined by a set of group-specific competencies. (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). But augmentation can raise to the higher level roles that involve judgment, responsibility, creativity and interpersonal skills. Therefore, identity reconstruction is an ongoing process of employees pushing back their value. HRM practices that acknowledge these capacities can help in the constructive reconstruction of identity.

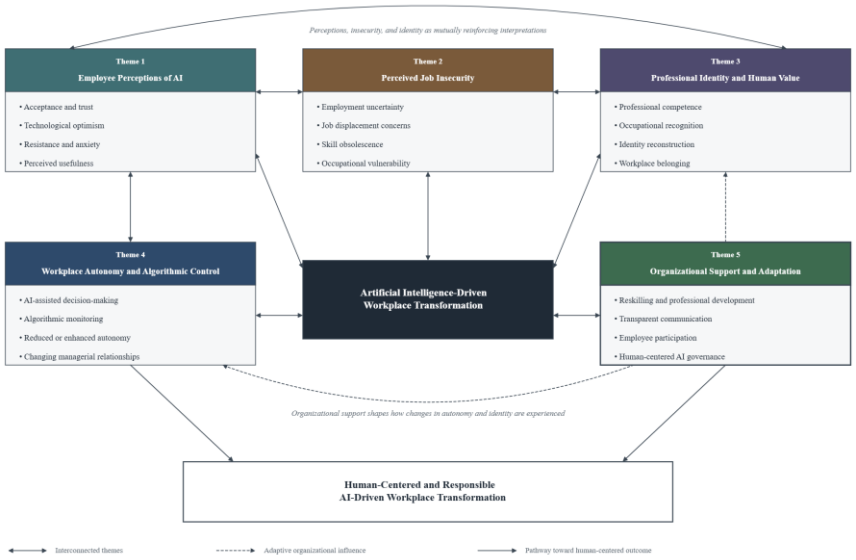


Figure 3. Integrated Thematic Framework of Employees' Experiences of AI-Driven Workplace Transformation

Note. The framework represents themes developed through qualitative thematic synthesis of documentary evidence; connections are interpretive, not statistically tested.

Theme Four: Changing Autonomy, Control, and Human–AI Relationships

Algorithmic management shifts management away from employees to systems. Algorithms are a space of contestation of control, as described by Kellogg et al. (2020), both with regard to their direction, evaluation, and discipline, and in regard to new types of algorithmic insecurity, as described by Wood (2021), in addition to resistance in the workplace. To date, there are few qualitative studies on the Chinese food delivery workers which reveal the reorganization of time, space, and discretion by algorithmic systems (Zheng & Wu, 2022). Data from platform contexts should not be taken at face value and applied naively to the professional context, where AI can help, but not make decisions (Nawaz et al., 2026). However, the common theme is suggested by sociotechnical systems theory: If efficiency is maximized without regard for social organization, autonomy and meaningful work suffer (Trist & Bamforth, 1951). Reductions in autonomy are strongly related to identity threat and insecurity, tying this theme with Themes Two and Three.

Theme Five: Organizational Support, Reskilling, and Human-Centered Adaptation

The condition that proves to be a vital determinant in the perception of AI as a threat or opportunity becomes organizational practice.Organizational practice becomes the decisive condition that shapes AI's experience as threat or opportunity. Better outcomes for workers are correlated with training and worker consultation (Lane et al., 2023) and the importance of including worker well-being in leadership practices is highlighted by Bankins et al. (2024). Organizational justice is particularly important in algorithmically mediated decisions (Colquitt, 2001). Reskilling is about human capital depreciation, participation is about voice and control, and transparent communication is about uncertainty. Support is not, however, a panacea; it cannot compensate for insecurity that has already been established for restructuring decisions. It is therefore necessary for there to be credible, early and participative implementation.

Table 2; **Relationship Between AI Integration, Job Insecurity, and Workplace Identity**

AI-Related Workplace Change	Potential Employee Perception	Job Insecurity Implications	Workplace Identity Implications	Organizational Response
Task automation	Threat to role continuity	Anticipated displacement	Loss of valued tasks	Role redesign; transparent communication
Augmentation (AI assistance)	Support and learning opportunity	Reduced, if skills remain valued	Enhancement for novices; possible devaluation of expertise	Recognize human judgment; career pathways
Substitutive AI decision-making	Loss of professional authority	Uncertainty about future relevance	Threat to professional role identity	Human oversight; consultation
Algorithmic management	Surveillance and control	Algorithmic insecurity; intensification	Reduced autonomy and meaningful work	Explainability; contestability; justice
Changing skill requirements	Pressure to adapt	Perceived skill obsolescence	Need to rebuild professional identity	Reskilling; professional development

Discussion Synthesis

As a whole, the themes suggest that AI transforms perceptions, employment security, and professional identity all at once and all at the same time, as illustrated in Figure 3. The perception of threat is heightened when AI is replacing core tasks, lowering autonomy, and when AI is not accompanied by reskilling and transparency of governance.The perception of threat is amplified when AI is replacing core tasks, lowering autonomy, and when there is no reskilling and no transparency of governance. Insecurity and threat to identity are therefore not two distinct results, but two reinforcing interpretations of the same organizational change. Effective AI adoption involves more than just technological proficiency; it also calls for organizational change and employee adaptability.

Recommendations

Human-Centered AI Implementation

Organizations must leverage more on augmenting than replacing core tasks (Theme Three), since identity threat is occurring primarily when AI takes over core tasks. Link impact assessments before deployment should be at the task level, identifying which

tasks will be supported or replaced, or created as a result of AI, and then redesigning the role to focus on human judgment and not on residual tasks (Selenko et al., 2022).

Employee reskilling and continuous professional development (CPD) will be a key area of focus.There will be a focus on employee reskilling and ongoing CPD.

Insecurity is as much a depreciation of skills as the actual loss of jobs (Theme Two); HR departments should provide role specific AI competency programs, digital literacy training and funded learning time associated with clear career pathways. Training should start before implementation, as there are indications that this can improve worker outcomes (Lane et al., 2023), and training should involve line managers who should have enough knowledge of AI to lead their team.

Work Security and Clear Communication

Insecurity is in part anticipatory, so managers should communicate early and specifically about the roles that are going to change, how the workforce planning decisions are taken, and what redeployment options are available. When restructuring is not an option, authentic communication and fair transition support mechanisms can minimise the sense of betrayal that is recorded in displacement settings (Sharma et al., 2025).

Professional identity and employee recognition

However, as experienced employees report feeling devalued by AI (Strich et al., 2021), it is important to go beyond metrics of performance and reward, and explicitly value ethical judgment, creativity, relationship building with clients, mentoring, and supervision of AI outputs. Senior staff members can help ensure that AI systems are accurate and enhance them, maintaining a sense of status while reshaping contributions in a new way.

Employee participation and organisation support

Engaging employees and their representatives in the selection, piloting, and evaluation of AI tools can be linked to more positive outcomes (Lane et al., 2023), and consequently, organizations should engage employees and their representatives in these processes. Resistance can be treated as a source of information, rather than opposition, if proper feedback channels and training for line managers in supporting change are established.

Responsible AI Governance

With algorithmic management autonomy concerns and control issues in mind, organizations should ensure that the decisions they make through AI are explainable, contestable and subject to meaningful human oversight (Kellogg et al., 2020; Shneiderman, 2020). Appelable algorithmic evaluations of procedures would enhance procedural justice (Colquitt, 2001). Monitoring must be proportionate, respect privacy and be communicated to the employees. Policymakers have a role to play by implementing policies that reinforce worker voice and social dialogue in the transition to AI, alongside lifelong learning. (Gmyrek et al., 2025).

Implications for Theory and Practice

Theoretical Implications

This research brings together a single interpretive lens to examine the human implications of workplace change as a result of artificial intelligence. According to job insecurity theory, there can be job insecurity before and without the actual displacement occurring (Shoss, 2017). Social and organizational identity theories account for this uncertainty being felt by employees as a sense of self, status and belonging (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Human capital theory explains the sense of skill degradation that contributes to insecurity (Becker, 1964), and the sociotechnical systems theory puts these experiences in the context of organizational decisions regarding the co-design of technology and work (Trist & Bamforth, 1951). The key conceptual contribution is to view job insecurity and professional identity as two aspects of the same organizational change, instead of as distinct phenomena. It also proposes that identity resources and organizational support might be used to account for the varied interpretations of AI by employees in similar technological situations, and that qualitative research in the future could examine this possibility. This integration does not establish any theory on the ground, but instead provides a theoretical framework with which these relationships can be considered.

Practical Implications

The results show that staffing planning should consider skill depreciation (as well as staff change) and identify threat (as well as job loss) and that the inclusion of reskilling within career development should be a key element of workforce planning for HR professionals. Organizational leaders must create systems that complement and support existing wisdom and make decisions about algorithms openly. Early communication and real employee involvement seem to be key for managers to alleviate anticipatory uncertainty and opposition. In the workplace, ongoing education and interaction with AI could help reshape professional identity based on judgment, responsibility, and interpersonal skills. The recommendations for policy makers include the need for social dialogue, lifelong learning, and fair transitions, ensuring that the advantages of AI are not to be gained at the expense of employment security, professional dignity, and the benefits of social dialogue.

Limitations

There are a number of caveats to note. First, the study is based on previous studies and institutional documents (no firsthand employee accounts). Interpretations are also influenced by the questions, samples and analysis that have been developed by the original authors, and by the experiences that are represented in the existing evidence.

Second, there are significant differences in employee experiences of AI by industry, occupational group, geography and organizational culture. While it is based on data from a range of contexts such as platform work, financial services, customer support and information technology, these contexts are not representative of the wider diversity of workplaces.

Third, evidence published might not reflect employees' experiences or organisational facts. Research and institutional reports tend to focus on certain sectors, on larger institutions and on higher income economies, whereas the experiences of informal, small-enterprise and less-researched workforces is underrepresented.

Fourth, the capabilities of AI, its uptake, and workplace policies are changing quickly. Any findings based on evidence reviewed may need to be reviewed again as technologies and organizational practices evolve beyond the time period reviewed.

Finally, any synthesis will be a scholarly one, which is the fifth characteristic of thematic synthesis. Rigor is heightened by transparent analytical procedures, source triangulation, and intentional interaction with conflicting evidence, but can't be removed from interpretive judgment.

Finally, the findings reflect insights and contextual and theoretical understanding, not generalizations.

Future Research Directions

There are several avenues that could be expanded on the understandings gained from this documentary study. To begin with, a qualitative comparison of different industries can help to illuminate how norms and task structures in work affect the interpretation of AI. Second, while documentation could provide an external perspective on professional identity shifts, interview based and phenomenological research would be able to capture the employee's actual lived experience of these shifts. Thirdly, researchers must make a more nuanced distinction between the effects of AI augmentation and the effects of task automation, as they seem to have different implications for insecurity and identity. Fourth, other research could explore the impact of algorithmic management on the connection between autonomy at work and professional recognition, going beyond platform contexts. Fifth, research could examine the effect of organizational culture, leadership, and employee involvement on the perception of AI as threat or opportunity. Sixth, comparative research across developed and developing economies is required because most of the evidence existing is in higher income settings. Lastly, the importance of reskilling and technological self-efficacy for professional adaptation needs to be explored. Longitudinal designs might follow perceptions, insecurity and identity through the implementation stages, and mixed methods designs might be used to add interpretive depth and comparative scope as well. These studies could offer a framework for interpretation as discussed here, which could be tested and refined in the future.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to investigate the experiences of employees with the integration of AI in the contemporary workplace, the impact of AI-driven transformation on employees' feelings of job insecurity, and the role of AI in affecting employees' profession identity. It was based on a documentary thematic synthesis of the evidence from scholarship and institutions, aimed at understanding these dimensions in a composite way, not separately as fields of inquiry.

Five related themes emerged. The first is that the attitudes and expectations of employees are mixed, with some appreciating AI's ability to help and improve their jobs, while others are worried about its implications. Second, AI-driven fears of job loss, when the job is not being replaced but merely reshaped, are largely anticipatory, rather than occurring when a job is fully displaced. Third, the impact on professional identity is not always negative or the loss of it, but it is the re-negotiation of professional identity when AI becomes a complement or replacement of the skills that employees use to establish their value. Fourth, algorithmic management reconfigures autonomy and control, sometimes to the extent of limiting discretion and reducing significant work. Fifth, organizational support, participation, reskilling and clear communication seem to influence the perception of AI as a threat or as a means to growth.

Theoretically, the study is a synthesis of job insecurity theory, social and organizational identity theory, technology acceptance and resistance theory, sociotechnical system theory, and human capital theory within an interpretive framework. Theories of job insecurity and identity theories of identity stress, the human capital theory of the loss of skills and technical systems theory of technology and work design choices all provide explanations for this. These views all argue that the human impact of AI is a product of organizations and contexts, not technology.

The results highlight the need for human-centered AI governance, proactive and transparent communication, continuous employee upskilling, and active employee involvement in AI governance decisions. The practices do not necessarily imply positive outcomes but there is evidence that positive outcomes have been positively correlated with how the employee understands and adjusts to technological change.

However, the potential of AI in future workplaces is not just about increased automation, productivity, and efficiency. It also has to be assessed based on employees' reasonable feeling of having a job, of having a good job, of being able to develop their careers, and of belonging to their organizations. Any organisation that cares for both aspects is more likely to reap the benefits of AI without compromising the human ones that lie at the heart of sustainable performance. The challenge, then, isn't only to introduce intelligent technologies to organizations, it's to create organizations that remain different from the human.

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