Center for Management Science Research
ISSN: 3006-5291 3006-5283 Volume 4, Issue 3, 2026

AI AWARENESS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM PAKISTAN

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18933461

Keywords
AI, AI Awareness, AI Adoption, Firm Performance, Pakistan, TAM

Article History
Received: 10 January 2026
Accepted: 23 February 2026
Published: 10 March 2026

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Abstract
Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most important advances of the present era. It has opened new opportunities in the organizational field, expanding many processes and routines. AI is widely used in nearly every industry. It has transformed banking, security, healthcare, education, and engineering. Despite increasing scholarly interest in AI within organizational settings, significant gaps still exist in understanding how AI awareness affects employee performance. To explore this, 190 participants were selected through a purposive sampling method, and data were collected from them using a survey questionnaire. The findings show that AI awareness has a significant and positive impact on employee performance. These results can help organizational leaders and policymakers better navigate the ongoing integration of technology and maximize the benefits of their strategic, human-centered AI investments.

INTRODUCTION
With the development of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (Qaiser & Fatima, 2024), Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the most significant advancements of the present era (Boscardin, Gin, Golde, & Hauer, 2024). It has opened up new horizons for the organizational field, expanding many processes and routines (Neiroukh, Emeagwali, & Aljuhmani, 2024). AI is being used extensively in every conceivable field. It has revolutionized many industries, including banking, security, healthcare, education, and engineering (Valavanidis, 2023). AI includes not only performing simple tasks but also processing and predicting data, content creation, and decision-making (Baabdullah, 2024).

Employee attitudes towards AI can be viewed as a measure of their awareness of AI (Brougham & Haar, 2018). Additionally, AI applications have a substantial impact on work-related psychological and organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, job security, workplace anxiety, and overall organizational commitment (Gao & Feng, 2023). Employees with a high AI awareness are more likely to shape their professional responsibilities and actively pursue continuous learning, provided that organizational support is

in place to reduce their anxiety and reinforce positive engagement tendencies (J. J. Li, Bonn, & Ye, 2019). Despite growing scholarly attention to AI in organizational contexts, significant gaps remain in understanding the impact of AI awareness on employee performance.

On the other hand, AI adoption at the individual level serves as a critical behavioral bridge between awareness and performance outcomes (Pillai, Ghanghorkar, Sivathanu, Algharabat, & Rana, 2024). While awareness encompasses cognitive and attitudinal dimensions, adoption refers to the actual behavioral integration of AI tools into work practices (Jamil, Zhang, Anwar, & Mustafa, 2025). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) can be understood as a mediation mechanism for this theoretical grounding, as it is also one of the most influential frameworks in technology adoption research (Na, Heo, Han, Shin, & Roh, 2022). TAM explains the process of technology adoption and the consequences on two basic dimensions: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. When employees become aware of the advantages and ease of use of AI, they are more likely to adopt it, resulting in enhanced employee performance, as proposed in the current study.

This study seeks to address the existing contextual empirical gap by investigating the direct and indirect relationships between AI Awareness and employee performance within the Pakistani industrial context. Employee-level psychological processes, like AI awareness, have received limited attention as predictors of individual performance (Zeng, Li, & Yousaf, 2022). For example, Bakir, Douglas, and Lee (2025) Studied organizational-level adoption decisions rather than individual awareness and its behavioral consequences. Therefore, we aim to offer fresh perspectives about the contingency role of perceived organizational support in the relationship between AI adoption and employee performance. Furthermore, these findings may help organizational leaders and policymakers navigate the ever-changing integration of technology and maximize the benefits of their strategic, human-centered AI investments.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS BUILDING

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The technology acceptance model (TAM) was developed by Davis (1989). It is one of the widely adopted and applied frameworks for understanding technology adoption. TAM is a combination of two primary constructs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, both of which are essential for understanding technology adoption. According to Aljarrah, Elrehail, and Aababneh (2016), Zou and Huang (2023) Perceived usefulness is the degree to which an individual believes that using a system would enhance job performance, and perceived ease of use is the extent to which one believes that use of a system would be free from effort. Given the study's focus on individual perceptions of risk, trust, and awareness at the individual level, TAM was more appropriate because it applies to this study's constructs, and it has strong predictive power and straightforwardness. TAM is an effective model for the investigation of technology adoption and acceptance (Scherer & Teo, 2019).

AI Awareness and Employee Performance

AI awareness is defined as employees' subjective evaluations of the impact of AI and related technologies on their career development, skill adaptability, and task content (Del Giudice, Scuotto, Orlando, & Mustilli, 2023). New technologies have increased employee concerns about job security; however, many organizations continue to integrate them into the workplace (Nam, 2019). One of the reasons is that AI awareness equips employees with the cognitive readiness needed to interact effectively with intelligent systems, thereby reducing uncertainty and resistance to technological change (C. Li, Ashraf, Amin, & Safdar, 2023).

Dwivedi et al. (2021) Report that employees who comprehend the purpose, functioning, and benefits of AI tools are more likely to utilize these technologies to enhance task performance. Zong and Guan (2025) Discovered that employees who comprehended how AI tools are used for data analysis and predictive insights, as well as for

automating processes, were more effective at employing such tools to enhance job efficiency and service quality. AI awareness enhances the confidence of employees, which results in performance improvements (Olan, Nyuur, & Arakpogun, 2024). Similarly, Robina-Ramírez, Ravina-Ripoll, Leal-Solís, and Medina-Merodio (2025) Provide evidence that AI awareness has positive attitudinal consequences by increasing happiness at work, which can ultimately improve job performance. Their results indicate that AI automation tools designed to streamline processes grant workers agency and result in higher job satisfaction and engagement. Further supporting this view, Schram, Jóhannesdóttir, Einarsson, Bjarnadóttir, and Rogers (2025) examine Artificial Intelligence on performance in educational settings, concluding that teachers' familiarity with generative AI tools improves teaching efficiency by enabling the integration of these tools in instructional processes.

According to Gurney, Hughes, Pynadath, and Wang AI-awareness can also lead to digital skills, which are crucial for performance enhancement, particularly in environments requiring mental-state reasoning and problem-solving, as AI tools aid in making decisions and executing tasks. Rieder, Pappas, and Griffith (2025) Conducted a study on digital transformations at the organizational level, revealing that employees skilled in AI technologies experience diminished job insecurity, thereby cultivating a more favorable perspective on performance. In a different vein, Zhonghua and Heng (2025) explore another dimension of AI impact when they analyze the association between AI awareness and employees' innovative behaviors. Second, awareness of AI has implications for psychological safety and organizational trust. Armstrong and Armstrong (2025) demonstrate how the implementation of AI in the workplace can increase psychological safety, which can lead to high employee performance.

H_1: AI Awareness is positively associated with Employee Performance.

AI Awareness and AI Adoption

AI awareness is essential for AI adoption (Harshitha & Rajashekar, 2025). AI adoption refers to an organization's decision to implement AI for operational or strategic objectives (Mikalef & Krogstie, 2020). It is identified as human readiness, which is a key predictor of adoption. Ahmad (2025) found that awareness predicts favorable attitudes toward AI, which, in turn, influences AI-related behaviors. Additionally, AI awareness creates a favorable attitude towards AI, which in turn enhances willingness to use AI in business processes (Lichtenthaler, 2020). These benefits are more efficient operations, better decision-making, and a competitive advantage (MAHABUB, Hossain, & Snigdha, 2025).

According to Seçkin (2022) says that employees are less afraid of AI if they know its benefits and role in their workplace, rather than fearing it will take their jobs. Employees who are informed about the ethical considerations of AI are conscious about the implications of AI and can participate in conversations and support the development of organizational policy so that AI is deployed in compliance and in accordance with regulations (Mishchenko & Shishlyannikova, 2025). On the other hand, a lack of awareness can translate into passive resistance to change, hampering the possible gains from AI adoption (Roe, Perkins, Somoray, Miller, & Furze, 2025).

While trust in AI is often considered mediating between awareness and adoption, its exact role warrants further investigation. Awareness allows individuals to better understand AI, enhancing trust, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of adoption (Gambacorta, Jappelli, & Oliviero, 2025). Mobayo, Aribisala, Yusuf, and Belgore (2021) pointed out that awareness of AI is a key component in the adoption process, especially in resource-intensive industries within the energy sector. They indicate that managers will pursue the integration of AI when they see how it's able to improve operations and productivity (Mobayo et al., 2021). Similarly, Bhuiyan, Husain, Islam, and Amin (2025) report that in the healthcare sector, increased awareness of AI capabilities among healthcare professionals has led to a greater

willingness to adopt AI-driven tools; individuals who are more familiar with AI have a higher tendency to use these applications, particularly for diagnostics and administrative tasks. Thus, awareness acts as both a direct and indirect driver of adoption behavior.

H_2: Awareness of AI is associated with AI adoption.

AI Adoption as Mediator

AI adoption serves as a vital mediating mechanism, converting the cognitive and affective effects of AI awareness into measurable improvements in employee performance (Malik & Malik, 2024). By automating repetitive, time-intensive, and administrative tasks, AI adoption reduces cognitive demands and enables employees to focus on higher-value, strategic activities that require critical thinking and interpersonal skills (Gao & Feng, 2023). Employees who view AI as a means for professional growth, skill enhancement, and efficiency are more likely to adopt and effectively use AI tools (Jaiswal, Arun, & Varma, 2023). Empirical evidence supports a serial multiple mediation model in which improvements in AI adoption lead to better decision-making and process performance, which together contribute to increased business value (Zebec & Indihar Štemberger, 2024).

Moreover, AI adoption, particularly when supported by a positive organizational culture, enhances employee innovation by enabling novel problem-solving approaches and fostering creative solutions. (Z. Li, Choi, & Kim, 2025). The beneficial effects of AI adoption on performance depend on factors such as employees' digital literacy and adaptability to new technologies. (Huang & Rust, 2021). In the absence of necessary skills and organizational support, AI adoption may result in technostress, skill degradation, and a subsequent decline in employee motivation and performance (Soulami, Benchekroun, & Galiulina, 2024).

Psychological factors such as technology acceptance and trust in AI typically precede the behavioral stage of adoption, which, in turn, affects outcomes, including job satisfaction and performance (Vuori, Burkhard, & Pitkäranta, 2025). In digital transformation initiatives, mediation models demonstrate that employee awareness leads to adoption, which, in turn, influences performance (Azzahra, Prahitaningtyas, Afridi, & Olubisi, 2025; Sadeghi, 2024). Furthermore, employee engagement, which includes both attitudinal and performance aspects, has been recognized as a mediator between AI adoption and performance, suggesting a mechanism that closely corresponds with the awareness-adoption-performance framework (Al-Ayed, 2025).

H_3: AI Adoption mediates the relationship between AI Awareness and Employee Performance.

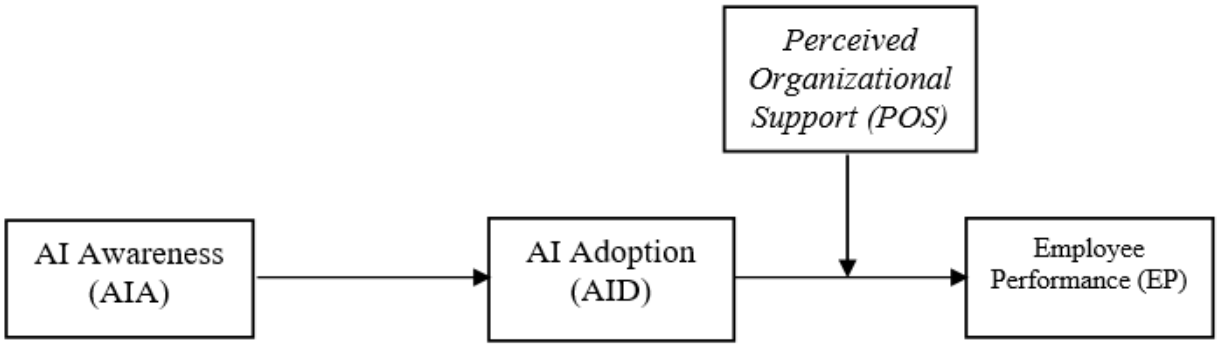

Fig 1: Research framework

Perceived Organizational Support as a Moderator

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) plays a pivotal moderating role in linking workplace factors and employee outcomes (Liu, 2004). Neiroukh et al. (2024) discover that, within financial institutions, POS mitigates the influence of AI utilization on performance, alleviating employee apprehension regarding failure. When POS is high, employees feel confident using AI for complex, high-stakes functions, driving performance gains. In contrast, when POS is low, employees restrict AI use to routine tasks to avoid risk, resulting in limited performance gains (Tong, Jia, Luo, & Fang, 2021). POS also lessens the effect of organizational factors on job satisfaction and adaptive performance. This is because strong support boosts self-efficacy and adaptation, especially when work-life balance is present (Emur & Satrya, 2024).

The extent to which AI awareness translates into improved performance is strongly influenced by employees' perceptions of psychological safety and organizational support (Susanto, Subarjo, Rahman, & Suprapto). In low perceived organizational support (POS) environments, AI awareness may foster concerns about job displacement or skepticism, which can hinder performance (Elfar, 2025). On the other hand, employees in high-POS environments perceive this awareness as a chance for professional growth, allowing them to utilize their knowledge to improve their performance (Tremblay, 2019). Katsaros (2024) has well documented the role of POS in mitigating the stress associated with technological change. Santoso, Abdinagoro, and Arief (2019) showed that POS greatly strengthens the positive link between employees' digital literacy and their innovative work behavior, which is an important measure of performance. Thus, POS functions as an environmental catalyst, shaping whether AI awareness becomes a source of anxiety or a driver of enhanced performance (Kristiana, Goeltom, & Nathalia, 2025).

The moderating role of POS is indirect, as it establishes the conditions for effectively translating awareness into technology use, which subsequently enhances performance (Abubakar & Ahmad, 2013). This perspective is consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model, which posits that subjective norms, including POS elements, shape intentions that ultimately lead to actual technology use (Venkatesh & Thong, 2016). Han, Yoon, Suh, Li, and Chae (2019) found that perceived organizational support moderated the relationship between awareness and performance, with this effect being fully mediated by the actual use of the platform for work-related tasks. Bashir (2023) found that the performance outcomes associated with AI awareness arise from a complex sequence of interactions between behavioral adoption and socio-emotional support, rather than from straightforward, parallel processes.

H_4: There is mediated moderation of AI Adoption and Perceived Organizational Support, respectively, between AI Awareness and Employee Performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Procedures and participants

This research deploys quantitative methods. Questionnaires were identified as the most efficient data-collection technique for this study. The research used a primary research method (the authors devised the survey questions and collected data), gathering data from 190 respondents using a questionnaire (Abbasi, Tsiotsou, Hussain, Rather, & Ting, 2023). The sample includes professionals from Pakistan who use AI for their job-related tasks. The study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of Green International University, Lahore. Coding and entry of Survey Data were done by converting data into numerical values and entering them into SPSS. Then, the data were screened for missing values, outliers, and very low response standard deviations. Testing of the hypotheses was performed using regression analysis in SPSS and Hayes' PROCESS.

Measures

The items were adapted from literature and discussed with the field experts before piloting. The questionnaire was finalized after the pilot

study. The relevant measurement scales used in this study are mature scales that have been published in internationally renowned journals. A five-point Likert scale was used for all the study measures ("where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree"). This study had four main variables: AI Awareness, with four items adapted from Bai, Zhang, Yu, and Yao (2024). AI Adoption: seven items adapted from Zeng et al. (2022), and employee performance: seven items adapted from Manzoor, Wei, and Asif (2021). Further, Perceived Organizational Support has three items adapted from Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, and Rhoades (2002).

Results

Sampling

The demographic details of the sample are shown in Table 1. Among the total number of respondents, more than half are male (n = 115, 60.53%) compared to the female respondents (n = 85, 44.74%). The most represented age group is 26–35 (n = 61, 32.11%). The lowest number of participants belongs to the age group older than 45 (n = 30, 15.79%). Most of the participants work in the private sector (n = 101, 53.16%), and 33.68% of participants work in the public sector.

Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach alpha values shown in Table 2 indicate that all three constructs are greater than 0.7, suggesting very good internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 are considered acceptable. This means that the constructs used in the research are reliable for further analysis.

Table 1. Demographics of the sample

N=190

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	115	60.53
	Female	85	44.74
Age (years)	18-25	47	24.74
	26-35	61	32.11
	36-45	52	23.37
	46 or above	30	15.79
Education	Doctorate	13	6.84
Postgraduate	37	19.47	
Undergraduate	120	63.16	
College / Diploma	20	10.53	
Current Designation	Top management	37	19.47
Middle management	43	22.63	
Lower management	80	42.11	
Employee	30	15.79	
Experience (years)	1-10	113	49.47
11-20	47	24.74	
	21 or above	30	15.79
Firm Type	Public	64	33.68
Private	101	53.16	
Not for Profit	25	13.16	
Firm Experience	0-5	39	20.53
6-10	47	24.74	
11-40	78	41.05	
41-70	21	11.05	
71 or above	05	2.63	

Table 2. Cronbach Results

Constructs	Cronbach Alpha	N of items
AIA	0.853	4
AID	0.856	7
EP	0.74	7
POS	0.921	3

Each of the four main components or constructs (AIA, AID, EP, and POS) is reliable. In other words, the questions used for each of the three constructs are measuring the same thing.

The Principal Component Analysis with Promax rotation was used to explore the principal components of the AIA, AID, EP, and POS scales. The results of the initial analysis revealed four components with Eigenvalues over 1. Four items loaded on component 1(AIA), seven items loaded on component 2 (AIA), seven items loaded on component 3 (EP), and three items loaded on component 3 (pos) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. PCA

Items	Components			
	AIA	AID	EP	POS
AIA1	.764			
AIA2	.616			
AIA3	.810			
AIA4	.605			
AID1		.347		
AID2		.700		
AID3		.812		
AID4		.809		
AID5		.866		
AID6		.971		
AID7		.866		
EP1		.777		
EP2			.614	
EP3			.815	
EP4			.619	
EP5			.848	
EP6			.681	
EP7			.756	
POS1				.865
POS2				.879
POS3				.849

Hypothesis Testing—Regression

The regression analysis was conducted to test the formulated hypotheses H1–H2. Table 4 shows the results of the three separate simple linear regression analyses, including the value of R Square, the unstandardized regression coefficients (beta), t statistics, and associated p-value.

Table 4. Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	R Square	Unstandardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Impact
AIA	EP	.655	.810	18.909	.000	**Significant**
AIA	AID	.049	.067	3.113	.002	**Significant**
		P<0.05				

As shown in Table 4, the impact of AIA on EP was significant. Thus, H1 is supported. Confirmation of H1 indicates that Employee performance increases with Awareness of AI. For H2, the analysis indicates that there was a significant impact of AIA on AID. Thus, H2 is supported. Confirmation of H2 indicates that awareness of AI has a positive relation with AI adoption.
Thus, the hypotheses H1 and H2 were supported and together served to combine.

Hypothesis Testing—Mediation
To investigate the possible mediation effect of AID on the relationship between AIA and EP, as was put forth in hypothesis 3 (H4), a simple mediation analysis was performed. The dependent variable was EP. The independent variable was AIA. The mediator variable for the analysis was AID. The indirect effect was statistically significant, E = .0792, 95% CI (.0266, .1341), as shown in Table 4. Thus, hypothesis H4 is supported.

Hypothesis Testing—Moderated Mediation
To test H4, whether the mediation effect of AID on the relationships between AIA and EP, a moderated mediation analysis was performed. POS was the predictor variable.

Table 5. Moderation Mediation Analysis

	Index	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Impact
AID*POS	-.0022	.0026	-.0080	.0023	**Not Sig.**

Thus, the hypothesis (H4) that the mediating effect of AID between AIAEP and WGP will differ between POS is not supported.

Hypothesis Summary
In summary, as shown in Table 6, H1–H3 are supported by the data, while H4 is not supported.

Table 6. Hypothesis Summary

Hypothesis	Status
H1: AIA→EP	**Significant**
H2: AIA→AID	**Significant**
H3: AIA→AID→EP	**Significant**
H4: AIA→POS→AID→EP	**Not Significant**

Discussion
The role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the organizational context is a contemporary topic, and AI awareness impacts job performance. This research addresses the empirical gap in relation to psychological mechanisms at the employee level, i.e., how awareness of AI shapes performance outcomes in the Pakistani industry setting. Through the perspective of AI Awareness, AI Adoption, and Employee Performance, this study contributes to existing conceptual models like the TAM and extends its theoretical horizon. The relationship between AI Adoption and POS is not

statistically significant in this study but warrants further investigation. Elsewhere, POS has been found to moderate the effect of technology adoption on employee outcomes (Yu & Arshad, 2025). In the present study, POS was not a primary determinant; it seemed to be affected by leadership support and training, as well as by staff motivation, more than AI implementation in influencing performance. While Jain, Garg, and Khera (2022), found that organizational support often plays a crucial role in technology use; this finding departs somewhat from traditional models.

Theoretical implications

The TAM, which emphasizes organization-level adoption and perceived ease of use and usefulness of technology, is expanded in this paper to include AI Awareness as a precursor factor for both AI Adoption and Employee Performance. Straub (2009) have so far focused on organizational adoption and have not gone deeply into understanding the cognitive processes of the individuals who mediate these results. This study makes a novel contribution by focusing on individual-level AI awareness and, following Moravec, Hynek, Gavurova, and Kubak (2024)recognizing psychological constructs as essential to the acceptance of technology.

AI awareness has lasting effects on employees' performance by fostering trust and engagement with AI technologies. This association is consistent with the expanded TAM model Almeida, Junça Silva, Lopes, and Braz (2025), which posits that awareness and perceived usefulness are two important factors of technology acceptance and performance.

Therefore, as indicated by AI Adoption between AI Awareness and Employee Performance, the effect of mere awareness is insufficient; it is the utilization of AI that could improve performance. The research of Rafi, Aitken, Fatah, and Mailangkay (2024)Highlights this mediating role and shows that generative AI tools are related to higher employee productivity, thus underlining the importance of not only creating general awareness about AI but also facilitating its effective integration into work practices.

Policy and Practical Implications

The findings suggest that investments in AI hardware or software should be matched by equivalent investments in "human ware," with a particular emphasis on awareness programs. Since awareness directly influences performance and facilitates adoption, managers should prioritize transparent communication about the operation of AI tools and their potential benefits for employee career development.

Furthermore, the lack of significance for perceived organizational support (POS) as a moderator indicates that organizations should not rely exclusively on general support. Instead, greater emphasis should be placed on specific facilitating factors, such as targeted training and technical upskilling, which are likely to be more directly associated with the adoption-performance relationship than broad emotional support.

Limitations and future research

Despite significant findings, several limitations may have influenced the results. The purposive sampling method and the sample of 190 professionals from Pakistan limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or economic contexts. Furthermore, reliance on primary survey data introduces the potential for common-method bias, as respondents might overreport their performance or AI awareness due to social desirability.

Moreover, the cross-sectional design of the data precludes definitive conclusions regarding long-term causality. Although the regression analysis indicates a relationship, the study does not track changes in performance as AI awareness develops over time. The lack of significance for the POS moderator may also stem from the measurement scale employed; with only three items, it may not have adequately captured the complexity of organizational support within the Pakistani workplace.

Future research could investigate different context variables that may moderate the relationship

between AI awareness and performance, e.g., organizational culture, managerial leadership style, or industry-specific barriers to adopting AI. A longitudinal study of AI awareness and employee performance could significantly advance understanding of the lasting effects of AI awareness on performance.

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