Exploring Employee Attitudes and Behaviors Related to AI Technology and the Future of Work

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This qualitative research study explores employee attitudes and coping behaviors toward AI artificial intelligence implementation using Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Coping Theory as a framework. Thirteen healthcare technology professionals participated in semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis revealed five key themes: mixed attitudes toward AI, support for continuous learning, organizational communication gaps, and privacy and security concerns. Participants expressed both optimism and anxiety, using problem-focused strategies like self-direct learning and emotion-focused coping such as avoidance. The research demonstrates organizational challenges in communication, training, and infrastructure. This research provides practical recommendations for ethical AI adoption, including transparency, secure tools, and continuous learning opportunities.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, coping theory, employee attitudes, organizational change, qualitative research, AI technology adoption

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of AI implementation and augmentation is highly relevant and is becoming disruptive in many industries. This research focuses on the problem of understanding how employees perceive and adapt to AI implementation and augmentation, focusing on their coping behaviors, perceptions of job security, and organizational support. As AI is being implemented within the workplace, some employees have self-efficacy to better adapt to the AI technologies, while other employees experience different attitudes and behaviors toward AI implementation and augmentation and future roles within the workplace. There is an uncertainty on how employee attitudes toward AI implementation will reflect their motivation and desire to adapt to AI augmentation. Factors such as perceived job security, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy for retraining will influence how employees adapt to AI implementation and augmentation. AI technology has become disruptive across many industries, with many impacts with employees' future of work. Employees respond differently to AI adoption, ranging from proactive adaptation to avoidance with fear of job displacement. This research explores employee attitudes, behaviors, and organizational support, using Lazarus and Folkman (1984) Coping Theory as a theoretical foundation. By understanding the motivations with employee adaptation or avoidance of AI technology, organizations can better support workforce transitions and have higher probability of successful AI implementation. This research is different from existing research on AI technology adoption, as this research emphasizes AI's unique attributes. Lent (2018) argues that research has found how employees within the workplace can overcome the stresses of technology automation and fear of losing their jobs. Organizations need to better understand

employee attitudes and behaviors to successfully implement AI to improve employee adaptability for the use of the AI technology. Graetz et al. (2018) argue that technology augmentation combined with human intelligence enhances the development of superior systems, promoting the disruption of employee work tasks. There are employee attitudes that lead their behaviors of adaptation or avoidance towards AI implementation and augmentation within the workplace. These employee behaviors lead to potential job roles and future employment.

Research Question

Organizations with a better conceptual understanding of employee attitudes and behaviors will have a higher probability of adopting their AI platform by creating training modules to empower the employees who have self-efficacy to take charge in their future career within their organization and industry. This research addresses gaps in knowledge about the social and factors that drive adaptability or avoidance of AI implementation and within the workplace.

RQ: *What are employees' attitudes and perceptions of the opportunities and threats caused by AI implementation and augmentation in the workplace?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

AI and Workforce Transformation

There is a need for this research and potential contributions to the field focus on understanding how employee attitudes with AI implementation and augmentation shape their behaviors during the adoption of AI within the workplace. This research identifies gaps with Coping Theory and practical implementation in existing literature related to employee perceptions, factors that influence employee adaptation or avoidance, and the impact on employee attitudes for a successful AI adoption. Telang et al. (2019) emphasizes the challenges for employees that avoid AI training and their perceived job security. Existing literature provides benefits of AI implementation, including improved productivity and cost-efficiency (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2019). There is limited research on the social and psychological effects of AI adoption on employees within the workplace. This research identifies Lazarus and Folkman (1984) Coping Theory and focuses on how people have different levels of social support and self-efficacy to manage their stress. The literature focuses on the importance of employee engagement, retraining, and organizational support with reducing negative employee attitudes and supporting adaptability of AI technology. The literature has gaps with understanding how coping strategies, such as problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies, influence employee responses to AI and how perceived job security and self-efficacy shape these behaviors.

Organizational Support and Employee Adaptation

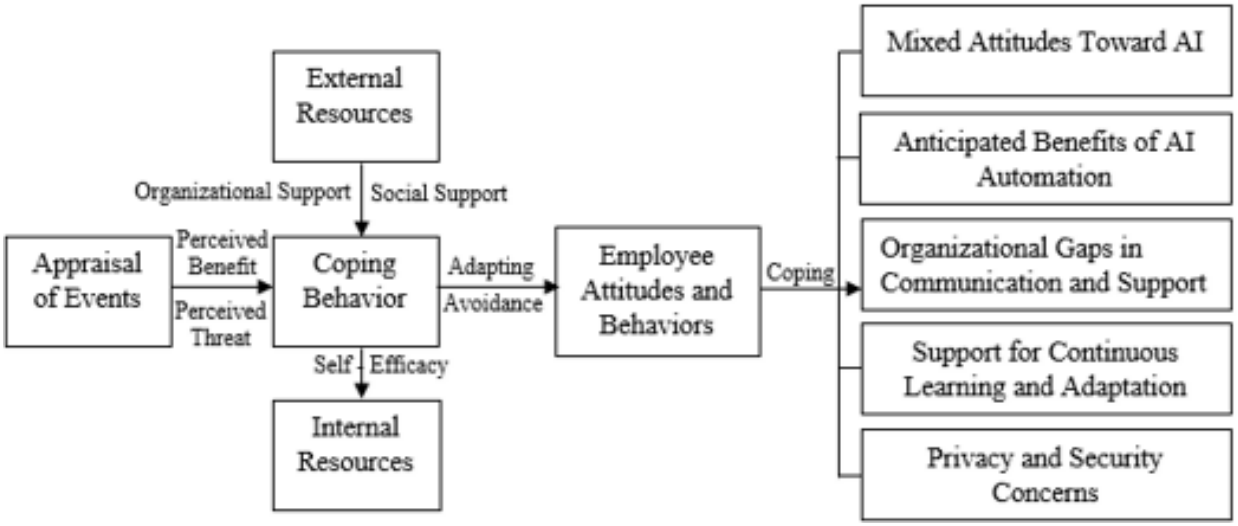
There is extensive research regarding the monetary benefits of organizations implementing AI within the workplace (Vicsek, 2020), but there is not as much research regarding how AI implementation shapes employee attitudes and behaviors. AI implementation and augmentation is highly relevant in today's workforce and understanding the employee perceptions with AI will give organizations a higher probability of successful AI implementation adoption (Khreiche, 2020). Organizations need to understand the driving force for employee avoidance and adaptability of AI implementation and augmentation. Acemoglu and Restrepo (2019) argue with the increase in technology implementation and productivity gains, how this proportionally shifts the need for new skills with retraining by employees within the workplace to keep up with demand.

THEORETICAL MODEL

The theoretical model in this research is grounded in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Coping Theory, which explains how individuals respond to stress through two primary strategies: problem-focused coping

(actively focusing on the source of stress) and emotion-focused coping (managing emotional reactions). In the context of AI adoption in the workplace, employees first appraise AI as either a threat or opportunity and then evaluate whether they have internal resources (e.g., self-efficacy, skills) and external resources (e.g., organizational support, social support) to manage the change. The model (Figure 1) illustrates how employee attitudes and behaviors, ranging from adaptation to avoidance, are shaped by the perceived ability to manage AI-related stress and align with organizational support. Research indicates that when employees perceive high organizational support, they are more likely to demonstrate adaptive coping behaviors, resulting in positive AI integration outcomes such as increased trust and engagement (Brougham & Haar, 2018; Vicsek, 2020). On the other hand, insufficient support often leads to emotion-focused responses like avoidance, which inhibits AI implementation.

FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: EMPLOYEE COPING AND AI IMPLEMENTATION



Coping Theory

The theoretical foundation for this research focuses on the Coping Theory by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The Coping Theory is a process on how people manage the demands of stressful situations (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that the Coping Theory emphasizes how people have different methods and abilities to manage their stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that Coping Theory focuses on how people have different levels of social support and self-efficacy to manage their stress. The initial component of Coping Theory is appraisal of events where employees assess whether a situation is a threat, challenge, or harm to their well-being. Once an employee makes their appraisal, they evaluate the resources available to them for a response to the event. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that their coping theory is cognitive and behavioral where employees manage their internal or external demands that are exceeding their resources. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) internal resources are the self-efficacy of an employee for adapting to AI implementation which improves their knowledge and further strengthens their optimism and resilience for the future of work. External resources consist of the social support from family, friends, and coworkers for their belief in the employee's ability to adapt to AI implementation with training and development. The Coping Theory within this research demonstrates how employees manage their stress by either adapting to AI implementation or avoidance of AI, as employees have perceptions of opportunities and threats during AI adoption. The initial component of Coping Theory is appraisal of events where employees assess whether a situation is a threat, challenge, or harm to their well-being. Once an employee makes their appraisal, they evaluate the resources available to them for a

response to the event. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that model coping is cognitive and behavioral, where people manage their internal or external demands that exceed their resources.

Theoretical Application

The Coping Theory within this research demonstrates how employees manage their stress by either adapting to AI implementation or avoidance of AI, as employees have perceptions of opportunities and threats during AI adoption. The initial component of Coping Theory is appraisal of events where employees assess whether a situation is a threat, challenge, or harm to their well-being. Once an employee makes an appraisal, they evaluate resources available for a response to the event. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that their model coping is cognitive and behavioral where employees manage their internal or external demands that exceeding their resources.

METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE APPROACH

This research is focused on qualitative research methods to explore employee attitudes, behaviors and perceptions of job security with AI adaptation in a changing work environment. Exploring how employees make sense of AI through interviews and lived experience, the epistemology is interpretivist because the knowledge comes from employees' perspectives, not just numbers or external facts. The research was approached with a genuine commitment to understanding employee experiences with AI adoption, and the researcher recognized that professional orientation may have influenced some framing of questions and interpretation of responses. To mitigate potential bias, the researcher engaged in ongoing reflexive journaling during data collection and data analysis, actively questioning assumptions and remaining open to themes that challenged expectations. The researcher's positionality as an "insider-outsider" familiar with organizational structures but not embedded within participants' specific workplace activities enabled participant empathetic engagement.

Data Collection

The research method used was a convenience sampling method for participant recruitment, selecting individuals based on availability rather than randomization. Recruitment occurred through professional networking, public social media platforms, and direct outreach to health insurance payer, with snowball sampling encouraging referrals from employees and managers. The goal was to recruit thirteen in-depth interview (IDI) participants, and the sample was expanded to enhance insight and meaningful data. The thematic consistency across both sets of interviews supports Hennink and Kaiser's (2022) conclusion that data saturation in qualitative interviews typically occurs between nine and seventeen participants.

The qualitative research method involved ethnographic semi-structured IDIs exploring employee attitudes, behaviors, job security perceptions, and adaptation strategies, including training levels. The research collected demographic data such as age, gender, education, and job role. The research targeted white-collar professionals in Hawaii, including employees and managers of diverse backgrounds, aged 18 to 65+. The in-depth interviews IDI were conducted via Zoom platform, allowing participants to respond freely, capturing insights not typically found in close-ended surveys. The convenience sampling method was chosen for its cost-effectiveness and efficiency.

Interview Questions

In terms of ethnographic semi-structured interview questions, the types of open-ended introductory questions asked to the participants included questions such as their role in the company, the number of years they have worked for the company, and roles/responsibilities performed. With regards to main questions, participants were asked open-ended questions such as "How confident do you feel about the future of AI Implementation and why?", "In what way(s) are you adapting or avoiding AI implementation with the workplace? Why?", "In what ways do you feel confident or not so confident about the future of AI Implementation and why?", and "In what ways do you think you have the capability to adapt to changes in your job caused by AI implementation?". In terms of contingency probes, participants were asked to

describe concrete instances in which employees feel prepared to take on new responsibilities as AI is implemented.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis for this research was conducted by reviewing and analyzing the interview data by searching for patterns, classifications, themes, and categories from the interview transcripts from the in-depth interviews IDI that are relevant to the research questions (Saldafia, 2009). Braun and Clarke (2012) argue that the use of thematic analysis allowed me to make sense of the qualitative data from this research and make sense of collective and shared meanings and experiences based on commonalities and patterns from the employee attitudes and behaviors by adapting or avoiding AI implementation within the workplace (p. 57). For example, interviewing employees and how they view their future job role due to AI implementation and how that motivates them on a typical workday will allow me to gather data to review patterns reflecting employee job satisfaction. After all of the (IDI) in-depth interviews were complete, then with the interview data provided, I will be able to generate preliminary codes based on the interview questions asked from the initial set of transcribed interview responses, literature review, and theoretical frameworks. These codes were edited to form my finalized set of themes.

Qualitative Results

This qualitative research study focused on non-managers' role within a healthcare insurance payer. The criteria for the in-depth interviews were that the non-managers worked within the same healthcare insurance company. There were approximately thirteen non-managers that participated in the in-depth interviews. In this research study the non-manager role types that participated in the in-depth interviews all were direct reports to a manager. The demographics of the participants ranged across a broad range spectrum. The ethnicity of the participants was Asian, Native Hawaiian, and White Caucasian. Approximately 25% male and 75% female participants were in the in-depth interviews. The age range of the participants were from 25 – 64 years of age. The participants' education level ranged from College Education to Post-Graduate Master's college education. The duration that the participants were with their company ranged from 1 – 25 years of service. The duration that the participants reported to their manager ranged from 1 – 10 years. Likewise, the duration that the participants were in their role as non-manager or manager was closely correlated to the amount of time they reported to their manager, ranging from 1 – 10 years. All of the in-depth interview participants had internet connectivity.

All of the in-depth interviews were facilitated over the internet on the Zoom video conferencing platform. The average duration that each in-depth interview took was approximately 30 - 45 minutes each. There were 3 in-depth interview questions that were asked to each participant, and I typed all of the participant responses during the interviews. Each participant was eager and willing to engage in the in-depth interview and I learned so much more about how strongly the participants felt about AI Artificial Intelligence automation with the workplace. The researcher would like to introduce the participants with pseudonym names that participated in the in-depth interviews.

Participants

Aiko is a program leader with 20 years of experience and shares a cautiously optimistic view of AI. This participant expresses both curiosity and excitement about the potential of AI to streamline work tasks while having significant concerns regarding privacy, security, and the lack of organizational guidance.

Haruto. Haruto is a test manager and has been with the company for approximately 14 years. Haruto was selected because has worked for managers in other countries and on the mainland. Haruto brings interesting perspectives regarding information technologies.

Iolani is a Consumer Web Support Analyst and has been with the company for approximately 1.5 years. This participant was selected because she recognizes the practical support AI can provide, particularly for administrative efficiency and customer service.

Kai is a program analyst and has been with the company for approximately 15 years. Participant was selected because he provides a practical and future-oriented perspective on AI, drawing from over a decade of technical experience in coordination, testing environments, and development.

Keanu. Keanu is a senior software engineer and has been with the company for approximately 23 years. Keanu was selected because he has worked many positions within both the business side and information technology side of the company.

Keli'i. Kelii is a senior software engineer who has been with the company for approximately 20 years. Kelii was selected because he leads many technology meetings and has daily interactions with his colleagues and management.

Koa. Koa is a call center analyst and has been with the company for approximately 3 years. Koa was selected because he has moved to different companies every 2 years and has interesting perspectives to share regarding different technologies and communication styles with managers.

Konala. Konala is a vendor manager and has been with the company for approximately 6 years. Konala was selected because he interacts with the management and legal department of the organization. Konala brings the perspective of technology from a legal perspective.

Mohit. Mohit is an associate software engineer and is relatively new to the company for approximately 2 years. Mohit was selected because he is from another country and has a diverse perspective to provide regarding information technologies.

Samesh. Samesh is a lead senior software engineer and has been with the company for approximately 5 years. Samesh was selected because he is highly engaged with communication and decision-making for technology solutions for the business and overall company.

Tejas. Tejas is a senior test analyst who has been with the company for approximately 11 years. Tejas was selected because he is highly technical and is more of a heads down technical person with minimal interaction with his colleagues. He brings another perspective.

Viraj. Viraj is a software developer and has been with the company for approximately 6 years. Viraj was selected because of his diverse background and to find out how he embraces or avoids AI technologies.

Young-Soo. Young-Soo is a business intelligence data analyst and has been with the company for approximately 8 years. Young-Soo was selected because he is a key stakeholder within the organization's business side and interacts with executive management frequently.

Qualitative Data Analysis Approach

After all of the in-depth interviews were complete and transcribed, then with the interview data provided, the researcher conducted qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) in order to answer my research question: What are employees' attitudes and perceptions of the opportunities and threats caused by AI implementation and augmentation in the workplace? The researcher was able to generate preliminary codes based on the interview questions asked from the initial set of transcribed interview responses, literature review, and theoretical frameworks. Each participant's responses were summarized and consolidated into individual Microsoft Word documents by each interview question. Then, all participant responses were assigned preliminary code categories by each question, and the final code themes were formalized. The thematic analysis followed Braun & Clarke's (2012) approach and generated the following five core themes (Figure 1) across all thirteen participants: These codes were edited to form my finalized set of themes are:

1) Mixed Attitudes Toward AI
2) Anticipated Benefits of AI Automation
3) Organizational Gaps in Communication and Support
4) Support for Continuous Learning and Adaptation
5) Privacy and Security Concerns

Mixed Attitudes Toward AI

The participants expressed mixed attitudes toward artificial intelligence, communicating a simultaneous sense of enthusiasm for its transformative potential and caution driven by concerns over

privacy and security. This dual perspective aligns with broader patterns observed among the employees navigating the uncertainties of disruptive technologies. While AI was mostly perceived as a tool capable of enhancing efficiency and streamlining work tasks, with optimisms that were offset by apprehensions related to data protection, ethical issues, and unpredictability of the AI platforms. The coexistence of these opposing perspectives demonstrates the complex cognitive and emotional responses from employees that accompany technological innovation in the workplace which aligns with the Coping Theory by (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Below are responses from participants and all the participants statements are from interviews:

Aiko is curious and excited about AI; sees potential to enhance project management tasks. But, she is Apprehensive about AI despite curiosity; lack of usage at work so far. Quote from Aiko: "Excited and apprehensive."; "I am curious about using it at work." **Iolani** perceives AI improves support consistency, helps during high call volumes. But, her Job loss concerns impersonal AI interactions. Quote from Iolani: "It is good to use AI... It is bad... could take over jobs." **Kai** Views AI as a natural evolution of automation; believes those who don't adapt will be left behind. Also, he perceives no negative views at work, but avoids AI due to privacy. Quote from Kai: "If you can't adapt you will be left behind."; "I welcome my AI masters in the future."

Anticipate Benefits of AI Automation

The participants viewed AI as a means to enhance efficiency and productivity by reducing the challenge of repetitive and administrative redundant tasks. The participants' perceived functional value demonstrated that AI could enable employees to redirect their focus toward strategic and cognitively demanding responsibilities. Specific examples from the participants aligned with Coping Theory by (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), such as AI's capability to identify the critical path in risk planning, demonstrating how participants perceive AI to simplify complex processes and streamline decision-making. These perceptions demonstrate a broader expectation that AI will serve as supportive tool, optimizing routine processes contributing to organizational effectiveness.

Below are responses from participants and all the participants statements are from interviews:

Kelii perceives AI can reduce repetitive tasks, improve scheduling, and assist in risk planning. But, she struggles with not knowing which tools are approved or how best to use them. Quote from Kelii: "AI can save a lot of time with mundane routine tasks."; "AI found the critical path instantly." **Mohit** observes that AI summarizes meetings and emails, supports elderly customers, provides service estimates. But she perceives AI may reduce human interaction and service quality. Quote from Mohit: "Dental plan has a ChatBot... provided cost estimate"; "AI summarizes meeting notes". **Viraj** observes that AI can potentially automate repetitive processes and assist with self-managed tasks. Viraj has not experienced AI benefits in current work tasks; limited application so far. Quote from Viraj: "AI will eventually replace processes to become automated. Self-managed."

Organizational Gaps in Communication and Support

A recurring theme in the participant perceptions was the lack of formal organizational processes to support AI adoption. One participant emphasized the complete absence of internal communication, training programs, or organizational support to guide employees in understanding and responsibly integrating AI into the workplace, who depend on self-directed approaches, including personal research and external course training which aligned with Coping Theory by (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). This gap demonstrates a need for organizations to develop frameworks, including clear guidelines, internal knowledge sharing platforms, and support groups to ensure that AI is adopted ethically, safe, and effectively across the organization.

Below are responses from participants and all the participants statements are from interviews:

Haruto hopes for company-led AI training and support groups, but observes No communication or guidance from management; uncertainty about company expectations. Quote from Haruto: "There is no communication about AI."; "No guidelines on how to use AI." **Keanu** observes Potential for AI training mentioned, though not accessed, but perceives No formal communication about AI changes or support. Quote from Keanu: "Haven't had communication."; "Heard of training, but have not been in the training." **Samesh** Mentions AI training courses assigned by the company, but mentions minimal communication from the organization about AI's future impact. Quote from Samesh: "The company AI training courses assigned."; "There is some discussion."

Support for Continuous Learning and Adaptation

The participants demonstrated a proactive approach to learning, engaging in continuing education and self-initiated effort to stay current with AI technology, even without direct application in the employee's current work environment. This self-motivated learning within a broader tension between aspiration and the desire to upskill is challenged by the realities of limited time, competing responsibilities, and the overwhelming exposure to AI technology aligned with Coping Theory by (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). One of the participants expressed confidence in their ability to adapt to AI, but they also emphasized the practical challenges of navigating the evolving technological landscape without structured support. This emphasizes the need for organizations to allocate dedicated time, resources, and guidance to support meaningful and sustainable AI adoption with their employees.

Below are responses from participants and all the participants statements are from interviews:

Young-Soo is excited to learn and use AI; sees personal value in continuing education. Aiko communicates that there are too many AI tools; time constraints for learning; no internal point of contact. Quote from Young-Soo: "I'm pretty confident to learn what I need to learn."; "Nobody I can ask about AI within the company." **Konala** is self-taught, confident in learning AI, but there is a lack of training and must overcome barriers. Quote from Konala: "Very confident."; "Haven't had formal training, only self-taught." **Koa** feels confident in adapting to AI due to familiarity with technology; welcomes learning. Koa notes age as a potential barrier to adaptation; limited examples of structured learning support. Quote from Kai: "Pretty confident... has iPhone and experienced it."; "Age" as a barrier.

Privacy and Security Concerns

The participants recognized AI's potential to enhance project management efficiency, particularly in risk planning, scheduling, and reporting areas. The participants also expressed concerns about data security and confidentiality. A challenge to AI adoption was the reluctance to share sensitive company information with AI platforms, especially without clear corporate policies. This challenge presents broader employee anxieties around the ethical and secure deployment of AI within the workplace which aligned with Coping Theory by (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The participants would like to see controlled and customizable AI use, including options such as disabling data-sharing features. These findings represent the importance of organizational safeguards and transparent governance processes to support trust and responsible AI integration within the workplace.

Below are responses from participants and all the participants statements are from interviews:

Tejas is learning about AI settings to protect content (e.g., turning off training data usage). Aiko has concern about sharing confidential information; unclear security boundaries with AI use. Quote from Tejas: "Don't want to share confidential company information with AI."; "Setting in ChatGPT where you could tell it not to use my content." **Iolani** did not mention privacy and security as an opportunity. Iolani perceives AI as impersonal with ChatBot interactions imply potential privacy/trust concerns. Quote from Iolani: "Contact Active and Fit and have to constantly repeat yourself and is very impersonal." **Kai** is cautious about AI use in personal life; values privacy. Kai avoids AI personally due to privacy concerns; concerned

about public AI use with sensitive data. Quote from Kai: “With work, no issues with AI, but it is public.”; “Avoids AI.”

RESULTS / FINDINGS

The findings represent the key themes and patterns that were revealed from the thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, without interpretation. The findings consider participant responses regarding their attitudes and behaviors toward AI implementation in the workplace. The following five themes were identified:

Mixed Attitudes Toward AI

The participants in this research demonstrated hesitation regarding the implementation of AI technologies in the workplace. The participants expressed optimism and curiosity about AI’s potential to improve workplace efficiencies but was reduced by concerns over job displacement and employee adaptability. These mixed attitudes emphasize the emotional tension experienced by employees as they assess the implications of AI adoption. Aiko expressed being “excited and apprehensive” about the use of AI, demonstrating an enthusiasm adapting to AI with caution. Iolani observed, “it is good to use AI… It is bad… could take over jobs,” expressing both appreciation and fear. Kai claimed, “If you can’t adapt, you will be left behind,: indicating support for change while acknowledging the challenges.

Anticipated Benefits of AI Automation

After all the interviews, AI was perceived as a tool to enhance employee productivity by streamlining routine tasks. The participants recognized AI’s value in supporting work processes, freeing time for more strategic and creative activities. Mohit observed that “AI can save a lot of time with mundane routine tasks. Koa shared that tools like Microsoft Teams could “summarize meeting notes”, increasing employee efficiency. Hurato expressed, “AI will eventually replace processes to become automated,” communicating AI to support self-managed workflows.

Organizational Gaps in Communication and Support

All participants identified significant deficiencies in their organizations’ efforts to communicate about AI tools and provide structured training. This lack of organizational support created uncertainty about the appropriate use of AI and increased reliance on self-directed learning. Konala commented, “There is no communication at all about AI.” Young-Soo noted having “heard of training, but not attended the training,” indicating limited access. Tejas confirmed, ‘There is some discussion, “but emphasized formal guidance was lacking.

Support for Continuous Learning and Adaptation

Even without organizational training, participants demonstrated motivation to engage in self-learning as a coping strategy. This commitment to professional development was perceived as essential to keeping up with the pace of evolving AI technologies. Keanu stated, “I’m pretty confident to learn what I need to learn,” having self-efficacy. Samesh commented, “Haven’t had formal training, only self-taught,” indicating resilience with change.

Privacy and Security Concerns

There was consistency with participants regarding the potential risk related to sharing sensitive information through AI platforms. These concerns often led to avoidance behaviors and lack of trust in AI tools, especially in the absence of organizational policies ensuring data protection. Viraj commented, “Don’t want to share confidential company information with AI.” Iolani stated, “Avoid AI. Value privacy,” demonstrating hesitation toward AI adoption without sufficient safeguards established.

DISCUSSION

This research explains research question regarding employee attitudes and behaviors toward AI adoption regarding Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Coping Theory, which distinguishes between two core strategies: **problem-focused coping**, which identifies the source of stress directly, and **emotion-focused coping**, which manages the emotional responses to stressors. The thematic findings of this research demonstrate how employees use both strategies in response to the uncertainties and organizational realities with AI integration within the workplace.

Problem-Focused Coping and its Limitations

The participants demonstrated strong initiative in **problem-focused coping** strategies, including self-directed learning, participation in training, and experimentation with AI tools. These actions demonstrate a proactive perspective with AI adaptation and willingness to build AI technology competencies. The absence of structured organizational support, such as guidance, approved AI tools, or formal training, significantly limited the effectiveness of these efforts. Without organizational alignment, employees were forced to guide AI adoption in isolation, leading to frustration and restricted practical application. This lack of organizational support demonstrates a coping imbalance. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), successful coping requires personal motivation and environmental resources. The findings emphasize the need for organizational intervention to support employees' problem-focused efforts.

Emotion-Focused Coping Its Uncertainty

The employees demonstrated **emotion-focused coping**, particularly related to concerns about job security, ethical risks, and data privacy. Participants communicated anxiety, and in some cases, avoidance of AI tools due to lack of trust in the AI implementation. These emotional responses demonstrate the emotional significance placed on employees as they attempt to explore rapid AI technological change without sufficient organizational support.

Continuous Learning as a Coping Strategy

A recurring theme was the emphasis on **continuous learning** as a coping mechanism. Participants viewed upskilling as essential to remaining relevant in an AI-integrated future. This coping strategy was overshadowed by competing work priorities, limited access to AI training, and the overwhelming amount of AI tools. The absence of structured learning often led to self-motivated efforts unsustainable. The finding demonstrates the organizational importance to formalize development programs, such as mentoring, dedicated training time, and prioritized learning resources to enable sustainable upskilling. When supported, continuous learning can serve as a resilient and adaptive form of problem-focused coping.

Role of Organizational Structure in Coping

The findings indicate that employees' ability to cope effectively with AI implementation depends on an employee's mindset and organizational-level coping. Participants communicated a need for secure AI tools, transparent communication, and governance structures that provide data ethics and confidentiality. In the absence of these structures, emotional stress is increased and trust in AI is decreased.

Reframing AI Implementation as Change Management

This research finds that AI integration must be reframed from a technical upgrade to a change management process in the organization. For AI to succeed, organizations must consider both the emotional and practical factors of employee adaptation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that effective coping occurs when internal and external resources align. Organizations must adopt a comprehensive approach that supports emotional well-being, builds trust, and prepares employees with the tools needed to engage meaningfully and ethically with AI technologies.

CONCLUSION

This research examined employee perceptions and coping behaviors related to AI implementation in the workplace, grounded in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Coping Theory. The findings identify a complex emotional environment where employees embrace AI's potential and communicated concerned over its risks. AI is widely recognized as a tool for enhancing employee efficiency, recurring anxieties regarding job displacement, data privacy, and a lack of organizational support challenged employees' confidence and engagement. Participants demonstrated problem-focused coping, such as self-directed learning and experimentation with AI tools, and emotion-focused coping, including avoidance and uncertainty. For AI adoption to succeed, it must be reframed as a strategic change management process, and not just an AI technical upgrade. Organizations must recognize that successful AI integration depends on aligning technological advancement with human adaptability, emotional safety, and ethical infrastructure. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

Develop AI Policies: Establish comprehensive guidelines that define the scope, purpose, and ethical boundaries of AI use, especially regarding data security and employee privacy. Policies reduce uncertainty and support responsible engagement. *Provide Structured Training and Support:* Provide frequent, accessible training through workshops, knowledge-sharing, and mentoring programs. These initiative support employees to improve competence and confidence, strengthening problem-focused coping. *Implement Secure AI Infrastructure:* Adopt AI tools with security protocols. Ensuring data protection improves employee trust and decreased anxiety related to AI technology. *Provide Transparent Communication:* Leadership should proactively communicate the organization's AI vision, expected changes, and job role implications. Transparency supports emption-focused coping by provides support to a shared understanding of the AI strategy. *Promote Ethical and Responsible AI Use:* Support an organizational culture that values fairness, accountability, and human-centered implementation. Ethical methods confirm that AI adoption aligns with organizational values and employee well-being.

This research indicates that AI adoption is not specifically a technical effort but a transformational process that requires sustained investment in human capabilities, emotional resilience, and ethical governance. As organizations guide the future of work, supporting employees to cope with AI technological disruption will be important to supporting a resilient and future ready workforce. Organizations can ensure AI adoption leads to meaningful and sustainable outcomes by connecting the gap between employee effort and organizational preparation.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research provides valuable insights into employee perceptions of AI adaptation within the workplace, several limitations must be acknowledged, and these inform directions of future research. The sample size was limited to thirteen participants; all were white-collar professionals within the healthcare technology industry, limiting the generalizability of the findings. This small sample size restricts the transferability of findings to broader populations, particularly employees whose work contexts and access to technology differ. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that within the Coping Theory, employee responses to workplace stress, such as AI adoption, are shared by both personal and environmental factors. Employees in frontline roles may demonstrate distinct coping strategies in response to technological change. Future research should include participants from other industries to explore how AI technology integration is experienced under different occupational conditions.

This research did not include perspectives from managers and organizational leaders. Given that coping is not only an employee process, but also influenced by external resources, including leadership communication, this omission limits the analysis. Leadership plays a critical role in shaping employees' perceptions of stress and their ability to engage in problem-focused coping. Future studies should investigate how managerial communication influences trust, learning, and adaptation in AI integrated environments. The design of this research collected participant perspectives at a single point in time. As coping theory hypothesizes, stress appraisal and coping behaviors evolve through consistent re-evaluation

(Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). A consistent approach would enable researchers to examine how perceptions of AI change over time, particularly as AI becomes more embedded in organizational processes.

Future research should consider the use of longitudinal designs with a broader sampling to examine how employee perceptions and coping strategies evolve as AI becomes more embedded within the workplace. These studies could explore the long-term psychological effects of AI integration, including impacts on job satisfaction, well-being, trust in technology, and professional identity. Additionally, future research could explore cross-cultural variations in employee experiences with AI adoption, as cultural values and organizational norms may influence how employees perceive and cope with AI technological change. Comparative studies across different countries or cultural contexts could provide deeper insight into how trust in technology and organizational structures shape adaptation. Examining differences between hybrid, remote, and onsite work environments may reveal how physical work environments impact AI adoption and stress coping. This would enhance the contextual and transferability of findings across diverse workplace environments. Researching these areas would provide a deeper understanding of sustainable AI adaptation and support strategies for AI adoption within the workplace. In doing so, researchers and practitioners can better support employees in change through both employee adaptation and organizational adoption.

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APPENDIX

In-depth interview with ethnographic semi-structured interview questions:

Introductory Questions

a) How are you today?
b) What is your role in the company?
c) How long have you been in this role?
d) How long have you been with the company?
e) What types of duties/work responsibilities do you perform?

Main Questions + Contingency Probes

f) How do you feel about the increasing use of AI technology in your workplace?
Contingency Probe: Can you describe a specific instance where AI technology positively impacted your work experience?
Contingency Probe: Can you share an example of when AI technology created challenges or concerns for you?
g) What opportunities do you think AI automation creates for employees in your role or industry?
Contingency Probe: Can you provide an example of how AI has helped you or your team achieve better results?
Contingency Probe: Have you experienced any instances where AI opened new career paths or upskilling opportunities for you?
h) In what ways, if any, has AI automation influenced your daily tasks or responsibilities at work?
Contingency Probe: Can you describe a situation where AI automation streamlined or simplified your tasks?
Contingency Probe: Have there been instances where AI made your work more difficult or complex? How did you manage that?
i) How confident do you feel about adapting to new roles or responsibilities created by AI automation?
Contingency Probe: Can you share an experience where training or organizational support helped you feel more prepared to adapt?
Contingency Probe: What barriers, if any, have you faced when trying to adapt to AI changes in your role?
j) How do you perceive AI automation will impact job security in your industry?
Contingency Probe: Can you recall a time when AI technology replaced or altered a role within your team or department? How did it affect employees?
Contingency Probe: Have you noticed any efforts by your organization to address employee concerns about AI job security?
k) How does your manager or organization communicate about the impact of AI technology and automation on the future of work?
Contingency Probe: Can you describe a time when you felt their communication about AI changes was clear and effective? What made it effective?
Contingency Probe: Can you share an instance when you felt the communication about AI changes was unclear or insufficient? How did it affect you?

Concluding Questions

l) Do you have anything else you'd like to add?