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THRIVING OR SURVIVING? AI-INDUCED STRESS AND EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IN THE DIGITAL WORKPLACE — A PILOT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The swift adoption of Artificial Intelligence in modern work environments has brought about substantial shifts in organisational functioning, employee roles, and their mental well-being. The present study aims to examine the relationship between workplace AI integration, organisational readiness, perceived AI-related stress and employee well-being among IT professionals working in Info Park, Kochi, Kerala. Primary data were collected from 111 respondents using structured questionnaires operationalising four principal constructs – Attitude Towards AI, Perceived AI-Related stress, Workplace AI Readiness, and employee well-being – measured on a five-point Likert scale using a quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory design. Data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics, including descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation, multiple regression and mediation and moderation analyses. The results show that respondents have a general positive attitude towards AI, with high perceived usefulness and optimism about career development. Moderate levels of latent uncertainty were also found, especially in terms of job security and speed of technological change, consistent with the conceptualisation of technostress by Tarafdar et al. (2007). Organisational AI readiness was rated as moderate with distinct deficits in participatory governance, supervisory support and institutional mental health infrastructure. Notwithstanding these gaps, employees reported generally positive well-being outcomes, underpinned by personal resilience and mastery-oriented engagement with AI. All measurement scales showed excellent internal consistency ($\alpha > 0.94$). The study contributes empirical evidence to the emerging discourse on AI-induced occupational stress and wellbeing, with implications for organisational policy, HR practice, and the design of psychologically informed AI adoption strategies in India's IT sector

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, Organisational Support, AI-induced stress, Employee Well-Being,

INTRODUCTION

The spread of artificial intelligence across organisational terrains is one of the most significant technological transformations of the modern age. AI is transforming the organisation of work, the conception of professional roles and the psychological experience of employees who are living these changes - from the automation of routine cognitive tasks to the support of complex decision-making processes (Ghaleche, 2023; Araz Zifar, 2023). This change is happening at a particularly fast pace in the Indian information technology sector – a globally significant knowledge economy that employs millions of professionals – as organisations make substantial investments in AI-enabled tools and platforms to remain competitive (NASSCOM, 2023).

While research into the productivity and efficiency benefits resulting from the introduction of AI is well documented, little attention has been given by academia to examining the ramifications for the individual human worker and their organisations. Research indicates a wide gamut of emotional responses which may arise from integrating these technologies with employees' work lives, including both positive feelings such as enthusiasm and concern for personal career progression, to more negative ones involving fears of job loss, cognitive overload, and perceptions of technological unfairness (Jiaqi Xu, 2024; Moza Tahnoon Al Nahyan, 2023). More recently, interest in a psychological phenomenon known as “technostress”, and specific variations relating to the presence of AI technologies (such as “automation anxiety” and “skill obsolescence concerns”) has also grown significantly, having emerged as an important mediator between AI adoption and outcomes related to employee wellbeing (Tarafdar et al., 2007)

The next set of variables relates to organisational factors which serve as critical moderators of the above-mentioned psychological processes (Mohammed Sani Abdullahi, 2023; Sanam Soomro, 2024), including supervisory support, open communications, adequate training, and participatory governance. Despite all these theoretical advancements, there remains an alarming paucity of empirical studies exploring the interplay of employees' well-being, AI-related distress, and AI readiness within the Indian IT landscape (Ajayi F.A., 2024). Notably, many existing studies focus exclusively on Western organisations whose settings may differ significantly from those found in emergent economies (e.g., Funmilayo Aribidesi Ajayi, 2024). This is especially true for the case of Kerala's IT sector, with its youthful, highly educated, largely-MNC employed work force poised at the crossroads of regional organisation structures and global AI usage patterns (Sanjai Dutt, 2019).

To bridge this research gap, the current study explores the nexus of workplace AI integration, organizational AI preparedness, perceived AI-related discomfort, and employee well-being through an empirical analysis involving 111 IT employees at Info Park, Kochi. By employing a rigorous quantitative methodology, this study offers empirically grounded insights with wide-ranging

implications for organisational practice and scholarly understandings of AI-induced workplace dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a major shift in organisational dynamics, how employees view their roles and responsibilities within organisations, and how employees perceive themselves as part of an organisation due to the rapid implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace. The growing use of AI technology to assist employees in many aspects of their jobs will continue to have an impact on employees' commitment and loyalty to organisations, as well as add new issues for managers to consider regarding employee engagement, job security, and wellness. The main reasons for employees being distressed due to the complexities surrounding the adoption of AI are job displacement, lack of training, and a lack of transparency in the use of AI systems. This literature review summarises multiple pieces of research related to the adoption of AI and its effects on employee well-being, including employee reactions, organization-level affects, burnout, and employee views on the effectiveness of using AI.

The work-related perception of employees is greatly impacted by the efficiency of AI technologies in their workplace. AI has the potential to increase productivity, make more informed decisions, and improve work processes (Ghaleche 2023). For AI to be successfully implemented, however, employees need to have confidence in these systems. Employees generally like AI because of its accuracy, consistency, and ability to take away repetitive work so that they can focus more on strategic and creative tasks (Araz & Zirar 2023). While AI provides significant savings and operational improvements, it also requires that you continuously train and adjust your employees to ensure they know how to work along with an AI system (Ghaleche 2023). This continual upskilling can create pressure on employees who feel overwhelmed by rapid advancements in technology.

There may be differences in response among employees due to various factors related to the potential benefits of employing artificial intelligence technologies for tasks. Acceptance of AI is mostly affected by aspects such as resistance, flexibility, fairness issues, and trust in AI systems (Ghaleche, 2023). A lot of fear relating to job displacements, an absence of transparency, and perceptions of risks to professional advancements have been some of the reasons behind initial resistance to integrating AI technologies at workplace (Araz Zirar, 2023).

Despite these fears, acceptability increases where individuals can see the impact of utilising AI on enhancing job performance (Ghaleche, 2023), which implies that there will be a gradual adaptation process to AI technology utilisation within workplaces. Addressing these concerns raised by employees regarding AI's fairness, transparency, and potential biases will help create a more

conducive work environment when introducing AI adoption initiatives.

The entrance of AI will significantly affect organisational structure, roles, and skills that are required in an organisation. It has been noticed that adoption of AI leads to replacement of some level of low/moderate level knowledge-based jobs that require humans to adapt and retain (Araz Zirar, 2023). In such scenarios, there might be misalignment between current capabilities of employees with the evolving expectations from them, resulting in a feeling of disengagement and insecurity. Moreover, despite improvement of overall operations by employing AI, there could be a fall in emotional engagement among employees due to fear of their replacement. Especially in service-oriented professions where human touch is highly valued, people may feel disconnected due to increased usage of AI (Jiaqi Xu, 2024)

For instance, Jiaqi Xu (2024) found that when an AI policy focuses on replacing intelligence, frontline staff members tend to experience reduced perspectives for career progression, while if the strategy focuses on intelligence cooperation with priority given to human-to-human interaction alongside AI, then employees' motivations and career satisfaction will benefit more positive impact of AI implementation (Jiaqi Xu, 2024). To ensure that AI enhances the existing human contributions instead of replacing them, it becomes imperative that businesses carefully evaluate how these technologies are implemented.

In terms of employee well-being, businesses should focus on how AI technology is affecting workers' well-being. It is necessary to consider both psychological and emotional aspects together with the technical side of AI integration. To mitigate the adverse effects of AI adoption, the organisation must create a supportive work environment focused on worker well-being, thus ensuring a safer workplace. Businesses should create a friendly cultural environment where workers appreciate the presence of AI technologies (Ghaleche, 2023). Therefore, organisations need to emphasise fairness, transparency, and ethical usage of AI technologies. Burnout in workplaces with high job demands, rapid technological advancements, and inadequate work-life balances—such as in the field of IT—is now recognized as a significant issue (Funmilayo Aribidesi Ajayi, 2024).

The integration of AI can mitigate certain aspects of this burnout by automating repetitive tasks and minimizing employee workload while allowing them to focus on higher-order tasks that provide greater satisfaction (Funmilayo Aribidesi Ajayi, 2024). However, there are several disadvantages for transitioning towards an AI-driven workplace, including additional stress arising from upskilling requirements associated with adapting to these novel technologies.

In order to address these issues, well-being programs including stress management, flexible work

schedules, and mental health assistance have become more popular (Funmilayo Aribidesi Ajayi, 2024). The incorporation of AI tools for individualized well-being interventions is where burnout prevention in the context of AI is headed. Even when job roles change, organizations can use data-driven techniques to provide employees with customized support that helps them manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance (Funmilayo Aribidesi Ajayi, 2024).

Understanding how AI impacts the workforce has focused on the relationship between job security, performance, and employee well-being. Stress, disengagement, and decreased job satisfaction can result from the worry of losing one's job as a result of AI adoption (Moza Tahnoon Al Nahyan, 2023). However, these effects are significantly mitigated by employees' beliefs of job stability. Employee well-being and productivity increase when they feel comfortable in their positions and receive sufficient guidance and assistance (Moza Tahnoon Al Nahyan, 2023).

Organizations that have Perceived Organizational Support exhibit increased productivity and employee satisfaction because Perceived Organizational Support results in increased engagement and organizational commitment among the employees (Mohammed Sani Abdullahi, 2023). In relation to the adoption of AI technology, organizations that emphasize open communication, sufficient training, and managerial support can easily cultivate a good working environment for the use of the technology. Employees who are well supported in their organization are likely to view AI as an important tool that makes their work easier instead of viewing it as a threat to their job security (Stephanie Kelley, 2022). Therefore, Perceived

Organizational Support is very essential when it comes to the attitude formation of AI. Sanam Soomro (22 October 2024). The research highlights the importance of organisational dedication and managerial ability in overcoming the fears of employees in connection to AI. The proposed relationships support the idea that not only is technological preparedness important for the implementation of AI, but it is equally important to create a supportive environment.

To conclude, the use of artificial intelligence in the workplace creates numerous possibilities as well as poses many challenges related to employee well-being. On one hand, this technology enhances the efficiency of work processes, allowing people to avoid burnout; on the other hand, there is an increased risk of job displacement and inequality. Thus, we can solve the issue if we prioritise the well-being of our employees by providing them with the necessary training, offering supportive leadership styles, and making open communication regarding potential advantages/disadvantages of implementing AI at work. In turn, companies ensure better employee satisfaction and health while improving overall performance. Moreover, more studies need to be conducted to examine the effect of artificial intelligence on employee well-being.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory design to examine how workplace AI readiness, AI adoption, and AI-related distress affect employee well-being in Kerala's IT sector. A stratified random sampling approach was used, with random selection within each stratum; a pilot study at Info Park informed survey refinement. Data were collected via a structured survey and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics, including descriptive statistics, reliability (Cronbach's alpha), factor analysis, correlation, multiple regression for direct effects, and mediation/moderation analyses to test indirect and conditional relationships.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The current chapter presents an analytical exposition of primary data collected from 111 information technology (IT) professionals working in Info Park, Kochi, Kerala. The main research aim in this study is to assess the interrelationships among the incorporation of AI in the workplace, organisational AI readiness, AI-related distress perception and employee well-being. The data collection process was conducted using structured questionnaires that included questions on a five-point Likert scale that measure the four main constructs of the study: attitude towards AI, perceived AI-related distress, AI readiness in the workplace and employee well-being. This analysis of the data is presented under the following sections: (i) Demographic characteristics of the respondents, (ii) AI adoption patterns, (iii) Descriptive statistics of the constructs, (iv) Item analysis of each construct, and (v) Internal consistency.

The primacy of descriptive statistical analysis as a foundational pre-inferential procedure is well-established in organisational behaviour and human resource management scholarship. As Hair et al. (2019) noted, "descriptive analysis provides essential contextual grounding before inferential testing, allowing researchers to systematically characterize their samples and delineate distributional characteristics of responses at baseline". Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), meanwhile, emphasized that "the evolution of internal consistency via calculation of Cronbach's alpha represents an indispensable prerequisite for ascertaining the psychometric validity of Likert-scaled measurement instruments."

1. Demographic profile of respondents

In terms of demographics of the 111 participants in the survey, one finds that the majority of the sample consisted of men (62.2%), which is consistent with NASSCOM's (2023) research report that estimates women account for 35-36% of India's total tech workforce. In addition, the sample consisted of a young demographic wherein 58.6% of the respondents belonged to the 25-34 years age group while 21.6% were less than 25 years old. The aforementioned age distribution of the sample truly represents the mid-career demographic characteristic that prevails within Kerala's IT services industry

and especially pertains to the present study, as the younger employees possess higher levels of digital literacy and adaptability towards changes driven by technology within organizations (World Economic Forum, 2023). All respondents of the sample were highly educated; bachelor's degree holders and those with a master's degree made up 47.7% of the respondents each, a demographic characteristic that is true for the advanced skill requirements of present-day job roles.

As far as the organisational attributes of the participants are concerned, 66.7% of them worked in multinational companies (MNCs), whereas 98.2% belonged to Info Park, Kochi. Thus, there is an immense geographic and industrial specificity in this database. The job stability ratio was quite high since 97.3% of the participants had signed permanent contracts and 41.4% of them earned ₹25,001–₹50,000 monthly, which is characteristic of a mid-level salary package paid in mid-size IT firms at Info Park. The most popular working format was hybrid work (47.7%), followed by the on-site work (42.3%) and remote work (9.9%). The distribution of marital status was quite balanced with 51.4% married participants and 48.6% unmarried participants.

2. AI usage among IT professionals

A proper analysis of the degree to which the sample population is exposed to the technology is crucial for any interpretation of attitudes, psychological impact, and well-being of the participants. According to the results, an exceedingly high percentage of respondents (about 82%) used AI technology in a professional context. In more specific terms, 27.9% (N=31) reported regular use of AI as an essential part of their work, and 54.1% (N=60) applied AI tools occasionally for particular tasks. Only 14.4% (N=16) reported that they do not currently use AI technology at all, and 3.6% (N=4) reported being unaware of AI technology.

These results fit in well with existing data on AI integration within global knowledge-intensive work contexts. According to McKinsey & Company's 2023 research, roughly 75% of knowledge workers worldwide engage with AI-enabled tools regularly. The extent to which this study found significantly higher rates of AI interaction among its subjects indicates that our participants were indeed experiencing AI firsthand, an important consideration when evaluating the construct validity of the study's attitudes and distress measurements.

3. Analysis of attitude towards AI

Attitude toward AI constructs how people cognitively and emotionally judge artificial intelligence within work settings, covering views on useful function, job growth effects, and levels of firm backing for using AI tools. Looking at empirical data, evidence exists showing mostly positive feelings about AI among sampled IT workers. The greatest agreement appeared regarding the need for AI skills aiding career growth (65.7%), next came belief that AI simplifies tasks and aids choices (62.1%). In

addition, significant proportions of the respondents agreed that AI increases productivity in the team (57.6%) and that their organizations are aware of AI trends (56.7%). It is particularly important to note that 53.1% of the respondents believed in their organization's ability to help employees adapt to AI changes – this is significant because institutional trust is the first step in effective change management (Armenak & Bedeian, 1999).

Despite such a favourable attitude trend, neutral attitude remained present throughout all the variables, with values between 18.9% and 30.6%, meaning that there is still a considerable

portion of employees who have an uncertain attitude, necessitating communication and training efforts.

4. Analysis of perceived AI-related distress

Perceived AI-related distress represents the stress experienced due to the implementation of AI technology at work, including the issues related to obsolescence of skills, cognitive overloads, role ambiguity, and job insecurity.

The results reveal a complex response pattern where there is high variability in levels of distress across different dimensions. The items related to the issue of acute cognitive load and acute need for learning received relatively weak responses, with only 18.0% of participants feeling a strong sense of the need for rapid acquisition of AI skills and 27.0% considering AI-based learning to be cognitively exhausting. It can be concluded that a considerable number of participants do not experience acute distress associated with AI implementation – findings supported by Bloom et al. (2021), who found that early stages of ai implementation usually cause ambivalence and uncertainty.

A strikingly different trend was observed when it came to the issue of job security worries. While the question about job losses in one's own company due to AI ("I fear AI can cause job loss in my organisation") produced the highest level of agreement within the distress variable (35.1%), the same number (35.1%) chose the middle answer choice on this scale. Such a near-bimodal distribution indicates a state of persistent uncertainty about one's job prospects. These worries align with the popular forecasts made by the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2023) regarding the estimated 300 million full-time jobs displaced due to the development of generative ai in global economy, especially in the sphere of services. As evidence, 29.7% of survey participants worried about AI-driven replacement of certain elements of their job tasks.

The prevalence of responses on the 'neutral' scale for the distress questions (31.5-45.9%) implies that currently, the respondents are in an intermediate psychological state that cannot be regarded either as

one of significant distress or of total equanimity. This is consistent with the definition of technostress developed by Tarafdar et al. (2007), who differentiate between manifest technostress (psychological stress caused by the technological change) and latent technological uncertainty (indeterminate and unsettled concern about the technology). The current distribution of answers is more characteristic of the latter category of respondents, indicating that adaptation to the changes caused by AI takes place.

5. Analysis of Workplace AI Readiness

AI readiness within the workplace has been defined in the present study as the extent to which an organisation has leveraged its human, technological, and structural resources to successfully adopt AI. The findings show that AI readiness in the workplaces of the organizations surveyed is generally medium on almost all measured aspects. The positive response rate ranged from 35.1%, which was recorded for employee participation in AI policy formation, to 51.3%, which was obtained when respondents were encouraged to explore AI applications independently. Most important of all, it should be pointed out that the greatest numbers of neutral responses were recorded in regard to supervisor support (43.2%) and training (40.5%), meaning that a significant number of employees have doubts whether the necessary organizational efforts are enough. In view of the available evidence that supervisor support helps reduce technology-related stress in employees during organizational changes (Luo et al., 2021; Dery et al., 2017), this aspect becomes particularly noteworthy.

However, the lowest positive response rate, recorded in relation to participation of employees in the development of AI policies (35.1%), warrants careful consideration. The change management theories focusing on the process of participatory decision making clearly reveal that the participation of employees in strategic management of the implementation of technology improves their acceptance of the new technology, reduces the level of resistance, and ensures better psychological well-being of the employees (Oreg, 2006; Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017). The limited nature of the participatory approach in the present case reveals the lack of a specific structure within the AI governance framework of the organisations. The above findings can be understood in the context of NASSCOM's AI adoption report (2022).

6. Analysis of employee well-being

Well-being of employees, as defined and measured in the current research, is a combination of psychological, emotional, and professional aspects of employee success, which includes job satisfaction, self-assurance regarding the professional role, emotional strength, and perception of sufficient institutional support measures.

According to the research results, IT professionals working at Info Park, Kochi, maintain positive

levels of well-being in spite of the disruptive effect associated with increasing use of artificial intelligence. The strongest positive results were recorded in terms of emotional strength in response to changes in technology (54.9%), self-assurance in the professional role in light of increased use of AI (52.2%), and job satisfaction (51.3%). Overall, the above-mentioned results demonstrate the resilience of IT professionals in light of technological changes.

The presence of positive motivation and energy after AI skill acquisition was confirmed by 51.3%, while 47.7% of the respondents experienced their own personal growth as a result of being engaged in the AI adaptation process. The results obtained seem to be in accordance with the self-determination theory (SDT) by Ryan & Deci (2000), according to which engagement in mastery learning activities, such as AI skill acquisition, leads to the satisfaction of the basic needs for competence and autonomy, thus enhancing subjective well-being. In turn, Seligman's (2011) Perma Theory of Flourishing is empirically validated by the data obtained.

Despite the above positive responses, several aspects of well-being recorded comparatively lower positive responses. The aspect of availability of organisational mental well-being support (39.6%) and active organisation efforts towards reducing AI stress (38.7%) emerged as the least agreed responses in the construct. Work-life balance also generated relatively lower positive responses (44.1%). Overall, the above results suggest that despite employees having high individual resilience, there is a lack of support infrastructure in institutions concerning psychological well-being. This institutional weakness becomes even more urgent based on Gallup's (2023) finding that employees who feel organisations are not concerned about their mental well-being are more prone to burnout and behavioural disengagement.

Moreover, the relatively high support for psychological safety in AI changes (42.3%) necessitates organisational intervention. The concept of psychological safety established by Edmondson (1999) refers to the group-level perception that engaging in interpersonal risk will not lead to adverse consequences. This construct has been widely recognised as being vital in facilitating adaptability and innovation in technology-based organisational settings. In light of the relatively high levels of psychological safety reported in this study, there is a need for organisations to create psychologically safe work environments through the implementation of AI technologies.

7. Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the scales used in this study was measured through the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) – the most popular measure of reliability used in social sciences research. The results of this analysis show extremely good internal consistency for all three constructs for which the SPSS output was produced. Namely, attitude towards AI ($\alpha = 0.971$), workplace readiness for AI

($\alpha = 0.970$) and perceived stress connected to AI ($\alpha = 0.942$) each have Cronbach's Alpha values significantly higher than the 0.70 recommended threshold in the psychometric literature (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). According to George and Mallery's (2003) classification, Alpha value higher than 0.90 is considered 'excellent', which all three constructs satisfy. It is, nevertheless, important to note, as pointed out by Strainer (2003), that alpha values close to unity could sometimes be an indication of item redundancy in a scale and not merely good reliability. Further psychometric improvement through techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) could help determine the exact dimensions of each construct and those items that significantly influence internal consistency values. In the current research, though, the alpha values have been taken as strong evidence of the reliability of the scales.

This chapter provided an exhaustive descriptive analysis of the primary data gathered from 111 IT professionals employed at the Info Park in Kochi. Demographic analysis revealed the youthfulness, high level of education, male preponderance, job stability, and involvement in multinational companies leading the adoption of AI in India's IT industry. The analysis of AI usage has shown that about 82% of the respondents use AI technologies in their professional activities, hence proving the ecological validity of this research's interest in AI effects on organizational and psychological processes.

The following are the four main insights gained from the construct level analysis which have both theoretical and practical implications. The first is that respondents exhibit a primarily positive attitude towards AI, viewing it as an efficiency tool, a catalyst for career growth, and organizational support for technological transformation. The second insight is that even though AI distress is evident, it has more to do with underlying uncertainty than acute psychological distress; particularly, anxiety about job security and pace of AI transformations. The third finding pertains to the modest level of AI readiness at work, and the identified deficiencies in terms of participatory governance of AI, mental health resources, and supervisor support. The final one is that while employees experience well-being outcomes positively, such as self-confidence, job satisfaction, and emotional flexibility, psychological support and stress management structures in organizations are underdeveloped.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how workplace AI, organizational readiness for AI, AI-induced stress, and employee well-being are interconnected in the Indian IT industry. The study is based on data collected from 111 employees at Info Park in Kochi, Kerala. The study shows that employees are innovative and creative during the process of the AI-led transformation, but they are also frustrated by the barriers of the AI-led transformation that prevent them from achieving well-being. Respondents were largely positive toward AI, suggesting the respondents see AI as a tool to enhance productivity and support

in the decision-making process. The positive attitude toward AI also provides the basis for the respondents' desire for career development. This aligns with Davis's (1989) technology acceptance model and Venkatesh et al.'s (2003) UTAUT model. Although the respondents had a positive attitude toward AI, they also had concerns about the potential negative impact of AI on their employment. The concerns about the negative impact of AI on employment were also aligned with Tarafdar et al.'s (2007) technostress model and the ILO's (2023) forecast of AI's negative impact on Global employment.

Organisational AI readiness while discernible along training, infrastructure, and supervisory dimensions was judged as broadly moderate, with glaring lacunae in participatory governance and employee voice in AI policy. These are serious deficits, given participatory change and supervisory support have been consistently evidenced as key drivers of well-being and acceptance in technology transitions (Oreg, 2006; Rafferty & Jimmieson, 2017). Employee well-being indicators were overwhelmingly positive – demonstrating their adaptability, intrinsic drive and absorption with AI related skills development (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Seligman, 2011); however, institutional provision for mental health, psychological safety and stress reduction were largely absent.

The findings presented have a profound impact on organizations and their approach to Human Resource Strategy. An organization that operates in the area of AI technology must move away from being solely technology focused and make an equal investment in the psychological and organizational structures needed to support employee wellbeing. In order to support employee wellbeing, organizations need to create and institutionalise ongoing/programmatic training programs focused on AI Technology, establish workplaces that provide psychologically safe, inclusive environments, strengthen the ability of supervisors to lead technology transitions, and meaningfully include employees in AI governance and development processes. Additionally, organizations need to provide transparent and empathetic communication to their employees regarding the impact AI will have on their jobs and careers in order to reduce employee anxiety and build employee trust in the organisation.

Through an academic lens, this article provides empirical support to the emerging yet rapidly growing body of literature examining AI-related workplace stress and employee well-being, especially within the largely unexamined context of the IT industry in India. The high psychometric reliability demonstrated by the measurement tools used throughout this research ($\alpha > 0.94$ for each construct) will allow others to use them as a valid basis on which to conduct additional inferential and structural analysis in future projects. Continuing with further investigations into this line of research will still require both longitudinal research designs to investigate AI adaptation over time, as well as examining differences across sectors and cultures to facilitate generalisation. Establishing causal relationships between AI readiness and distress's influence on employee well-being will help researchers in this field create a stronger theoretical base for producing knowledge that organisations can use to take

advantage of the transformative power of artificial intelligence while keeping the dignity, safety and flourishing of the human workforce at the centre of these changes.

Practical Implications: Beyond the organisational-level recommendations already noted, the findings also point to policy and commercial implications. Policymakers and industry bodies could consider guidelines on responsible AI adoption—such as employee consultation before AI rollouts and minimum upskilling standards—while state labour departments may look to incorporate AI-related technostress into existing occupational health frameworks. Commercially, investment in AI-adaptation support (training, wellbeing programmes, phased rollouts) should be viewed as a means of protecting productivity and reducing attrition-related costs rather than as a mere expense. IT parks could further support this through shared training and wellbeing resources, particularly benefiting smaller firms. These dimensions, only briefly touched upon here, merit deeper investigation in the full-scale study.

Limitations: This pilot study is limited in scope and its findings should be interpreted with caution. The sample size ($n=111$) was modest, appropriate for pilot testing but insufficient for broad generalisation, and the subsequent full-scale study will substantially increase the sample. Data were collected from a single location and sector—IT professionals at Info Park, Kochi—which limits generalisability to other IT parks or industries. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions, and the use of self-report measures may introduce common method or social desirability bias. As a pilot study, its primary aim was to validate the research instrument rather than test hypotheses at scale, and the results should therefore be treated as preliminary and indicative rather than conclusive.

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