Responsible AI Adoption in the Workplace: An Interdisciplinary Study of Workplace Communication, Ethical and Legal Responsibility

Dr Apeksha[1], Dr. Abhilasha Sisodia[2], Dr Zeba Mehdi[3]

[1]Associate Professor; Department of Languages (English); Noida Institute of Engineering & Technology (NIET), Greater Noida. Contact No- 8055242042/apeksha@niet.co.in
[2]Associate Professor; School of Law; KCC Institute of Legal and Higher Educations Greater Noida, India; abhilasha21985@gmail.com
[3]Assistant Professor; Department of Languages (English); Noida Institute of Engineering & Technology (NIET), Greater Noida. Contact No- 9718385985/ zeba.mehdi@niet.co.in

Abstract
This study examines employee and early-career perceptions of artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled workplaces through the connected lenses of leadership, professional communication, trust, ethical safeguards, employee voice and well-being. It responds to a growing concern in the AI-at-work literature: technological adoption can increase efficiency w hile simultaneously creating uncertainty about transparency, accountability, employee rights and human agency. The study uses a descriptive survey of 109 respondents. The sample is predominantly young and inexperienced in formal employment: 47 respondents are below 20 and 62 are aged 20–25; 93 report no work experience. Yet AI engagement is high, with 57 respondents using AI frequently and 40 occasionally. Rights awareness is comparatively weak: 72 respondents report low or very low awareness. At the same time, very strong support is recorded for human-centred organizational practices. More than 94% agree or strongly agree that clear leader communication increases trust, that empathetic leaders create better workplaces, and that professional communication and interpersonal skills matter for human–AI collaboration. More than 94% also support legal and ethical safeguards and human-centred leadership, while 86.2% support communication and soft-skills training and 81.7% support giving employee dignity and well-being equal importance to technological efficiency. The paper identifies a striking asymmetry between high AI use and comparatively low awareness of employee rights. It argues that human-centred leadership should be treated not as a soft complement to digital transformation but as a governance mechanism that connects AI literacy, transparency, employee voice, psychological safety and well-being. The paper develops a practical Human-Centred AI Leadership Matrix derived from the survey evidence.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Human-Centered Leadership; Professional Communication; Employee Voice; Psychological Safety; Legal Safeguards

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence is moving from the margins of organizational work into routine processes of communication, recruitment, training, performance management, decision support, customer service and knowledge production. The organizational question is no longer simply whether AI can perform a task. It is how organizations should redesign work when AI becomes an active participant in workflows and decisions. This change creates a management problem as much as a technological one. AI can augment human capability, automate selected activities and restructure managerial control, but each of these possibilities affects how employees experience autonomy, fairness, competence, dignity and security.

The literature increasingly rejects a simple replacement narrative. Jarrahi argues for "human-AI symbiosis" in organizational decision making and states that AI should be designed "with the intention of augmenting, not replacing, human contributions" [1, p. 577]. Raisch and Krakowski similarly distinguish automation from augmentation while arguing that the two remain interdependent, producing an "automation–augmentation paradox" [2, pp. 192–210]. These arguments are important because they reposition AI from a substitute for human work to a component of a sociotechnical system in which leadership and organizational design remain decisive. Trust is central to this sociotechnical relationship. Glikson and Woolley conclude that successful organizational integration of AI critically depends on workers' trust and identify transparency, reliability and related system characteristics as important antecedents of

cognitive trust [3]. More recent research has expanded this argument by showing that trust can be influenced by organizational context, leadership, employee voice and the ways AI is introduced. The question, therefore, is not simply whether an AI system is accurate. Employees also ask whether their organization is transparent about its use, whether leaders listen to concerns, whether they can challenge important decisions and whether safeguards exist when an AI system produces a harmful or questionable result.

The present study investigates these issues through a survey of 109 respondents. The response profile is notable for two reasons. First, it is very young: 100 of the 109 respondents are aged 25 or below, and 93 report no work experience. Second, despite this limited formal workplace experience, AI use is widespread: 57 respondents report frequent use and 40 occasional use. This combination creates an analytically interesting population. These respondents may be entering workplaces in which AI is already normal, yet they may have limited awareness of formal employee rights in AI-enabled environments.

The survey also reveals a strong normative consensus. Respondents overwhelmingly support clear communication by leaders, empathetic leadership, interpersonal skills for human–AI collaboration, supportive communication environments, human-centred leadership, legal and ethical safeguards, employee questioning of AI-assisted decisions, communication and soft-skills training, and parity between employee dignity and technological efficiency. The strongest tension appears between the low level of rights awareness and the high level of support for rights-protective practices. This tension is the central problem addressed in this paper.

The study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it connects AI adoption with leadership and employee well-being rather than treating technological adoption as a technical acceptance problem alone. Second, it empirically foregrounds the relationship between AI use and rights awareness among a young respondent population. Third, it translates the survey findings into a Human-Centred AI Leadership Matrix that links communication, empathy, employee voice, transparency, safeguards, training and dignity.

Literature Review

AI at work is often viewed in terms of two roles: replacing human effort or supporting it. Automation reduces the need for people to perform certain tasks, while augmentation helps employees make better decisions by adding the capabilities of AI. Raisch and Krakowski [2] suggest that these two roles can overlap and change over time. This is important because an AI tool introduced to improve productivity may later be used to monitor or assess employees. Similarly, a system that initially creates fear or uncertainty may become helpful when employees understand how to use it and have enough freedom to make their own decisions.

Jarrahi's human–AI symbiosis framework [1] also stresses the value of collaboration between humans and AI rather than viewing AI simply as a replacement for human work. AI is highly effective at processing large amounts of information and identifying patterns, while humans bring contextual understanding, intuition and the ability to respond to uncertain situations. However, effective collaboration depends on how AI is introduced and managed within the workplace. Employees need the freedom and confidence to understand AI-generated recommendations, question them when needed and rely on their own judgement when the situation requires it. The present survey explores these issues by examining workplace communication, employees' willingness to question AI-assisted decisions and the continuing importance of interpersonal and communication skills.

The concern becomes greater when AI is used not just for routine tasks but also for managing employees. Algorithmic management can influence how work is assigned, how performance is assessed and how rewards or penalties are decided. Kellogg, Valentine and Christin identify six forms of algorithmic control: restricting, recommending, recording, rating, replacing and rewarding [4, pp. 366–410]. Their study shows that AI does more than change how tasks are performed; it can also influence workplace power and employee autonomy. This makes effective communication, ethical practices and appropriate human oversight important for balancing technological capabilities with employee interests.

Trust is especially important when employees have to work with AI without knowing exactly how its decisions are made or how reliable they will be. Glikson and Woolley's review [3] shows that trust in AI is shaped by factors such as how the system is presented, its level of intelligence, transparency and reliability. In workplaces, however, employees do not experience AI as a technology on its own. Their experience is shaped by managers, organizational policies, digital interfaces, performance systems and everyday communication. As a result, employees' trust in AI may also be closely connected to how much they trust the organization and the people managing its use.

Recent research further highlights the relational nature of trust. Studies of AI in HRM identify trust

in AI technology as an important factor in employee perceptions and adoption intentions [5]. Bakonyi's qualitative study also identifies several trust paradoxes, showing that features that build trust initially may later create distrust during implementation [6]. Therefore, trust cannot be established through a one-time communication effort; it requires continuous transparency, accountability, competence and responsiveness.

The survey findings strongly support this interpretation. Ninety-five respondents, or 87.2%, agree or strongly agree that clear communication from leaders increases employee trust. More than 94% agree or strongly agree that human-centred leadership contributes positively to well-being, while 94.5% support strong legal and ethical safeguards as a means of increasing trust. These results suggest that respondents see trust as organizationally produced rather than as a purely technical property of AI.

Employee voice helps organizations identify risks that may not be visible to managers or system designers. Morrison highlights voice and silence as important aspects of organizational behavior and explains the factors that influence employees' willingness to speak up [7, pp. 79–107]. Edmondson and Bransby similarly emphasize psychological safety, where employees feel able to express concerns without fear of interpersonal consequences [8, pp. 55–78]. This becomes particularly important with AI, as employees may hesitate to question its decisions when technology is seen as objective or managerial authority is treated as final.

The survey strongly supports the need for a psychologically safe communication environment. Ninety-three respondents agreed that supportive communication allows employees to raise concerns without fear, while 15 were neutral and only one disagreed. This suggests that employees expect AI-enabled workplaces to maintain open channels for expressing concerns. Similarly, 81 respondents supported the right to question AI-assisted decisions, 27 were neutral and one disagreed. This indicates that employees do not necessarily reject AI but expect the ability to question, challenge and, when necessary, override its decisions. This view also aligns with the EU AI Act, which emphasizes effective human oversight of high-risk AI systems. Human overseers should be able to understand system limitations, identify problems, interpret outputs and, where appropriate, disregard or override them [12]. Meaningful human oversight therefore requires not only human involvement but also the competence, authority and organizational freedom to intervene.

Leadership is particularly important when employees face uncertainty or disruption during technological change. Research identifies empathy, openness, communication, inclusion, integrity, respect and dignity as key aspects of compassionate leadership [9]. Similarly, positive leadership practices are closely linked to employee well-being [10]. These findings support the survey's emphasis on empathetic and supportive leadership in AI-enabled workplaces.

The survey strongly supports empathetic and relational leadership. Sixty-eight respondents strongly agree and 35 agree that leaders who listen and show empathy create better workplaces, while only six disagree. Although this does not prove that empathy directly causes well-being, it shows that employees value supportive leadership. The findings also challenge a purely efficiency-driven approach to AI adoption. Eighty-nine respondents agree that employee dignity and well-being should be valued equally with technological efficiency, while 17 are neutral and three disagree. Overall, the results favour a shift towards a more people-centred approach to AI-enabled workplace transformation.

Communication and AI literacy

Transparency is more than simply sharing information; it also requires building employees' understanding of AI. OECD guidance notes that employees can exercise their rights and question AI outcomes only when they understand how AI is used and how decisions are reached [11]. The OECD also highlights concerns about transparency, explainability, data collection and trust in workplace AI [13]. Similarly, NIST's AI Risk Management Framework views trustworthy AI as part of a broader process of governance, mapping, measurement and management rather than as a purely technical feature [14].

The survey reveals a gap between governance ideals and employee awareness. Seventy-two respondents report low or very low awareness of employee rights in AI-enabled workplaces, while only 37 report high or very high awareness, placing 66.1% of the sample in the low-awareness group. At the same time, 86.2% agree that organizations should provide communication and soft-skills training to help employees adapt to AI-enabled workplaces. This suggests that training is not an optional add-on but an important means of turning abstract rights and principles into practical employee capability.

The distinction between AI literacy and AI use is important because frequent use does not necessarily indicate understanding. An employee may use generative AI daily while having limited knowledge of data governance, automated decision-making rights, monitoring, accountability or appeal procedures. The survey reflects this gap: 57 respondents are frequent AI users, while 72

report low awareness of employee rights. This coexistence of high usage and low awareness should be a key concern for organizations adopting AI.

Responsible AI and Workplace Governance

Responsible AI is increasingly moving from voluntary principles towards organizational governance and regulation. The NIST AI RMF identifies key characteristics of trustworthy AI, including reliability, safety, security, accountability, transparency, explainability, privacy and fairness [14]. The EU AI Act also introduces legal requirements for certain high-risk systems, including human oversight, transparency and worker information [12]. These developments are important for management because AI governance directly affects employee experience, particularly employees' ability to understand, question, challenge and appeal AI-mediated decisions.

The survey's strongest governance finding concerns legal and ethical safeguards. Twenty-nine respondents strongly agree and 74 agree, while only six disagree. Overall, 103 of 109 respondents (94.5%) support such safeguards. This suggests that respondents do not view ethics and law as barriers to AI adoption; rather, they see them as essential for building trust and confidence in AI-enabled workplaces.

This finding is supported by Hu et al. [15], who identify an Inverted-U relationship between algorithmic transparency and perceptions of fairness, indicating that excessive transparency may reduce its benefits. Transparency, therefore, should be meaningful and usable rather than simply extensive. Employees need clear information about the data used, automated decisions, points of human intervention and available channels for raising concerns. Without clear interpretation and opportunities for recourse, transparency may overwhelm employees instead of strengthening their confidence and agency

Conceptual Foundations of Responsible AI Adoption

The paper draws on four perspectives: the automation–augmentation paradox, social information processing, psychological safety and responsible AI governance. Together, they provide a framework for understanding how employees experience AI at work. The central argument is that AI outcomes depend not only on technological capability but also on how the technology is introduced, communicated and governed. First, the automation–augmentation perspective [1,2] shows that AI can replace some tasks while supporting others. How employees experience this balance depends partly on organizational practices and leadership. AI may be seen as a threat when it is linked to control or displacement, but as a support when it strengthens employees' capabilities. Second, social information processing suggests that employees interpret technological change through signals from leaders and workplace practices. Clear communication, active listening and honest acknowledgement of uncertainty can therefore help employees understand AI adoption as responsible and supportive.

Third, psychological safety [8] explains why employees must feel able to question AI without fear of negative consequences. Even when an AI system is transparent, employees may remain silent if its recommendations are treated as unquestionable. Psychological safety therefore provides an important social foundation for meaningful human oversight. Fourth, responsible AI governance provides the institutional support through policies, accountability, risk management, documentation, human oversight, training and redress. The EU AI Act and NIST AI RMF increasingly recognize human oversight and organizational accountability as essential elements of AI governance [12,14].

The survey brings these four perspectives together through a practical six-dimensional matrix: (1) communication and transparency; (2) empathy and supportive leadership; (3) employee voice and contestability; (4) AI literacy and soft skills; (5) legal, ethical and procedural safeguards; and (6) dignity and well-being. This matrix is not presented as a statistical model, since the study does not include item-level psychometric validation or respondent-level data. Rather, it is an evidence-informed conceptual model based on the observed response patterns. Existing research provides strong insights into AI augmentation, trust, algorithmic management, psychological safety and responsible AI, but these areas are often examined separately. Less attention has been given to how they intersect among young and largely inexperienced users who are already engaging frequently with AI. This study addresses this gap by examining these dimensions together, linking technological use with communication, employee agency, legal safeguards and well-being.

The study has six objectives: (1) to profile respondents' AI engagement and workplace experiences; (2) to assess their awareness of employee rights in AI-enabled workplaces; (3) to examine perceptions of communication, empathy and interpersonal skills in human–AI collaboration; (4) to assess support for transparency, employee voice and contestability; (5) to examine attitudes towards leadership, legal and ethical safeguards, training, dignity and well-being; and (6) to develop a practical framework from the survey findings.

RQ1. What is the profile of respondents in terms of age, work experience and frequency of AI use?

RQ2. What level of awareness do respondents report regarding employee rights in AI-enabled workplaces?
RQ3. To what extent do respondents associate leadership communication, empathy and interpersonal skills with effective human–AI collaboration?
RQ4. To what extent do respondents support transparency, employee voice and the right to question AI-assisted decisions?
RQ5. To what extent do respondents support leadership, legal and ethical safeguards, training, dignity and employee well-being in AI-enabled workplaces?
RQ6. What practical framework can be derived from the observed response patterns to guide responsible and people-centred AI adoption?

Methodology

The study follows a quantitative descriptive survey design. A total of 109 responses were collected. To maintain data accuracy, the analysis is limited to questions for which response categories and frequencies are clearly available. No missing responses or categories have been inferred. The questionnaire includes demographic and AI-use information, followed by statements addressing respondents' workplace perceptions and attitudes. As the response scales vary slightly across items, the analysis retains the categories as reported. Percentages are calculated using the full sample of 109 respondents. For questions containing both Agree and Strongly Agree responses, these are combined to indicate positive agreement. Where only an Agree category is reported, it is presented independently rather than assuming an underlying five-point scale. This approach keeps the analysis transparent and faithful to the data provided.

Overall, the survey presents a clear pattern: AI use is already common among respondents, but awareness of employee rights remains relatively low. At the same time, respondents show strong support for communication, empathy, people-centered leadership, ethical safeguards, employee voice, training and well-being. The findings are discussed below across four key areas.

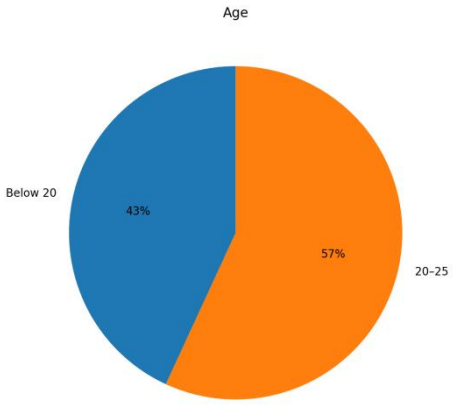

Figure 1. Age profile of respondents.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

The age distribution is concentrated in two categories. Forty-seven respondents (43.1%) are below 20 and 62 (56.9%) are aged 20–25. No respondents are recorded in the 26–35 or above-35 categories. The sample is therefore entirely 25 or younger. This is not a weakness in itself, because younger participants are highly relevant to research on the future workplace, but it limits the extent to which the findings can be interpreted as established employee attitudes.

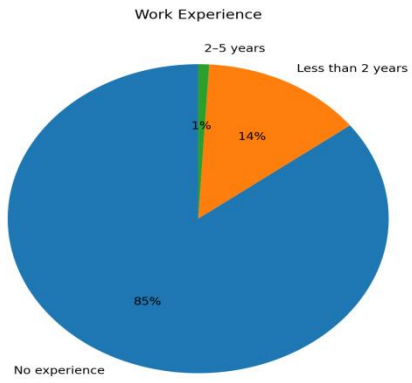

Figure 2. Work-experience profile.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Work experience is similarly concentrated. Ninety-three respondents (85.3%) report no work experience, 15 (13.8%) have less than two years, and one (0.9%) has two to five years. None report more than five years. The sample should therefore be understood primarily as a young, pre-employment or early-career population. This makes the later finding on employee-rights awareness particularly important: respondents may be preparing to enter workplaces in which AI systems are already embedded, but many have limited practical experience of employment rights and organizational AI governance.

Table 1. Respondent profile

Variable	Category	n	%
Age	Below 20	47	43.1%
Age	20–25	62	56.9%
Work experience	No experience	93	85.3%
Work experience	Less than 2 years	15	13.8%
Work experience	2–5 years	1	0.9%
Work experience	More than 5 years	0	0.0%

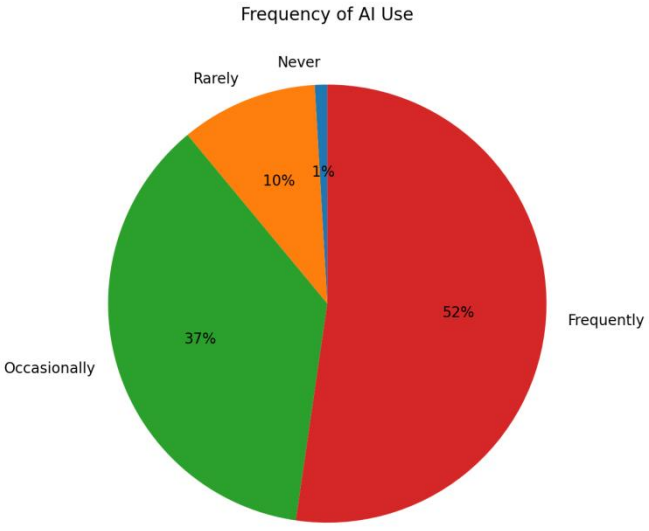

Figure 3. Frequency of AI use.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Despite limited work experience, AI engagement is high. Fifty-seven respondents (52.3%) report frequent AI use, 40 (36.7%) occasional use, 11 (10.1%) rare use and only one (0.9%) never uses AI. Thus, 97 respondents (89.0%) use AI occasionally or frequently. This is one of the most important descriptive findings because it demonstrates that AI familiarity in this sample is not merely aspirational. Most respondents already interact with AI with some

regularity.

The finding also complicates the assumption that AI literacy follows automatically from AI use. Frequent use can produce operational familiarity without institutional literacy. A person may know how to use a generative AI tool while remaining unaware of whether an employer may monitor AI-assisted work, how automated evaluation operates, what recourse exists against an AI-assisted decision or how data are used. The next result illustrates this gap.

Table 2. AI-use frequency

Response	n	%
Never	1	0.9%
Rarely	11	10.1%
Occasionally	40	36.7%
Frequently	57	52.3%

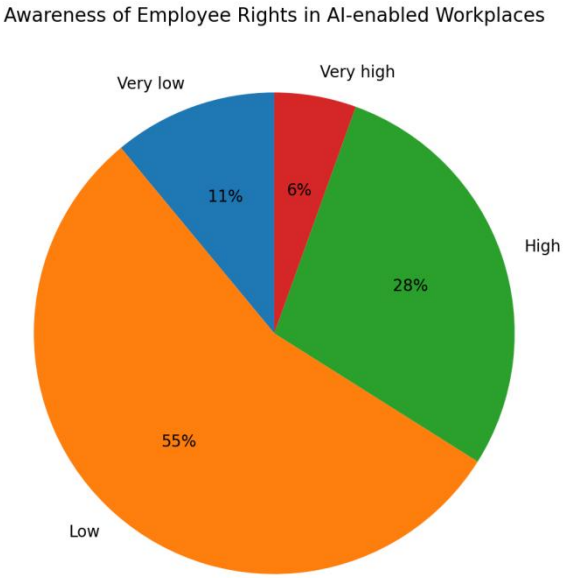

Figure 4. Awareness of employee rights in AI-enabled workplaces.

Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Awareness is substantially weaker than AI use. Twelve respondents (11.0%) rate awareness of employee rights as very low, 60 (55.0%) as low, 31 (28.4%) as high and six (5.5%) as very high. Therefore, 72 respondents (66.1%) report low or very low awareness, compared with 37 (33.9%) reporting high or very high awareness.

This is the survey's principal risk signal. Respondents show high exposure to AI but comparatively low awareness of its employment implications. This gap matters because rights and safeguards are meaningful only when employees understand what they can ask, challenge or expect from organizations. OECD guidance similarly emphasizes that workers' ability to exercise their rights depends on understanding how AI is used and how decisions are made [11]. Frequent AI use, therefore, should not be taken as evidence of adequate awareness. This broader understanding of AI governance is consistent with the NIST AI Risk Management Framework, which organizes responsible AI practices around four functions: "govern, map, measure, and manage" [14]. The findings also highlight the need to broaden the meaning of AI literacy in the workplace. Beyond understanding how AI systems work or how to prompt them, employees need awareness of transparency, privacy, monitoring, bias, human oversight, contestability, documentation and complaint mechanisms. Such workplace-oriented AI literacy is particularly important for younger employees entering organizations where AI is already embedded in routine work.

Table 3. Awareness of employee rights

Response	n	%
Very low	12	11.0%
Low	60	55.0%
High	31	28.4%
Very high	6	5.5%

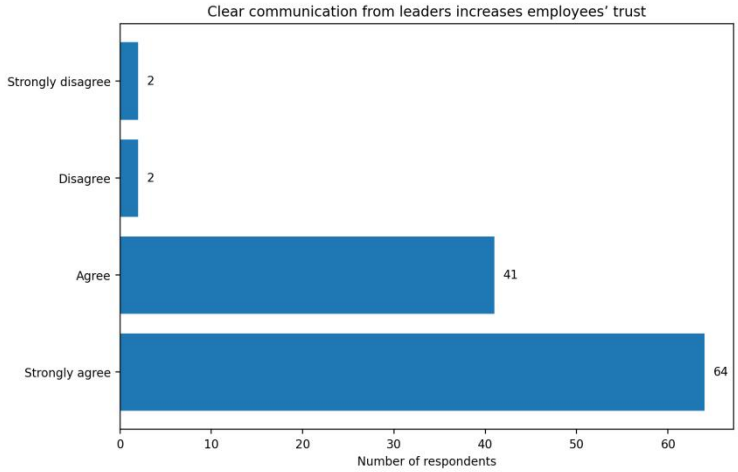

Figure 5. Clear communication from leaders increases employees' trust.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

The first attitudinal item shows a strong positive response. Sixty-four respondents strongly agree and 41 agree that clear communication from leaders increases employees' trust in the organization, while only four disagree. Overall, 105 respondents (96.3%) express positive agreement. The finding supports a relational understanding of trust in AI. Employees experience AI within an organizational and social context shaped by leadership. Leaders influence how AI is explained, what it is expected to do, how employee data are handled, what changes may follow and how errors are addressed. Clear communication can therefore reduce uncertainty, even when technical uncertainty remains. The finding is consistent with research on trust in AI [3,5,6] and with recent work highlighting the role of leadership in shaping trust during technological adoption. McGuire, De Cremer and Narayanan [16] report that employee trust in AI is influenced by leadership, with opportunities for employee voice reducing negative affect and strengthening perceptions of leader trustworthiness. The present survey does not t
est this causal relationship, but its strong support for leader communication is consistent with this mechanism.

Table 4. Leadership communication and trust

Response	n	%
Strongly disagree	2	1.8%
Disagree	2	1.8%
Agree	41	37.6%
Strongly agree	64	58.7%

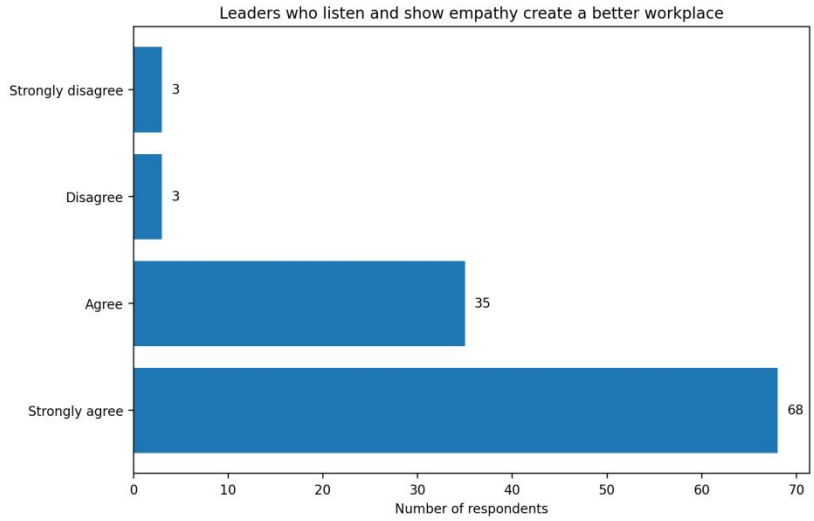

Figure 6. Empathetic leadership and workplace environment.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

The second leadership item shows similarly strong agreement. Sixty-eight respondents strongly agree and 35 agree that leaders who listen and show empathy create a better workplace environment, while only six disagree. Overall, positive agreement reaches 94.5%. The finding is particularly relevant when AI changes the emotional experience of work. Employees may be concerned about job displacement, surveillance, performance assessment, loss of autonomy or reduced recognition of their expertise. A purely technical approach to AI implementation may overlook these concerns. Empathetic leadership provides a way to recognize employee experiences as an important part of successful implementation. The finding is consistent with research on compassionate leadership, which links empathy, openness, communication, well-being, inclusion, integrity, respect and dignity [9]. It also aligns with positive-leadership research connecting leadership practices with worker well-being [10]. In AI-enabled workplaces, empathy therefore extends beyond interpersonal kindness; it can help leaders identify emerging concerns before they develop into resistance, disengagement or turnover
.

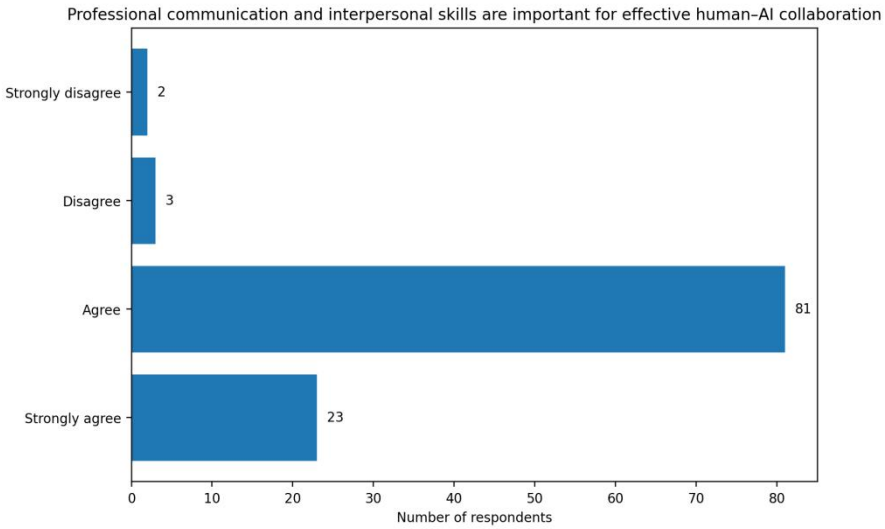

Figure 7. Professional communication and interpersonal skills in human–AI collaboration.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

The third item examines whether professional communication and interpersonal skills are important for effective human–AI collaboration. Eighty-one respondents agree and 23 strongly agree, while only five disagree. Overall, positive agreement reaches 95.4%. The finding challenges a

narrow, technology-focused view of AI readiness. If AI adoption were mainly a technical issue, technical competence might be expected to dominate. Instead, respondents recognize communication and interpersonal skills as important to effective human–AI collaboration. This supports Jarrahi's [1] human–AI symbiosis argument, which emphasizes combining AI capabilities with human contextual judgement. It also aligns with the TOP framework of Tursunbayeva and Chalutz-Ben Gal [17], which views technology, organization and people as interconnected dimensions of AI adoption. The implication is that AI training should extend beyond software use. Employees also need skills to communicate AI-supported recommendations, explain uncertainty, manage differences between human judgement and AI outputs, escalate anomalies, and raise AI-related concerns with managers and colleagues.

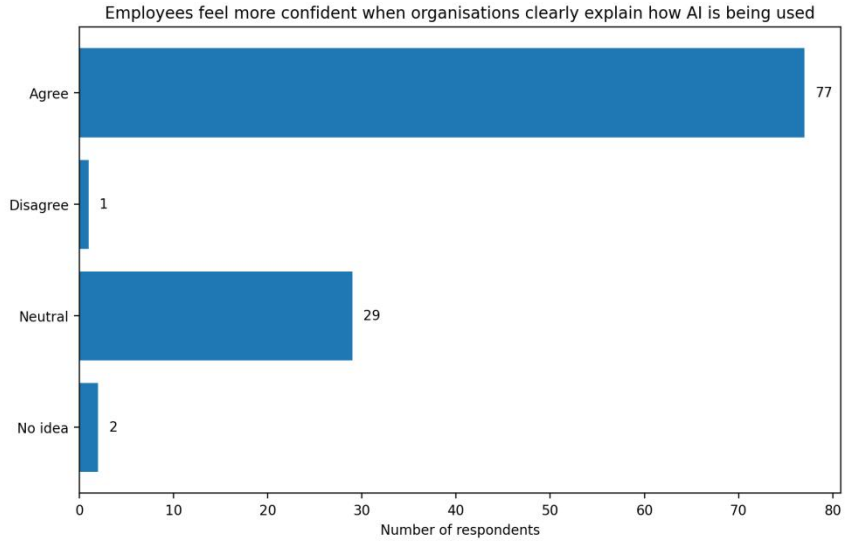

Figure 8. Confidence when organizations explain how AI is used.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Seventy-seven respondents agree that employees feel more confident when organizations clearly explain how AI is used in their work. Twenty-nine are neutral, one disagrees and two report no idea, resulting in 70.6% positive agreement. Although lower than the preceding leadership items, the response remains clearly positive. The relatively large neutral group is also important. It may suggest that respondents value transparency in principle but have limited experience with formal organizational disclosure about AI. Given the age and work-experience profile, many may not yet have encountered workplace AI policies, algorithmic performance systems or formal communication about AI use. The neutral responses, therefore, should not necessarily be read as resistance to transparency but may reflect limited direct experience. OECD guidance identifies lack of transparency as a workplace risk, particularly when employees do not know when AI is being used, how decisions are made or how outcomes can be questioned [11,13]. The survey therefore supports the need for organizations to communicate AI use proactively rather than expecting employees to discover it themselves.

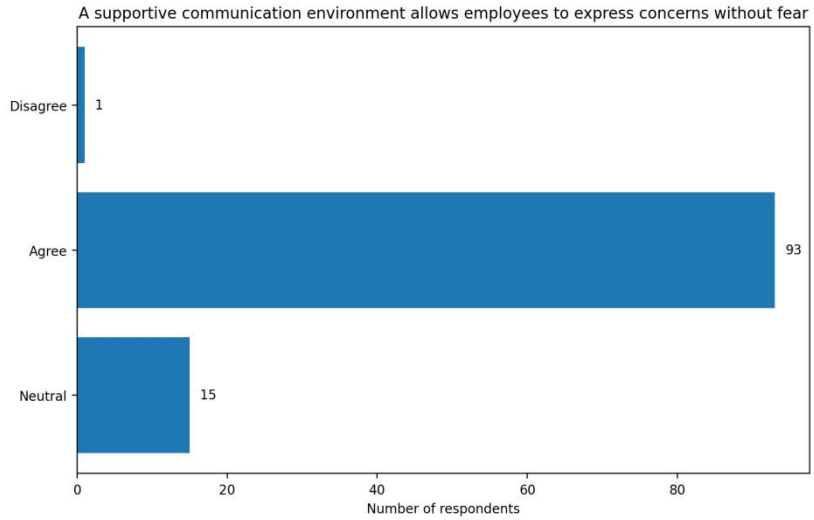

Figure 9. Supportive communication and employee concerns.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

The supportive-communication item produces 93 agree, 15 chose neutral and one disagree. Positive agreement is 85.3%. The result provides strong evidence that respondents value an environment in which concerns can be expressed without fear. This is closely connected to psychological safety. Edmondson and Bransby [8] describe psychological safety as a state of reduced interpersonal risk and identify leadership as one of the central themes in the field. In AI-enabled organizations, psychological safety is particularly important because employees may have concerns that managers themselves have not anticipated. If the organizational climate discourages dissent, AI-related risks can remain invisible until they produce measurable harm. The survey therefore suggests that employee voice should be built into AI governance. Organizations should provide channels through which workers can report errors, bias, privacy concerns, excessive monitoring, inappropriate automation or unexplained decisions. Voice should not be treated as an informal courtesy; it can function as a distributed risk-detection mechanism.

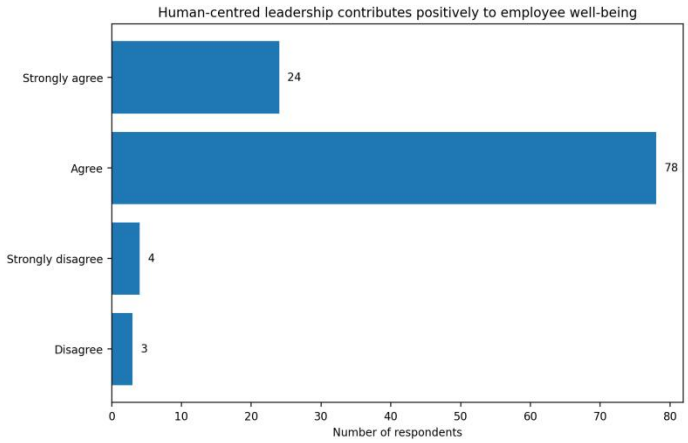

Figure 10. Human-centred leadership and employee well-being.
Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Twenty-four respondents strongly agree and 78 agree that human-centred leadership contributes positively to employee well-being, while four strongly disagree and three disagree. Overall, positive agreement reaches 93.6%. The finding gives the study a clear normative direction. Respondents do not treat employee well-being as secondary to AI-driven productivity. Instead, they associate it with the conditions under which AI is introduced and managed. This aligns with recent research on AI and work design, which argues that AI integration should consider positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment rather than focusing only on

productivity [18]. Watermann, Kubowitsch and Lermer similarly argue that "comprehensive, human-centered work design frameworks are necessary" when AI changes work processes [18, p. 311]. The WHO guidelines on mental health at work also emphasize organizational interventions and manager training alongside worker-focused measures [19]. This is particularly relevant to AI, as technological change can affect workload, role clarity, autonomy and perceived job security, with implications for employee well-being. Leadership can play an important role in managing these changes.

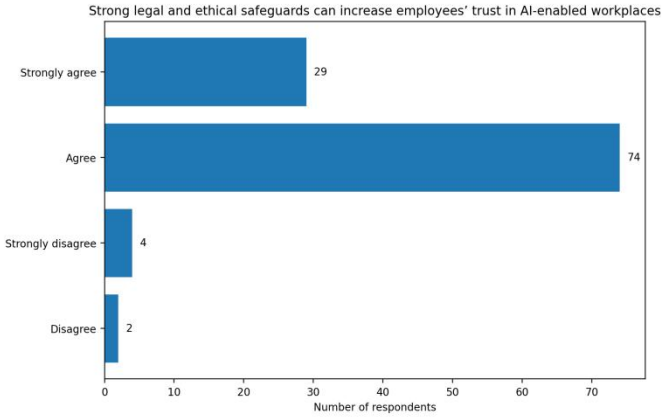

Figure 11. Legal and ethical safeguards and employee trust.

Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Twenty-nine respondents strongly agree and 74 agree that strong legal and ethical safeguards can increase employee trust in AI-enabled workplaces, while four strongly disagree and two disagree. Overall, positive agreement reaches 94.5%. The finding is significant because it challenges the assumption that regulation necessarily limits innovation. Respondents appear to view legal and ethical safeguards as a foundation for trust. This is consistent with NIST's approach, which places governance and risk management at the centre of trustworthy AI [14], and with the EU AI Act's emphasis on human oversight, transparency and accountability for high-risk systems [12].

The finding also has a clear managerial implication. Compliance should not remain solely a legal function. Leaders need to explain how safeguards operate in practice: who is accountable for AI-assisted decisions, when human review is required, what records are maintained, how employees can challenge outcomes and how failures are addressed.

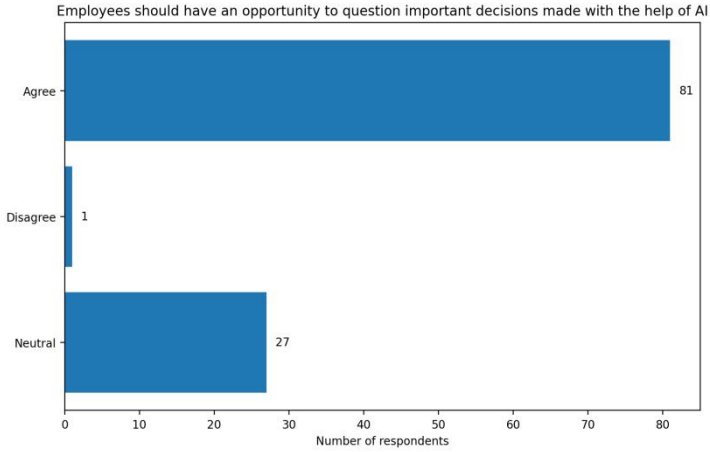

Figure 12. Employee opportunity to question AI-assisted decisions.

Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Eighty-one respondents agree that employees should have an opportunity to question important decisions made with the help of AI, while 27 are neutral and one disagrees. Overall, positive agreement reaches 74.3%. Although lower than the response to legal and ethical safeguards, the finding remains clearly supportive. The lower agreement compared with the communication and leadership items may reflect the more complex nature of contesting AI-assisted decisions.

Questioning such a decision involves not only employee voice but also organizational authority and, potentially, a formal mechanism for human review.

Respondents may support the principle while remaining uncertain about how such a right would work in practice. The finding nevertheless provides support for treating contestability as an important element of responsible AI governance. Leaders should ensure that employees know when AI has contributed to a decision, understand the basis of that decision and have a clear route to request human review. This is closely aligned with the EU AI Act's emphasis on effective human oversight [12].

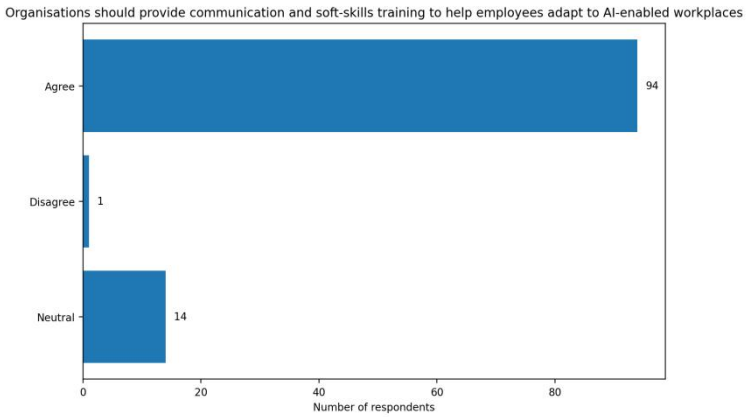

Figure 13. Communication and soft-skills training for AI-enabled workplaces.

Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Ninety-four respondents agree that organizations should provide communication and soft-skills training to help employees adapt to AI-enabled workplaces, while 14 are neutral and one disagrees. Overall, positive agreement reaches 86.2%. The finding directly connects with the rights-awareness gap. With 66.1% of respondents reporting low or very low awareness of employee rights, training becomes a practical intervention rather than a symbolic commitment. Such training should extend beyond communication skills to include AI literacy, workplace rights, data practices, bias, human oversight, escalation procedures and responsible AI use.

The finding also reinforces the view that AI transformation is an ongoing learning process. Employees cannot be expected to adapt effectively to new systems without the skills to interpret AI outputs, communicate with colleagues, identify problems and make informed decisions. The human side of AI adoption should therefore be treated as a process of continuous capability building.

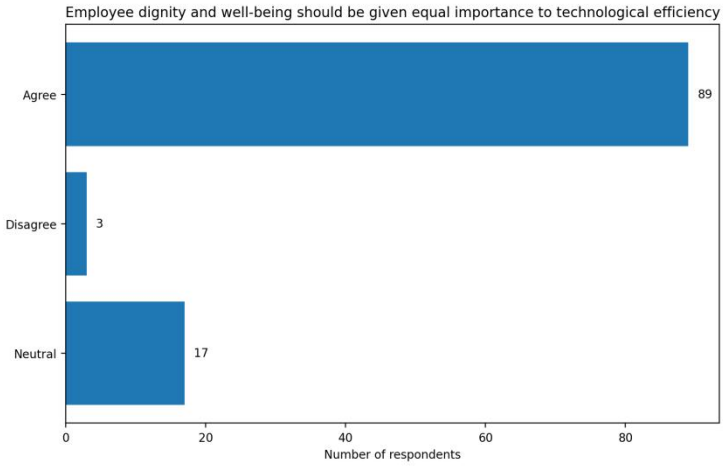

Figure 14. Employee dignity and well-being versus technological efficiency.

Source: Author's survey, n = 109; figure recreated from the supplied response overview.

Eighty-nine respondents agree that employee dignity and well-being should receive equal importance to technological efficiency, while 17 are neutral and three disagree. Overall, positive agreement reaches 81.7%.

Although this is the lowest positive proportion among the strongly normative items, the response remains substantial. The neutral group may reflect uncertainty about how equal emphasis on efficiency and well-being should be applied in practice. This raises an important managerial question: what measures should accompany productivity indicators? If AI improves output but increases stress, perceived surveillance or loss of autonomy, can the implementation be considered successful? A people-centered approach would argue that efficiency is important but not sufficient; employee dignity and well-being must also be part of how AI outcomes are evaluated.

Table 5. Positive response pattern across substantive survey items

Item	Statement shortened	Positive n	Positive %
Q6	Leader communication increases trust	105	96.3%
Q7	Listening/empathy improves workplace environment	103	94.5%
Q8	Interpersonal skills matter for human–AI collaboration	104	95.4%
Q9	Explaining AI use increases employee confidence	77	70.6%
Q10	Supportive communication enables concern expression	93	85.3%
Q11	Human-centred leadership supports well-being	102	93.6%
Q12	Legal/ethical safeguards increase trust	103	94.5%
Q13	Employees should question AI-assisted decisions	81	74.3%
Q14	Communication/soft-skills training is needed	94	86.2%
Q15	Dignity/well-being should equal technological efficiency	89	81.7%

The cross-item pattern is more informative than any single percentage. Across the ten substantive items, positive responses range from 70.6% to 96.3%. The strongest support concerns leader communication, interpersonal competence and legal and ethical safeguards, while the lower levels relate to confidence gained from organizational explanations and the right to question AI-assisted decisions. Although these responses remain positive, they point to areas where AI implementation may require clearer organizational mechanisms.

A second pattern is the gap between rights awareness and normative expectations. While 66.1% of respondents' report low or very low awareness of employee rights, 94.5% support legal and ethical safeguards. Respondents therefore value protection more strongly than they understand the institutional mechanisms through which it is provided. Rights awareness should consequently be treated as part of AI governance rather than left entirely to individual employees.

A third pattern is the importance of relational leadership. Communication, empathy and interpersonal competence receive some of the strongest support, indicating that respondents view AI-enabled work as a social environment rather than simply a technological one. They expect leaders to guide and communicate technological change, not merely authorize it. This supports a sociotechnical view of AI adoption in which human relationships remain central to technological outcomes.

Discussion

The survey shows that human-centred practices are central to how respondents experience AI-enabled work. Across the substantive items, respondents consistently value clear communication, empathy, employee voice, ethical safeguards, training and dignity. The findings point to a simple principle: employees experience AI not only through technology but through the organizational relationships surrounding it.

A key finding is the AI-use/rights-awareness gap. Although almost nine in ten respondents use AI occasionally or frequently, 66.1% report low or very low awareness of employee rights. AI familiarity, therefore, should not be equated with workplace AI literacy, which should also include privacy, monitoring, automated decisions, human oversight, fairness, accountability and recourse.

Trust also emerges as an organizational issue. The 96.3% support for clear leader communication and 94.5% support for legal and ethical safeguards indicate that respondents associate trust with how AI is explained and governed. This complements research on trust in AI [3,5,6] and recent evidence that leadership and employee voice can influence trust in AI [16]. Trust therefore depends not only on system performance but also on communication and accountability.

Employee voice and psychological safety are similarly important. While 85.3% support a communication environment where employees can raise concerns without fear, 74.3% support the right to question important AI-assisted decisions. The difference is meaningful: speaking up is a broad organizational practice, whereas challenging an AI-assisted decision may require formal human-review and appeal mechanisms. Psychological safety [8] provides the social conditions necessary for employees to use such mechanisms without fear of negative consequences.

The findings also give clearer meaning to human-centred leadership. Rather than treating it as a broad normative idea, the survey supports an operational understanding based on communication, listening, empathy, transparency, employee voice, training, safeguards and attention to dignity. In addition, 81.7% support giving employee dignity and well-being equal importance to technological efficiency. This aligns with research on AI and work design [18] and WHO guidance on organizational and managerial approaches to workplace well-being [19]. AI success should therefore be assessed through human outcomes as well as productivity.

Governance is another central theme. The 94.5% support for legal and ethical safeguards suggests that respondents view regulation as a foundation for trust rather than simply a constraint on innovation. This is consistent with the NIST AI Risk Management Framework [14] and the EU AI Act's emphasis on human oversight, competence and accountability [12]. The managerial role therefore extends beyond promoting AI adoption towards responsible stewardship.

Communication and training further reinforce this position. With 95.4% recognizing the importance of professional communication and interpersonal skills in human–AI collaboration, AI readiness clearly extends beyond technical competence. Employees need to interpret and communicate AI outputs, manage disagreements, identify problems and raise concerns. Similarly, 86.2% support communication and soft-skills training, indicating a need for structured development in AI literacy, rights awareness, privacy, bias, human oversight and responsible AI use.

The young profile of the sample adds another important dimension. As all respondents are 25 or younger and most have limited work experience, the findings reflect the expectations of future employees who are already familiar with AI but may have limited knowledge of workplace governance. Organizations may therefore need to address both technological familiarity and institutional awareness among younger workers.

The findings are also consistent with the TOP framework of Tursunbayeva and Chalutz-Ben Gal [17], which connects technology, organization and people. The present study highlights how these dimensions interact: communication supports technology use, training strengthens human–AI collaboration, safeguards build trust and psychological safety enables employees to identify and raise concerns.

Overall, the survey suggests that responsible AI is best understood as a lived organizational practice, not simply a set of policies. Human oversight matters when employees can access responsible decision-makers; transparency matters when employees can understand it; and complaint mechanisms matter when employees feel safe using them. Leadership connects formal governance with employees' everyday experience of AI.

Drawing on the survey findings and reviewed literature, the study proposes a six-dimensional Human-Centred AI Leadership Matrix. The matrix is a conceptual synthesis rather than a statistically validated scale. It translates the findings into practical dimensions through which organizations can align AI adoption with employee trust, voice, capability, accountability and well-being.

Table 6. Human-Centred AI Leadership Matrix

Dimension	Leadership practice	Survey basis	Expected organizational outcome
1. Communication & transparency	Explain where and why AI is used; communicate limitations, data practices and expected impacts.	Q6, Q9	Trust, confidence, reduced uncertainty
2. Empathy & human-centred leadership	Listen to employee experiences; acknowledge anxiety; treat concerns as implementation information.	Q7, Q11	Well-being, relational trust, acceptance
3. Voice & contestability	Provide safe channels to question AI-assisted decisions and report errors or harms.	Q10, Q13	Psychological safety, accountability, error detection
4. AI literacy & soft	Train employees in AI	Q8, Q14	Competence,

skills	use, rights, communication, uncertainty and escalation.		collaboration, adaptive capacity
5. Ethics, law & safeguards	Define accountability, human oversight, privacy, fairness, audit and redress.	Q12	Trust, legitimacy, risk reduction
6. Dignity & well-being	Evaluate AI success through human outcomes as well as productivity.	Q11, Q15	Sustainable performance, dignity, flourishing

The matrix provides a practical sequence. Organizations should first make AI visible through clear communication; second, listen to employee experiences; third, establish voice and contestability; fourth, build literacy and communication skills; fifth, formalize ethical and legal safeguards; and sixth, monitor dignity and well-being alongside efficiency. The sequence is iterative rather than linear. Feedback from employees should continuously inform AI governance.

Managers should treat communication as an operational control rather than a public-relations activity. Before implementing an AI system, leaders should explain its purpose, data sources, expected benefits, known limitations and human-review arrangements. After implementation, they should provide recurring opportunities for questions and feedback.

Managers should also separate AI performance from employee performance. If an AI recommendation is wrong, employees should not be penalized for appropriately challenging it. Clear accountability rules should specify who owns the final decision. This is consistent with the principle of human oversight in the EU AI Act [12].

Finally, leaders should measure employee outcomes alongside technological outcomes. Adoption rate, productivity and cost savings should be accompanied by indicators such as perceived autonomy, trust, psychological safety, training completion, reported concerns, appeal outcomes and well-being.

Human resource departments should develop workplace AI-literacy programmes that include employee rights and responsibilities. The survey's 66.1% low-awareness finding makes this particularly urgent. HR should also maintain clear documentation of AI use in recruitment, performance evaluation, scheduling, monitoring and decision support where applicable.

HR should establish accessible appeal and complaint channels. Employees need to know whom to contact when an AI-assisted decision appears inaccurate, unfair or inappropriate. These channels should be protected from retaliation and connected to documented investigation procedures. Performance-management systems should be reviewed for automation bias. The EU AI Act explicitly recognizes the possibility of over-reliance on high-risk AI outputs [12]. HR and managers should therefore be trained to treat AI recommendations as evidence rather than unquestionable decisions.

AI governance committees should include representatives from employees, HR, management, technology and, where appropriate, legal or ethics functions. Employee participation is especially valuable because workers encounter implementation problems that may not be visible during system design.

Governance should follow a lifecycle model. NIST's AI RMF organizes risk work through govern, map, measure and manage [14]. Organizations can adapt this to workplace AI by governing responsibilities, mapping employee impacts, measuring trust and well-being, and managing identified risks through mitigation and redress. Transparency should be calibrated to user needs. The goal is not to disclose every technical detail but to provide meaningful information about what the system does, what it does not do, what data it uses, how outputs should be interpreted and how employees can challenge them.

Legal Safeguards and Employee Rights in AI-Enabled Workplaces

In AI-enabled workplaces, employee rights extend beyond protection from discrimination to include privacy, transparency, human oversight, fair evaluation and the ability to question consequential decisions. AI may increasingly be used to recruit employees, allocate work, monitor performance and evaluate productivity, making algorithmic decisions a matter of workplace rights rather than merely technology management [12]. Employees should therefore know what AI systems are being used, what employee data they process, and how their outputs may influence employment decisions. The EU AI Act places particular emphasis on worker information and human oversight for

certain high-risk workplace AI systems [12]. The NIST AI RMF similarly identifies privacy, fairness, transparency, explainability and accountability as important elements of trustworthy AI [14].

An important but often overlooked safeguard is human review: employees should have access to a competent person who can examine, question or override an AI-supported decision rather than treating the algorithm as final. This is especially relevant because algorithmic management can increase workplace surveillance and reduce employee autonomy [ILO]. Recent ILO research also links intrusive AI-based surveillance and data-driven management with privacy concerns, reduced autonomy and psychosocial risks at work. Thus, responsible AI governance should ensure that employees are not only protected from harmful outcomes but also informed, heard and given meaningful avenues for review and redress.

Employees should be aware of key safeguards when AI is used in workplace decisions. These include the right to be informed about significant AI use, protection of personal data and privacy, fair and non-discriminatory treatment, meaningful human oversight, the ability to question or seek review of AI-assisted decisions, and access to appropriate channels for raising concerns. The EU AI Act, for example, requires employers deploying certain high-risk AI systems at work to inform affected workers and requires competent human oversight with the authority to interpret, disregard or override AI outputs [12]. The NIST AI Risk Management Framework similarly emphasizes accountability, transparency, explainability, privacy and fairness as core characteristics of trustworthy AI [14]. These safeguards indicate that employees should not be treated as passive recipients of automated decisions; they should have sufficient information, human review and institutional mechanisms to understand and challenge decisions that may affect their employment. Strengthening awareness of these rights is therefore an important part of responsible AI adoption.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on perceptions of AI-enabled workplaces, especially leadership, communication, employee trust, employee voice, ethical safeguards and well-being. It is not a technical evaluation of any specific AI system and does not measure actual organizational performance.

The survey population is predominantly young and inexperienced, making the findings particularly relevant to future and early-career workers. The paper therefore offers a prospective perspective on AI-enabled work rather than a representative account of the established workforce. The conceptual framework can be applied across sectors because its dimensions—communication, empathy, voice, literacy, safeguards and dignity—are not industry-specific. However, the intensity and practical meaning of each dimension may vary across sectors such as education, finance, healthcare, manufacturing and public administration. The study also has scope for policy analysis because several findings correspond to current principles of human oversight, transparency and responsible AI governance. The paper does not attempt a comparative legal analysis of jurisdictions; the EU AI Act and NIST AI RMF are used as reference points for governance discussion.

Conclusion

The real test of responsible workplace AI is not whether an algorithm can make a decision, but whether an employee can understand, question and seek review of that decision. This study examined perceptions of AI-enabled workplaces among 109 respondents. The findings reveal a clear gap: although 89.0% use AI occasionally or frequently, 66.1% report low or very low awareness of employee rights. At the same time, respondents strongly support clear communication, empathy, employee voice, training, legal and ethical safeguards, and dignity and well-being. The findings suggest that AI readiness extends beyond technical adoption. Organizations may be technologically advanced yet institutionally unprepared if employees cannot understand their rights, question AI-assisted decisions or raise concerns safely. The proposed Human-Centred AI Leadership Matrix, comprising six dimensions—communication and transparency; empathy and leadership; voice and contestability; AI literacy and soft skills; ethics, law and safeguards; and dignity and well-being—brings these findings together. While the matrix requires further validation, it offers a practical basis for responsible AI adoption. Overall, responsible AI is not only a technological issue but also an organizational one. Sustainable AI adoption requires institutions to combine technological capability with human judgement, trust, accountability and dignity.

References

1. Parker, S. K., & Grote, G. (2022). Automation, algorithms, and beyond: Why work design matters more than ever in a digital world. Applied Psychology, 71(4), 1171–1204. https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12241.
2. Kim, B.-J., Kim, M.-J., & Lee, J. (2025). The dark side of artificial intelligence adoption: Linking artificial intelligence adoption to employee depression via psychological

safety and ethical leadership. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 12, 704. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41599-025-05040-2.
3. Longoni, C., Bonezzi, A., & Morewedge, C. K. (2019). Resistance to medical artificial intelligence. Journal of Consumer Research, 46(4), 629–650. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucz013.
4. Kizilcec, R. F. (2016). How much information? Effects of transparency on trust in an algorithmic interface. Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 2390–2399. https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858402.
5. Detert, J. R., & Burris, E. R. (2007). Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open? Academy of Management Journal, 50(4), 869–884.
6. Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350–383.
7. Morrison, E. W. (2014). Employee voice and silence. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 1, 173–197.
8. Arslan, A., Cooper, C., Khan, Z., Golgeci, I., & Ali, I. (2022). Artificial intelligence and human workers interaction at team level: A conceptual assessment of the challenges and potential HRM strategies. International Journal of Manpower, 43, 75–88.
9. Bankins, S., Formosa, P., & others. (2022). AI decision making with dignity? Contrasting workers' justice perceptions of human and AI decision making in a human resource management context. Information Systems Frontiers, 24, 857–875.
10. Klein, U., Depping, J., Wohlfahrt, L., & Fassbender, P. (2024). Application of artificial intelligence: Risk perception and trust in the work context with different impact levels and task types. AI & Society, 39, 2445–2456. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-023-01699-w.
11. World Health Organization. (2022). Guidelines on mental health at work. Geneva: WHO.
12. Watermann, L., Kubowitsch, S., & Lermer, E. (2025). AI and work design: A positive psychology approach to employee well-being. Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation. Zeitschrift für Angewandte Organisationspsychologie, 56, 311–320. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11612-025-00806-3.
13. Tursunbayeva, A., & Chalutz-Ben Gal, H. (2024). Adoption of artificial intelligence: A TOP framework-based checklist for digital leaders. Business Horizons, 67(4), 357–368. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2024.04.006.
14. McGuire, J., De Cremer, D., & Narayanan, D. (2026). How leaders build employee trust in artificial intelligence: Voice opportunities, humility, and trust transfer. Journal of Business Research, 116470. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2026.116470.
15. Hu, P., Zeng, Y., Wang, D., & Teng, H. (2024). Too much light blinds: The transparency-resistance paradox in algorithmic management. Computers in Human Behavior, 161, 108403. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2024.108403.
16. Tabassi, E. (2023). Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework (AI RMF 1.0). NIST AI 100-1. National Institute of Standards and Technology. https://doi.org/10.6028/NIST.AI.100-1.
17. OECD. (2023). The impact of AI on the workplace: Main findings from the OECD AI surveys of employers and workers. OECD Publishing, Paris.
18. European Parliament & Council of the European Union. (2024). Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act). Official Journal of the European Union.
19. OECD. (2024). Using AI in the workplace: Opportunities, risks and policy responses. OECD Publishing, Paris.
20. Azila-Gbettor, E. M., Honyenuga, B. Q., Atatsi, E. A., Laryea, C. N. A., & Quarshie, A. N. K. (2024). Reviewing the influence of positive leadership on worker well-being: A comprehensive analysis. Heliyon, 10(2), e24134. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24134.
21. Dhiman, S., & Marques, J. (2024). Whither compassionate leadership? A systematic review. Management Review Quarterly, 74, 1473–1557. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-023-00340-w.
22. Edmondson, A. C., & Bransby, D. P. (2023). Psychological safety comes of age: Observed themes in an established literature. Annual Review of Organizational

Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 10, 55–78. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920-055217.
23. Morrison, E. W. (2023). Employee voice and silence: Taking stock a decade later. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 10, 79–107. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920-054654.
24. Bakonyi, Z. (2024). How can companies handle paradoxes to enhance trust in artificial intelligence solutions? A qualitative research. Journal of Organizational Change Management, 37(7), 1405–1426. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-01-2023-0026.
25. Arora, M., & Mittal, A. (2024). Employees' change in perception when artificial intelligence integrates with human resource management: A mediating role of AI-tech trust. Benchmarking: An International Journal, 32(6), 1884–1908. https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-11-2023-0795.
26. Kellogg, K. C., Valentine, M. A., & Christin, A. (2020). Algorithms at work: The new contested terrain of control. Academy of Management Annals, 14(1), 366–410. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0174.
27. Glikson, E., & Woolley, A. W. (2020). Human trust in artificial intelligence: Review of empirical research. Academy of Management Annals, 14(2), 627–660. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0057.
28. Raisch, S., & Krakowski, S. (2021). Artificial intelligence and management: The automation–augmentation paradox. Academy of Management Review, 46(1), 192–210. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0072.
29. Jarrahi, M. H. (2018). Artificial intelligence and the future of work: Human-AI symbiosis in organizational decision making. Business Horizons, 61(4), 577–586. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.03.007.