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The Influence of AI on Employee Flourishing in Multinational Companies

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ABSTRACT:

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes more deeply embedded in global business operations, its impact on the workforce has shifted from a purely technological concern to a human development issue. In multinational companies (MNCs), where workforce diversity and operational complexity intersect, the influence of AI on employee well-being is especially significant. While AI has the potential to improve performance and streamline processes, it also presents new psychosocial risks and workplace pressures. Current literature lacks a unified understanding of how AI adoption influences employee flourishing, defined as thriving and dignity, especially across different roles within MNCs. This thesis explores how AI adoption affects employee flourishing in MNCs, applying the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model to examine AI adoption as a job demand or a job resource. It aims to uncover the differing experiences of managerial and non-managerial employees and how these shape employee flourishing and future roles in MNCs in the AI era, where a conceptual matrix of AI automation and augmentation is being implemented. The study employed a qualitative, interpretivist approach using semi-structured interviews with 14 employees from various country units and functions within MNCs. Data were analysed thematically, developed based on the literature of the JD–R framework.

Findings show that AI functions as a dual impact between job demand and job resource: it enhances efficiency, autonomy, and learning opportunities, but also introduces technostress, job insecurity, and cognitive overload. Managers often benefit from automatic assistance to strategic augmentation and expanded influence, but face increasing role stretch and accountability. Non-managerial employees, particularly in routine roles, encounter more basic automation and task reduction, which may erode autonomy unless offset by reskilling and support. The study presents an updated conceptual model linking AI adoption types to employee flourishing outcomes, mediated across diverse institutional and cultural contexts.

AI does not inherently improve or harm employee well-being; instead, its effect depends on how it is designed, governed, and integrated into work. To foster flourishing, MNCs must implement inclusive AI strategies that balance automation with augmentation, prioritise human-centric governance, and invest in the future competencies of both managerial and nonmanagerial employee. The thesis contributes to theory by integrating JD-R and the automation-augmentation lens, and calls for future research on longitudinal outcomes, actor-specific interventions, and industry-level comparisons.

KEYWORDS: AI adoption, employee flourishing, multinational companies, JD–R model, human-centric AI.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

AI has quickly become an essential part of modern business operations. This shift is especially evident in large multi-corporate environments, where the complexity of coordination, communication, and collaboration creates both challenges and unique opportunities for AI-driven solutions. Over recent years, the rate of AI adoption among companies has increased significantly; for example, 78% of organizations worldwide reported using AI in 2024, up from 20% in 2017 (Stanford HAI, 2025). This demonstrates how AI technologies are becoming more integrated into daily corporate functions, from automating routine tasks to enhancing decision-making. Moreover, the bigger threat to jobs is not automation itself, but companies failing to adopt modern technology. If firms don't invest, they won't improve productivity or remain competitive, hindering new job creation. In summary, falling behind poses a greater risk to jobs than automation (Raja, 2016).

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are at the forefront of this AI-driven workplace transformation. With their extensive scale and global reach, MNCs often lead the way in adopting new technologies to stay competitive internationally. Today, most large firms have started integrating AI: for example, 78% of organizations worldwide report using AI in at least one business function - up from just 55% a year earlier (Billups & Abijah, 2025). However, AI adoption in Europe still varies; only about 8% of EU enterprises (with 10 or more employees) used AI technologies in 2023 (Eurostat, 2024), showing that while global leaders embrace AI, many companies are still in early stages. Asia-Pacific economies are also experiencing a wave of AI adoption. A Deloitte survey found that 62% of employees in the Asia-Pacific region use generative AI tools, with 43% using them specifically for work tasks. Such use is linked to higher job satisfaction and increased productivity (Johnston et al., 2024). From intelligent chatbots in customer service to data analytics for strategic decision-making, AI systems are becoming integrated into daily workflows across countries. Employees in global companies are increasingly encountering AI-based tools as part of their jobs, whether it is an algorithm that enhances their sales calls or a machine-learning system that helps in hiring and performance evaluations. This demonstrates how AI technologies are becoming deeply embedded in everyday corporate functions, from automating routine tasks to enhancing decision-making. These trends show that AI’s role in multinational companies is no longer just a trend but a vital part of modern international business.

In some cases, business leaders now prioritize AI solutions even before hiring new staff. A recent global survey of executives across seven countries found that 41% were already reducing employee headcount thanks to AI, and nearly one-third said their firms consider AI before making new hires. Such trends have fueled dramatic warnings of a coming “job-pocalypse” for workers, especially younger generations entering the workforce (Partridge, 2025). While AI promises productivity and cost-saving benefits for companies, it also raises serious concerns about employees' experiences and futures. On one hand, executives see AI as a way to address skill gaps and improve operations. On the other hand, workers and experts worry about the effects on job security, career growth, and morale. This balancing act is significant for large multinational companies, where AI-driven restructuring can impact thousands of employees across different regions.

The rise of AI in multinational corporations directly impacts employee experience and well-being. Incorporating AI into these global workplaces creates a paradox: while these technologies aim to increase productivity, reduce physical effort, and enhance decision-making, they also raise concerns about job loss, privacy issues, and the risk of dehumanizing work. A long-term study using German survey data from 2000 to 2020 found no significant adverse effects of AI on workers' well-being and mental health. In some cases, there was evidence of improved health and satisfaction, partly due to decreased physical demands at work (Giuntella et al., 2025). However, other studies report increased anxiety, lower life satisfaction, and concerns about job security (Nazareno & Schiff, 2021).

This study fills a gap in the literature by examining how AI implementation in multinational corporations can be strategically designed and managed to foster employee flourishing across its various dimensions. Unlike previous studies that mainly focus on productivity metrics or harm prevention, this research adopts a positive psychology approach to explore how AI can actively enhance employee well-being, personal development, and meaningful work experiences. On a macro level, reputable estimates indicate significant economic potential. McKinsey's analysis estimates the annual value of generative AI to range from $2.6 trillion to $4.4 trillion across 63 use cases. More relevant to short-term organizational priorities, 92% of executives plan to increase AI spending over the next three years, demonstrating that AI has become a key investment area rather than a mere experiment (McKinsey & Company, 2023). According to Microsoft's 2024 Work Trend Index, most users report that AI tools help them save time (90%), boost creativity (84%), enjoy their jobs more (83%), and focus on top-priority tasks (85%) (Microsoft & LinkedIn, 2024). However, this productivity boost also brings complex psychological and social challenges. Research from Harvard Business Review (2024) shows that while AI increases productivity, it can also lead to loneliness and poorer health (Tang et al., 2024). The study finds that employees who extensively use AI tools may experience less human interaction and greater isolation, which could weaken the social relationships essential for flourishing.

Furthermore, research shows that employees who regularly use AI tools are more likely to worry about losing their jobs: 49% of regular users believe their position may disappear in the next 10 years, compared to only 24% of employees who do not use AI (Boston Consulting Group, 2025). This suggests that while AI tools can improve immediate work experiences, they may also cause underlying anxiety about future job security, which could threaten long-term success. The widespread use of AI in MNCs raises important questions about its effect on employees' daily work and future growth. In an international setting, there may be additional complexities, such as cultural differences in how technology is received or varying regulatory standards for AI and labor across countries, which influence how AI affects employee well-being. All these factors make the topic of AI's impact on employees' flourishing in MNCs both vital and timely.

1.2 Research Purpose and Questions and Delimitations

AI adoption can improve organizational efficiency and support employee well-being by automating repetitive tasks, optimizing schedules, and offering personalized training (Etemad-Sajadi, 2025). In light of the background discussed earlier, this study is guided by the following central research question. The main research question of this thesis is:

1. How does AI influence employee flourishing as a resource or demand in MNCs?

To address this with the goal of long-term employee growth, two specific sub-questions are formulated below:

2. How does AI adoption as a resource or demand foster employee flourishing in MNCs?
3. How does AI adoption as a resource or demand hinder employee flourishing in MNCs?

While the research questions indicate what this study aims to discover, the objectives clarify the results it intends to deliver by turning those questions into actionable goals. First, the study will evaluate how AI-driven automation and augmentation affect key aspects of employee well-being (such as job satisfaction, engagement, performance, and work–life balance), and understand the job challenges that can come with AI implementation (like increased stress, loss of autonomy, role ambiguity, or workload spikes), and how these issues impact employee experiences. Second, it will identify best practices and develop recommendations for multinational companies on integrating AI to promote positive employee experiences. This includes strategies to reduce risks (e.g., increased stress, decreased autonomy) and enhance benefits (e.g., skill development, more meaningful work) associated with AI adoption.

This thesis has several limitations. First, the study uses semi-structured interviews with employees and management to employ a qualitative research approach. It does not include quantitative methods such as surveys, statistical modeling, or experimental designs. As a result, the findings focus on depth and contextual understanding. Second, this thesis concentrates on large, formally organized multinational companies. Local businesses, small enterprises, and startups are excluded. This boundary allows the analysis to emphasize complex, cross-border environments where AI is typically scaled and standardized across different employee groups. Third, employee flourishing is defined through a multidimensional well-being perspective that encompasses job satisfaction, engagement, autonomy, meaning, and professional development. The study does not examine other outcomes such as company performance or labor displacement. Regarding the technical focus, the research is limited to AI technologies used in employee-facing functions, such as HR analytics, generative AI for productivity, algorithmic performance monitoring, and task automation. Broader AI applications unrelated to employee experience (e.g., AI in product design or customer segmentation) are outside the scope unless they directly affect employee roles. Finally, the study captures employees' and managers' experiences with AI as currently implemented in their organizations. It does not evaluate long-term outcomes or hypothetical future scenarios, though participants may comment on expected changes or long-term effects. Additionally, perspectives from external stakeholders, such as clients, regulators, or labor unions, are not included in the primary analysis, though their influence may be discussed as contextual factors.

1.3 Definition of key concepts

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems or machines that exhibit capabilities that usually require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, or language understanding (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). In practical terms, AI is often defined as "a system's ability to accurately interpret external data, learn from it, and use those learnings to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adaptation" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). In practice, AI systems utilize technologies like machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, and other algorithms to perceive data, analyze and interpret it, make predictions or recommendations based on that analysis, often improving their performance over time as they learn from feedback, and perform tasks with some level of autonomy (Eurostat, 2024). In fact, AI is not a single technology but an umbrella term that covers a range of techniques and applications. These include machine learning algorithms (which identify patterns in large data sets), natural language processing (which enables understanding of human language), computer vision (for interpreting visual information), robotics, and more. AI systems can be narrow (designed for a specific task, like a spam email filter or a customer service chatbot) or general (with broader cognitive capabilities) (Syracuse University School of Information Studies, n.d.).

In business and management, AI has become a vital tool for innovation and competitiveness. Thanks to the rise of big data and advances in computing, AI-driven technologies are now top strategic priorities for companies (Kaaria, 2024). Organizations are adopting AI to automate repetitive tasks, analyze data for insights, improve decision-making, and even create new products and services. For example, a growing ecosystem of AI tools helps employees reduce analysis time, cut routine work, and produce higher-quality results with less need for expert support. In creative workflows, generative design assistants (such as Canva’s AI features, Adobe’s Firefly, and Gemini-powered helpers) can quickly draft simple logos, social media posts, and flyers, turning rough ideas into usable mockups in minutes. In data-heavy roles, business intelligence platforms with AI copilots (like Power BI, Tableau, or Looker Studio) now handle data cleaning, spot patterns, and generate basic dashboards and narratives, often without waiting for IT or specialized developers. For middle managers, presentation and reporting tools (such as Gamma, Canva, and AI slide generators) put together slide outlines, visualize key data points, and reword sections for clarity and tone, significantly cutting weekly reporting time. Knowledge workers also use AI to prepare for meetings and follow up, including summarizing long documents, creating agendas, and making action-item lists. Meanwhile, low-code AI automations connect routine tasks across email, spreadsheets, and project management apps. These capabilities lead to faster turnaround times, more iterations within the same timeframe, and greater independence for individuals, like self-serve dashboards and self-made slides without needing IT support. They also promote consistency, such as brand-safe assets and uniform report templates, and boost decision support with auto-generated insights and embedded what-if analyses. The main feature of these tools is their ability to perform cognitive or decision-making tasks at scale, often more quickly or accurately than humans. It is important to understand that AI does not mean machines are replacing humans entirely; instead, AI enhances human skills.

Employee flourishing

Employee flourishing occurs when people feel at their best and perform well at work. It encompasses many aspects of well-being, such as job satisfaction, performance, and personal growth, that together support a positive, meaningful work experience. Essentially, it means that the individual is thriving, experiencing a deep sense of vitality, purpose, and engagement in their work. It is the feeling of being fully involved in one's career, where work adds positively to daily life. In multinational corporations (MNCs), this idea applies to all employee levels, from front-line staff to executives, and represents an optimal state of work-related well-being that crosses cultural and hierarchical boundaries. Flourishing employees experience both thriving and dignity in their work. Thriving is a positive psychological state characterized by a sense of vitality (feeling energized) and learning (growing and acquiring new skills) in one's job (Spreitzer et al., 2005; Porath et al., 2012). Dignity at work means being treated with respect and fairness and finding one's work meaningful and valued (Allan & Blustein, 2022; Hodson, 2001, as cited in Zoogah et al., 2025, p.3). This concept includes both hedonic well-being (positive emotions, happiness at work) and eudaimonic well-being (meaningfulness, achievement, personal development) (PositivePsychology.com, n.d.). For example, a flourishing employee might report high energy and enthusiasm for their projects, a strong alignment between their values and their company's mission, and consistent progress in acquiring new skills or taking on meaningful challenges.

Within MNCs, certain organizational practices can support and enhance employee flourishing across diverse contexts. According to Zoogah et al. (2025), positive organizational practices are suggested. For example, offering AI-assisted learning opportunities for skill development, flexible work arrangements that respect employees' work-life needs, inclusive leadership behaviors that ensure all voices are valued, and comprehensive well-being initiatives; these foster the conditions for both thriving and dignity. In another example, providing flexible working schedules and empathetic communication has been shown to support employee functioning and resilience during crises. Such practices signal organizational support and benevolence, boosting employees' vitality and learning while affirming their worth and meaning in the workplace. In summary, an academic definition of employee flourishing in MNCs encompasses a work environment where individuals at every level thrive with energy and growth, and enjoy dignity through fair, respectful, and meaningful treatment—supported by organizational practices and cultures that enable these conditions (Spreitzer et al., 2005; Allan & Blustein, 2022).

Multinational corporations (MNCs)

In the academic context, according to Dunning and Lundan (2008), a Multinational Corporation (MNC) is defined as firms that hold either total or partial control over the management of revenue-generating assets in more than one country by engaging in international production through foreign direct investment (FDI)." Moreover, a Multinational Corporation (MNC) is generally defined as a company that operates in two or more countries, usually with its headquarters in one country (the home country) and additional facilities, offices, or subsidiaries in other nations (the host countries). In other words, an MNC manages productive activities or provides goods/services across multiple countries as part of a single enterprise. Well-known examples of MNCs include Apple Inc., The Coca-Cola Company, McDonald's Corporation, and Nestlé, among many others (Sumampong, 2024–2025). These corporations are characterized by their large scale and global presence; they often possess significant financial resources, a diverse international workforce, and the ability to move operations across borders. MNCs play a crucial role in the global economy by driving international trade, investment, and technology transfer. They also tend to be early adopters of new business practices and technologies, seeking efficiencies and innovations that can be applied across their worldwide operations.

Managing an MNC offers unique opportunities and challenges. Global operations provide access to a broad customer base and pools of talent, as well as the ability to leverage differences in costs or expertise across countries. However, MNCs must also navigate cultural differences, legal and regulatory frameworks, and market conditions in the countries where they operate. For employees, working in an MNC might involve interacting with colleagues from various national backgrounds, adapting to different cultural norms, or collaborating across time zones. This thesis specifically focuses on multinational corporations because they are often leading the way in implementing AI tools on a large scale, and the impact of AI on employees in these companies can have important implications. Studying MNCs helps us understand the complexity of AI adoption in a global context, such as how AI initiatives led by headquarters are viewed by local subsidiaries, and how global AI policies align with local HR practices. Gaining insights into how AI influences employee well-being in MNCs will thus benefit international business management and ensure that the benefits of AI are experienced across diverse cultural and geographic workforces.

1.4 The structure of the study

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the research topic and explains the context and reasons for studying how artificial intelligence (AI) affects employee well-being in a multinational company. It describes the research problem, outlines the goals and research questions, identifies the research gap, and highlights the significance of the study for international business and human resource management. Key concepts are clarified, and the thesis's overall structure is outlined.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive review of relevant literature on AI adoption and its effects on employees’ well-being and performance. It clarifies key concepts, reviews prior research on technology-driven multinational companies, and develops a theoretical framework that considers both the positive and negative impacts of AI on employee well-being.

The third chapter outlines the research design and methodology, explaining the qualitative approach, sample selection, and data collection through semi-structured interviews with employees at the chosen multinational company. It also details the analytical strategy, especially the use of thematic analysis, which offers deep insights into employee attitudes and behaviors beyond what quantitative methods can show.

The fourth chapter presents the findings from the qualitative analysis and integrates them with a discussion based on the existing literature and the conceptual framework. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the main insights, revisiting the research questions, and demonstrating how they have been addressed. It also acknowledges the study’s limitations, proposes directions for future research, and discusses practical implications for organizations looking to create environments where both technology and employees can succeed in the long term.

The fifth chapter interprets the findings through the lens of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. The research showed that people experience AI in very different ways. AI enhances efficiency, creativity, and learning for some, while causing stress, uncertainty, and identity disruption for others. Overall, the impact of AI on flourishing depends on the balance between new resources and new demands, shaped by organisational support and employee role.

Chapter six at the end shows that AI is changing how we work, but it does not automatically make work better or worse. What matters is how AI is introduced and supported. If organisations use AI to empower people, give them the skills to grow, and keep human values at the centre, then employees are more likely to thrive. But if AI is rolled out without proper support, it can lead to stress and uncertainty, especially for frontline workers. The key takeaway is this: flourishing with AI is possible, but it takes intention, leadership, and a human-first mindset.

2 Literature Review

This chapter provides a thorough review of relevant literature on AI adoption and its effects on employee flourishing. It starts by defining key concepts, such as employee flourishing, and reviewing past studies on technology-driven change in multinational companies. It is also grounded in fundamental theory, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework. Next, the chapter explains AI deployment and its subcategories. It discusses how AI adoption can generate job resources, like new skills and efficiency gains, as well as job demands or stresses, such as job insecurity. Based on these insights, the development of the study's conceptual framework is outlined, designed as a dual-pathway model where job resources and job demands act as mediators linking AI adoption to employee flourishing in a positive or negative way.

2.1 The adoption of Artificial Intelligence in MNCs

2.1.1 The development and adoption of AI in MNCs

Generally, there are many definitions of AI. Historically, four distinct human-centered approaches to defining and describing AI have existed, as shown in Figure 1 below (Russell & Norvig, 2021, p2).

Thinking Humanly "The exciting new effort to make computers think . . . *machines with minds*, in the full and literal sense." (Haugeland, 1985) "[The automation of] activities that we associate with human thinking, activities such as decision-making, problem solving, learning . . ." (Bellman, 1978)	**Thinking Rationally** "The study of mental faculties through the use of computational models." (Charniak and McDermott, 1985) "The study of the computations that make it possible to perceive, reason, and act." (Winston, 1992)
Acting Humanly "The art of creating machines that perform functions that require intelligence when performed by people." (Kurzweil, 1990) "The study of how to make computers do things at which, at the moment, people are better." (Rich and Knight, 1991)	**Acting Rationally** "Computational Intelligence is the study of the design of intelligent agents." (Poole *et al.*, 1998) "AI . . . is concerned with intelligent behavior in artifacts." (Nilsson, 1998)

Figure 1. Some definitions of artificial intelligence are organized into four categories. (Russell & Norvig, 2021, p. 2).

As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, AI is often defined as “a system’s ability to correctly interpret external data, learn from such data, and use those insights to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adaptation” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). According to Mukhamediev et al. (2022), AI has been categorized into seven technological sub-levels, including machine learning (ML), planning, robotics, expert systems, speech, vision, and natural language processing (NLP) (see Figure 1). However, the most common AI technologies used in multinational corporations include generative AI, machine learning, and natural language processing (NLP) (McKinsey & Company, 2025; International Data Center Authority [IDCA], 2025). In organizational settings, AI is best understood not as a single technology but as an ecosystem of interconnected capabilities such as machine learning (ML), deep learning, natural language processing (NLP), computer vision, robotic process automation (RPA), and, more recently, generative AI models like large language models (LLMs).

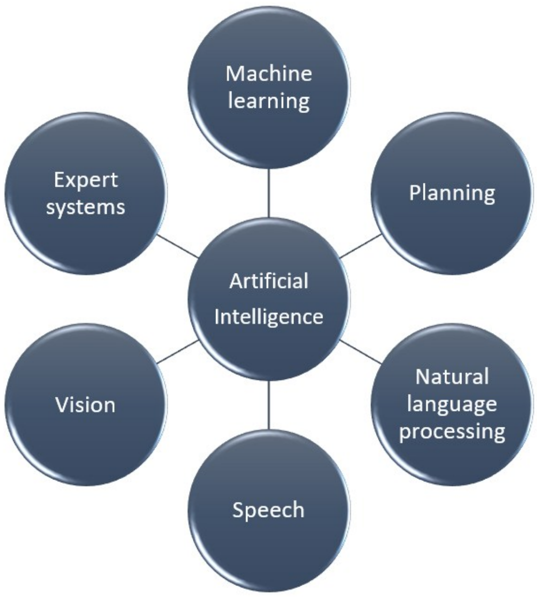

Figure 2. Sub-levels of technology of AI adoption from Mukhamediev et al. (2022, p. 5)

Machine learning is an essential subfield of AI where algorithms detect patterns in data to predict outcomes or make decisions without needing to be explicitly programmed for each rule. It includes supervised, unsupervised, semi-supervised, and reinforcement learning methods. Deep learning is a specialized branch of ML that relies on multi-layer neural networks (LeCun et al. 2015, as cited in Delipetrev et al., 2020) capable of modeling very complex, non-linear relationships and processing unstructured data like images, text, and audio (Syracuse University School of Information Studies, n.d.).

AI has its roots in 1950, when Alan Turing asked the famous question: “Can machines think?” In his article, he explained how machines could be made intelligent and introduced the Turing Test. This test says that if a person cannot tell whether they are talking to a human or a machine, then the machine can be considered intelligent (TURING, 1950). Turing’s ideas became the starting point for AI research, and the Turing Test is still used today as a way to measure machine intelligence (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019).

Six years later, in 1956, the term “Artificial Intelligence” was officially introduced at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on AI. This event brought together experts from different fields to create a new area of study focused on AI (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019). Key figures like Marvin Minsky, John McCarthy, Herbert Simon, Allen Newell, Claude Shannon, Nathaniel Rochester, and others are often called the founding fathers of AI (Crevier, 1993).

The 2010s experienced a rise in deep learning, fueled by large datasets, improved computing power, and advancements in neural network design. This progress resulted in breakthroughs in image recognition, speech recognition, and natural language processing (NLP), making AI feasible on a large scale across industries like finance, retail, manufacturing, and healthcare (IBM Data & AI Team, n.d.).

Over the past decade, AI has evolved from isolated pilots to becoming a central part of business operations. A European Commission report describes AI as a broad range of technologies, including machine learning, deep learning, text and speech processing, computer vision, and robotic process automation (RPA), which are increasingly being integrated into business workflows (Eurostat, 2024).

On the other hand, NLP includes techniques that enable machines to understand, interpret, and generate human language in both written and spoken forms (Syracuse University School of Information Studies, n.d.). It allows computers to process speech and communicate with humans, broadening its applications in sentiment analysis, chatbots, virtual assistants, document classification, translation, and question-answering systems.

Additionally, generative AI employs models like large language models and diffusion models to produce new content, including text, images, code, audio, and video (He et al., 2025). For multinational companies (MNCs), common applications include code generation, customer service chatbots, marketing copy, internal knowledge searches, and data summaries; these are incorporated into global operations such as supply chains, shared services, HR analytics, marketing, and risk management; shifting from single-use applications to a broad spectrum of AI uses; and increasingly incorporating AI into strategic decision-making and sustainability efforts (see figure 3, Chui et al., 2022).

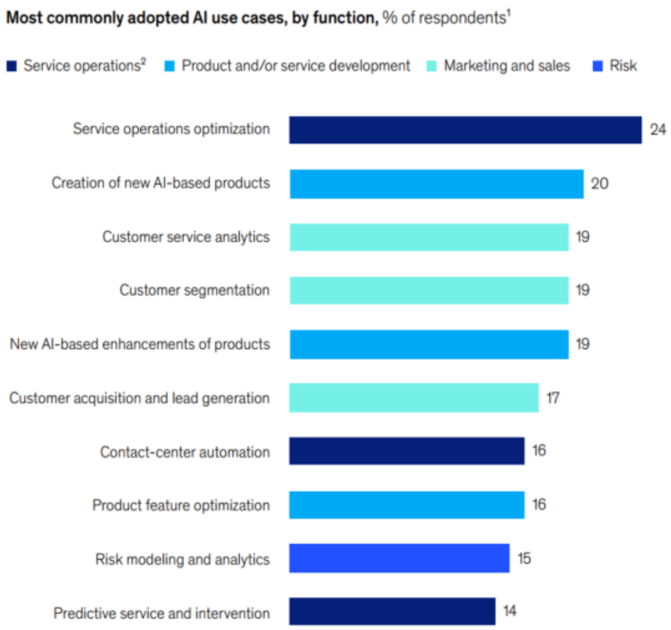

Figure 3. Most commonly adopted AI use cases by function from Quantum Black by McKinsey Global survey (Chui et al., 2022)

Global surveys by McKinsey on AI similarly show that AI adoption in at least one function more than doubled from 2017 to the early 2020s, with the percentage of organizations using AI stabilizing around 50 to 60% by 2022, as illustrated in Figure 4 (Chui et al., 2022).

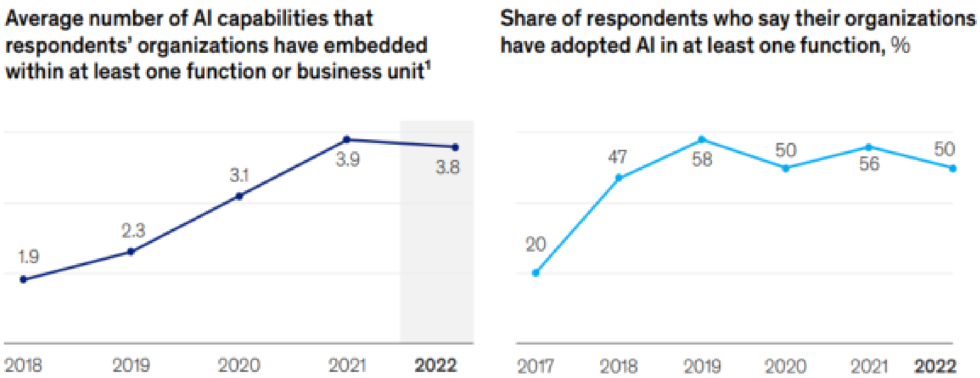

Figure 4. Share of organizations using AI from Quantum Black by McKinsey Global survey (Chui et al., 2022)

In 2025, 76% of organizations reported using AI across their operations, with 69% adopting generative AI in business functions (see figure 5) and 53% leveraging AI for big data analytics driven largely by machine learning (Chui et al., 2022).

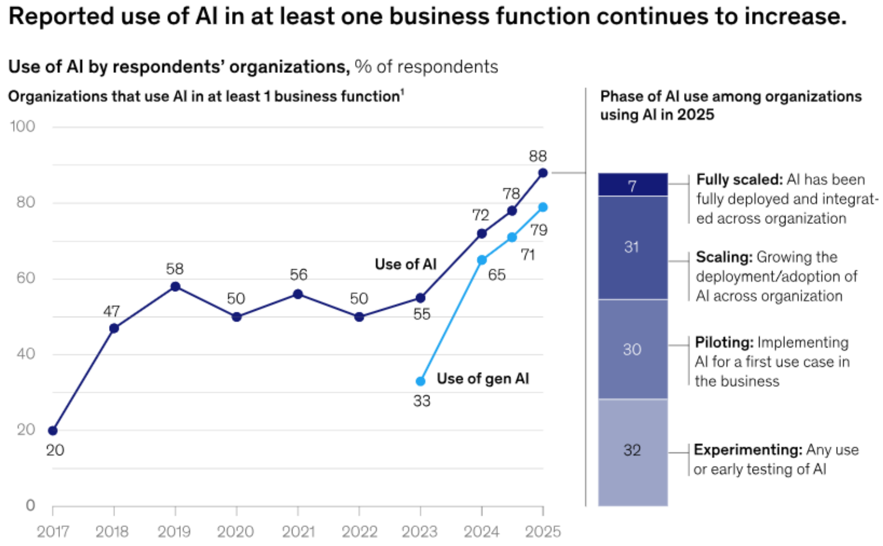

Figure 5. Report AI Usage and GenAI usage from Quantum Black by McKinsey Global survey (Chui et al., 2022)

2.1.2 AI Automation and AI Augmentation

Multinational companies (MNCs) are quickly adopting artificial intelligence (AI) to improve efficiency and encourage innovation worldwide. Surveys show that nearly all large firms are investing in AI, even if only a few consider themselves fully skilled at deploying it (Mayer et al., 2025). In practice, organizations mainly use AI in two ways: automation and augmentation (Daugherty & Wilson, 2018). Automation means machines fully taking over human tasks and working independently, meaning that machines replace tasks previously done by humans (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). In contrast, augmentation refers to AI systems working alongside humans to support and enhance their skills rather than replace them (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). For example, Unilever, a consumer goods MNC operating in 190 countries, uses AI automation in its human resources processes. Unilever's AI-enabled recruitment platform employs game-based assessments and machine-learning-analyzed video interviews to screen the 1.8 million job applications it receives annually, saving about 70,000 hours of human interview time and helping to reduce bias in hiring. Those selected are then aided by "Unabot," an AI chatbot that helps employees with common questions, from IT issues to HR policies. Launched initially in Asia and the Philippines and now available in 36 countries, Unabot reached an initial conversion rate of over one-third of users who tried it, with 80% of them returning, showing its usefulness in simplifying daily work (Marr, 2021). Conversely, AI augmentation might include decision-support tools that help employees analyze large data sets more effectively. For example, business intelligence platforms with AI copilots (such as Power BI, SAP BI, or Tableau) now automate data cleaning cues, identify patterns, and generate basic dashboards and narratives, often without requesting for IT or dedicated developers. This allows top managers to make timely, accurate business decisions.

Researchers observe that these two approaches represent different strategies with distinct outcomes. Early studies promoted focusing on augmentation, viewing AI as a tool that collaborates with employees to enhance performance. However, a paradox perspective indicates that augmentation and automation are interconnected and often coexist (Daugherty & Wilson, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). The study from Raisch and Krakowski (2021) showed that when automation and augmentation could work together more effectively, organizations and society can benefit. This happens through a cycle where people put aside tasks that machines are better at, and concentrate on developing and strengthening their unique skills.

Holmström and Carroll (2024) introduced a typology matrix tailored for generative AI, outlining four innovation strategies that differ in their levels of automation and augmentation (see Figure 6). These strategies include traditional tools, basic automation, automated assistance, and assisted augmentation. Traditional tools represent low levels of both automation and augmentation, relying mainly on human expertise without advanced technologies. Basic automation focuses on high automation with minimal augmentation, aiming to streamline routine tasks for improved efficiency. Automated assistance emphasizes augmentation by enhancing human skills through technology, with limited automation. Lastly, assisted augmentation combines high automation and high augmentation, using advanced technologies to automate parts of the process while also boosting human capabilities.

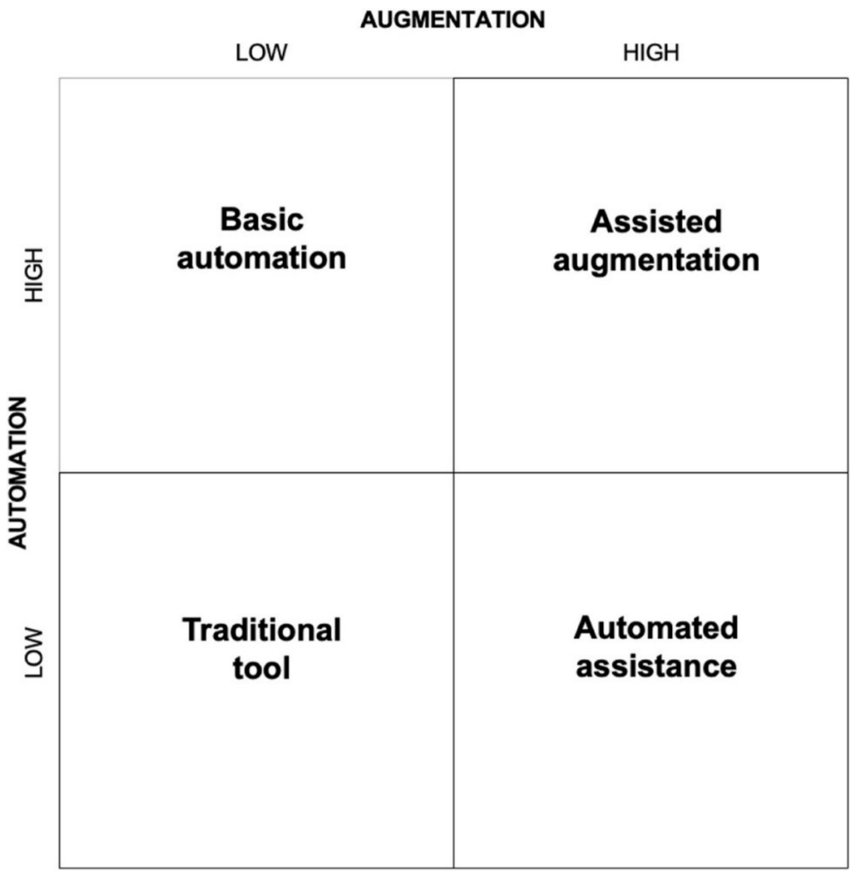

Figure 6. A typology matrix for generative AI by Holmström and Carroll (2024).

In the context of MNCs, balancing automation and augmentation is essential. These companies face pressures to optimize operations, often automating repetitive tasks, while also empowering a diverse, knowledge-driven workforce across countries, which favors augmentation. This dual use of AI is key to understanding its impact on employees. In summary, AI adoption in MNCs varies from full automation to human-AI augmentation. Automation offers scalability and cost savings by assigning tasks to machines, while augmentation aims to boost human potential by combining AI with employees. The following sections examine how these different modes of AI use influence employee well-being, starting with what it means for employees to thrive in an international work environment.

2.2 Employee Flourishing in MNCs

Employee flourishing refers to a state where individuals experience optimal well-being and effective functioning at work. In organizational psychology literature, flourishing at work is often described as “an employee’s perception that he or she is feeling and functioning well in the workplace” (Rautenbach, 2015, as cited in Redelinghuys et al., 2019).

Employee flourishing is rooted in positive psychology. It means employees are thriving in happiness and functioning well. To clarify, let's contrast flourishing versus languishing in an AI context: A flourishing employee might say, "AI helps me excel at my job, I can focus on creative work and I've learned new skills. I feel valued and part of a forward-looking team." A languishing employee under heavy AI influence might say, "I feel like a machine myself, just following what the algorithm dictates. I'm not sure where I fit or if my work matters anymore." Our framework aims to explain how we can get more of the former and avoid the latter. Seligman’s PERMA model describes flourishing through five elements: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Watermann et al., 2025). In organizations, a flourishing employee is not just satisfied or free from burnout; they are actively engaged, growing, and finding purpose or meaning in their work. We use this broad definition of well-being because it covers both hedonic well-being (positive feelings) and eudaimonic well-being (meaning and fulfillment). Additionally, Keyes’s (2002) influential model describes flourishing as a combination of emotional, psychological, and social well-being (Rothmann et al., 2019). Rothmann (2013) applied this multidimensional perspective to work settings, showing that flourishing employees tend to be happy and productive simply because they feel good and perform well. In international and multicultural work contexts, the core dimensions of flourishing remain consistent, though cultural values may influence their expression. Key dimensions are commonly identified as follows.

Emotional well-being

Emotional well-being involves feeling good at work most of the time. Employees who are thriving usually experience positive emotions such as excitement, joy, or gratitude, and they rarely face negative feelings like stress, anxiety, or boredom. They also tend to be satisfied with their jobs, showing that their work meets their needs and expectations (Rothmann et al., 2019).

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being involves feeling that your job has purpose, helps you grow, and allows you to use your skills. It includes having control over your tasks (autonomy), feeling capable and effective (competence), and having opportunities to learn and develop (Rothmann et al., 2019). When work aligns with personal values and offers meaningful challenges, it supports psychological well-being. Employees who thrive often feel deeply engaged in their work, with energy and focus that make them absorbed in what they do (Seligman, 2011).

Social well-being

Social well-being entails building strong relationships and experiencing a sense of belonging at work. In global companies, this includes feeling connected to colleagues from various cultures, being respected by the organization, and being part of a supportive team or community. It also involves being treated fairly, feeling appreciated, and maintaining positive relationships with supervisors and coworkers (Soulami, Benchekroun, & Galiulina, 2024). A friendly and respectful social environment is especially vital in international settings, where collaboration often crosses cultural and geographic boundaries.

Flourishing at work occurs when different aspects of well-being support each other. For instance, having strong social connections at work (social well-being) can enhance a person's sense of competence and purpose (psychological well-being), which then fosters more positive emotions and engagement (emotional well-being). In global companies, cultural intelligence and an inclusive workplace culture are particularly important because they help employees from diverse backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and that their work is meaningful. Scholars point out that flourishing can look different across cultures; what is considered meaningful work or fulfilling relationships may vary, emphasizing the need for more cross-cultural research (Soulami, Benchekroun, & Galiulina, 2024). AI adoption may trigger dual processes in the workplace, aligning with the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which explains how job conditions serve both as resources that bolster motivation and as demands that deplete energy, collectively influencing employee performance (Valtonen et al., 2025).

Applying the JD-R framework to AI adoption, AI use can follow two paths: an augmentation route that enhances resources and positive challenges, and a strain route that increases demands and hindrance stressors. AI's impact can be empowering or overwhelming, depending on how AI is implemented and experienced by employees, as well as on individual and organizational factors. More importantly, these processes are not mutually exclusive; they may occur at the same time, creating a complex overall impact on employee well-being. The theoretical foundations of each pathway are explained below.

2.3 The AI adoption as a resource or demand in MNCs

The Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) model says well-being at work depends on the balance between what the job requires employees to do (demands) and what it gives them to cope with (resources) (Jia, Ning, & Liu, 2025). When AI is adopted, new resources include time-saving automation, better information for decisions, smarter scheduling, and more flexibility (e.g., tools that draft reports or summarize customer chats so you can focus on higher-value tasks, or chatbot from social media and all other sales channels can collect customer inquiries and suggest available products based on customer needs, tools that collect customer tickets for IT bug fixing to ensure the normal IT support process in the situation of limited team headcount).

An increasing number of studies show that, when conditions are favorable, AI can boost employee well-being and growth. These advantages usually happen when AI acts as a tool that supports human skills rather than replacing or limiting them (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). AI's effect on employees can be both beneficial and harmful. On the positive side, AI can help employees succeed when it is used to support and improve their skills (augmentation). On the negative side, AI may create pressure or obstacles if it is mainly used to replace human work (automation) without considering its effects on people. This section explores both the positive and negative ways AI adoption influences employee well-being in multinational companies (MNCs).

2.3.1 The Positive Impacts – Fostering Employee Flourishing

When AI is used to enhance human work, it can enrich employees' jobs and serve as a resource that supports well-being and performance. Augmentation-focused AI tools often eliminate routine tasks and provide support, enabling employees to concentrate on more meaningful and engaging aspects of their roles. Recent literature (2018–2025) highlights several ways AI augmentation creates job resources that promote flourishing.

The reduction of workload and routine stress allows employees to conserve energy and focus on more meaningful tasks. One clear way AI helps employees is by handling repetitive, boring tasks. This allows workers to concentrate on more engaging and fulfilling parts of their jobs. By automating daily workflows and managing large data sets, AI can lessen mental fatigue and boredom. Sun et al. (2025) found that employee-AI collaboration significantly reduced employees' workload. This change encouraged more proactive behavior at work. With AI managing low-value tasks, employees had more time and energy for initiative and innovation, enabling them to focus on tasks requiring greater intellectual effort and deeper significance. This supports the JD-R framework by showing that AI can serve as a helpful resource in the workplace. By taking over routine or repetitive tasks, AI eases the pressure employees feel from their workload (Scholze & Hecker, 2024). This not only lowers stress but also frees up mental energy, giving employees more room to think creatively, solve problems, and take initiative. In short, AI helps shift focus from draining tasks to activities that are more meaningful and rewarding.

Enhanced efficiency and performance enable both organizations and employees to achieve goals faster and with greater effectiveness. Augmentation tools function like intelligent assistants, helping people make smarter decisions and accomplish more. For example, AI-powered analytics can analyze complex data and provide useful suggestions, almost like having a skilled teammate nearby. By simplifying tasks and making them clearer, these tools can boost employees' confidence and give them a greater sense of achievement at work. A recent study by Soulami, Benchekroun, and Galiulina (2024) found that smart technologies that improve employees' abilities tend to increase self-efficacy, which, in turn, enhances well-being and performance (Jiang et al., 2022, as cited in Soulami, Benchekroun, and Galiulina, 2024). When employees feel more capable thanks to AI support, they experience increased confidence and positive emotions, key elements of flourishing.

Greater flexibility and autonomy empower employees to manage their work more independently and adapt to changing needs. AI enables more flexible work options and personalized support, which are valuable resources in an international setting. With digital transformation support, employees increasingly prefer remote or hybrid work arrangements. Advances in digital tools and organizational changes have made flexible work modes more practical, enhancing productivity and work-life balance. Recent studies show that digitalization not only facilitates remote collaboration but also influences employee preferences toward hybrid models that combine independence with organizational connection (Hussain et al., 2025; Loncar et al., 2024). Researchers emphasize that remote work benefits both employees and organizations, including improved work-life balance, greater autonomy, less commuting time, and higher job satisfaction (Fatima et al., 2024a, b; Naqshbandi et al., 2023a, b; as cited in Hussain et al., 2025).

Skill development and learning opportunities enable employees to expand their expertise and continuously improve their capabilities. Instead of making human skills unnecessary, many AI applications improve and support skills, enabling employees to learn and grow. Employees working alongside AI may take on more analytical, creative, or interpersonal tasks that AI cannot do alone. This enrichment can make work more engaging and meaningful. Forward-thinking companies use AI as a catalyst for upskilling, offering training so employees can use AI tools effectively. As a result, workers gain new skills and experience a sense of progress.

Based on the study by Qiu et al. (2022), it is observed that using AI in customer service improves how employees utilize their resources by simplifying tasks and helping with emotional management. This decreases fatigue and encourages positive feelings (as cited in Jia, Ning, & Liu, 2025). In simple terms, AI support makes employees feel more capable and in control of their work, motivating them to enhance their skills. The presence of AI can promote ongoing learning. When AI handles routine decisions, workers can focus on more complex judgments, increasing their skill levels. This is shown in studies of AI-augmented workers who report increased self-confidence: they feel proud of using advanced tools and achieving more complex goals (Jia, Ning, & Liu, 2025). For example, financial analysts who use AI for data analysis can now gain deeper insights and transition into strategic advisors, which boosts their sense of professional growth and achievement.

In summary, AI augmentation can create a motivating cycle: AI provides resources (tools, information, feedback) that satisfy employees’ growth needs, which enhances engagement and well-being. Evidence for these benefits is growing. A recent large-scale study on AI use showed that when humans and AI collaborate effectively, employees reach their goals more easily and experience less stress. In organizations emphasizing human-AI teamwork, workers reported less strain and more positive attitudes, indicating that AI functions as a supportive social resource within teamwork (Klonek & Parker, 2025). The key is that AI is designed to assist employees rather than replace them. When used in this supportive, enriching manner, AI aligns with the job resources component of the Job Demands-Resources model, offering material, informational, and psychological resources that help employees succeed at work.

2.3.2 The Negative Impacts – Hindering Employee Flourishing

Conversely, AI adoption can also create significant challenges and stressors for employees if not managed properly. Especially in automation-heavy environments, AI might act as a source of job demands or hindrance stressors that negatively impact well-being. Researchers have identified several risk factors through which AI deployment can hinder or reduce flourishing in organizations.

Technostress and Cognitive Overload:

Implementing AI often introduces new systems and processes that employees need to learn and adapt to. The need to constantly update skills, manage complex algorithms, or monitor AI outputs can increase mental workload. Technostress is a term that describes the difficulty in adapting to new computer technologies, often linked to computer-related anxiety. In recent years, the concept has evolved to more broadly refer to the heightened stress that accompanies the digitalization of modern work environments, especially with AI adoption (Murray, 2022). Employees may experience cognitive overload trying to understand or keep up with AI systems, particularly if those systems are not user-friendly. In essence, if AI tools are introduced without adequate training or are poorly designed, employees may feel overwhelmed and exhausted, thus impairing their well-being. High cognitive load and constant adaptation demands act as barriers, draining energy and leading to anxiety or frustration.

Loss of autonomy and control:

Automation can diminish employees' sense of control over their work. For instance, in some multinational companies, algorithmic management systems use AI to assign tasks, evaluate performance, or make decisions that supervisors previously handled. According to Kinowska & Sienkiewicz (2022), their study on algorithmic management found that heavy reliance on AI decision-making reduces professional autonomy, which had "indirect and potentially undesirable effects on well-being" (Soulami et al., 2024). Klonek and Parker's (2025) analysis of social media discussions similarly concluded that high AI control over decisions correlates with increased employee stress. In JD-R terms, when AI assumes too much control, it restricts employees' sense of autonomy. This becomes a barrier that can lead to stress and decrease their motivation and engagement at work.

Job insecurity and fear of replacement:

One of the biggest sources of stress in the AI era is employees worrying that AI could replace their jobs. In global companies, this fear becomes even stronger due to competition and cost reductions through automation. Knowing about advanced AI systems, often called STARA (Smart Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Algorithms), can make workers anxious about their futures. Yin et al. (2024) found that when companies were unprepared for AI, employees who were more aware of AI's capabilities showed less innovation, likely because of fear and uncertainty.

Dehumanization and reduced meaningfulness:

If AI automation goes too far, employees might lose their sense of purpose at work. When AI takes over more engaging tasks, people are often left with repetitive or less satisfying duties. They might also miss the human interaction or craftsmanship that once gave their jobs meaning. Ethical debates warn that if AI systems make all decisions and workers only follow orders, employees can feel undervalued and disengaged. This situation harms psychological well-being and may lead to "languishing," the opposite of flourishing. Although more research is needed, Raisch and Krakowski (2021) caution that relying too heavily on automation can create harmful cycles within organizations.

Loneliness and reducing human interaction:

As mentioned earlier, AI's infiltration into communication and collaboration can unintentionally reduce human-to-human interaction. If employees start relying on AI assistants or interfaces for information and stop asking colleagues, or if remote teams communicate through AI-mediated channels, the depth of personal connection might diminish. A clear example is the use of AI chatbots for internal helpdesk queries, convenient, but it might replace a point of contact that previously involved speaking with a helpful coworker. Research by Chen et al. (2023) observed that heavy use of AI in teams can decrease informal conversations and weaken team cohesion, as less communication happens naturally (Jia, Ning, & Liu, 2025). The main point is that human relationships are essential for people to thrive. When implementing AI, companies must ensure it doesn't unintentionally limit opportunities for employee connection. This is especially important for multinational companies, since in many cultures, workplace relationships are highly valued. Over-reliance on impersonal AI systems could conflict with these values and lower morale. A better approach is to let AI handle routine tasks, allowing employees to spend more time on collaboration and building stronger social bonds. In this way, AI can turn a potential risk into a positive outcome.

In general, AI affects employees mainly in two ways. When used for augmentation, it offers valuable resources that support well-being. However, when overemphasized on automation, it can create extra demands and stress. For multinational companies, the challenge is to capitalize on AI's benefits, such as increased efficiency, support, and skill development, while reducing risks like overload, insecurity, or loss of control. A clear framework is needed to maintain this balance, and the Job Demands–Resources model provides a useful approach to understanding and managing these effects.

2.4 The future for employees in the AI adoption era

In this section, the study discusses how the adoption of AI is reshaping the role of employees within MNCs. It explores how AI alters everyday responsibilities, shifting the balance between automation and augmentation, focusing on the new skills and competencies employees will need to cultivate in order to thrive in increasingly digital and globally interconnected environments.

2.4.1 The evolution of future employee flourishing in the AI adoption era

AI adoption in multinational companies is not just about automating single tasks. It is gradually changing what employees do, how their careers develop over time, and which skills they need in order to thrive. According to JD–R theory, employees flourish when their job and personal resources are stronger than their demands and set off a positive process of engagement and growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Research in many different industries consistently shows that when companies quickly adopt AI, employees often start to feel more insecure about their jobs. In some extreme situations, fear of being replaced by AI has caused employees to act in unhelpful ways, such as damaging machines or refusing to cooperate with AI systems on purpose (Jia, Ning, & Liu, 2025). For MNCs, in the long run, the strategic growth is therefore not only whether to adopt AI, but how to redesign roles, development paths, and skill-building so that AI functions as a net resource that supports employee flourishing rather than a net demand that erodes it.

From a role-design perspective, according to Tang and colleagues (2022), AI is changing what it means to be a good performer or a good fit at work. They explain that older, 20th-century technologies were mostly passive tools. These tools required people to plan, organize, and direct their use. In that context, highly conscientious employees, those who are very organized, careful, and hands-on, worked extremely well with the technology and were often top performers. Today, however, many AI systems in the Fourth Industrial Revolution can organise workflows, learn from data, and make some decisions on their own. In other words, they start to do the same kind of structured, orderly work that conscientious employees used to do themselves. Because of this, the match between very conscientious employees and intelligent machines can become less complementary than before (Tang et al., 2022).

Their series of studies shows that in workplaces where AI takes over many structured, organized tasks, highly conscientious employees can begin to feel less confident about the range of responsibilities they can manage and more uncertain about what their role actually is. This can eventually harm their performance over time. For multinational companies, this points to a broader shift in how roles are designed. Instead of employees mainly directing technology, their work is increasingly about overseeing, guiding, and working alongside AI systems. In this new context, employees create value through things that AI struggles to do well, such as using cross-cultural judgment, making ethical decisions, adapting to specific situations, and building and maintaining relationships. These human strengths become more important than simply bringing order to routine tasks, because AI now handles much of that structure. Role theory, as discussed by Tang et al. (2022), suggests that employees need to reshape and renegotiate what is expected of them. One way to do this is by taking responsibility for how AI is used (for example, deciding when and why to use certain tools), rather than focusing only on what tasks the AI carries out.

AI also changes how employees develop and grow in their jobs, especially in terms of creativity and problem-solving. Jia et al. (2024) show that when AI is used to support rather than replace people. For example, when chatbots take care of routine tasks like lead generation in a call centre. It can free human agents to concentrate on more complex, unscripted customer issues. This shift allows employees to use more creative problem-solving in their work and can lead to noticeably better sales performance. Their real-world findings show that agents supported by AI were able to handle more questions they had not been specifically trained for and almost doubled the number of credit-card sign-ups they achieved, mainly because AI support boosted their creativity. However, these benefits were not shared equally. High-skill agents gained the most: they felt more freedom in their work, higher morale, and were better able to take advantage of AI support. In contrast, lower-skill agents felt more pressure and found it harder to keep up.

From the lens of JD-R (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), AI augmentation works as a job resource, providing extra time, mental space, and a wider range of problems to solve, for employees who already have strong personal resources, such as expertise, confidence in their abilities, and a strong desire to learn. For employees who lack these foundations, the same AI tools can instead feel like extra demands, increasing stress, complexity, and pressure to perform. For multinational companies, this suggests that AI-supported roles can become powerful drivers of growth and flourishing, but only if they are paired with intentional upskilling, coaching, and supportive teamwork. This way, all employees, not just the most skilled, can benefit from the new opportunities for mastery and creativity that AI creates.

At the same time, AI adoption is changing the social side of work, which is a key part of employee flourishing. Tang and colleagues, in their study “No person is an island,” show that when employees spend more time interacting with AI systems instead of with other people, their work becomes more asocial. This shift can lead to both positive and negative effects on how employees feel and function at work (Tang et al., 2023). On the positive side, spending more time working with AI can increase employees’ need for human connection, which may lead them to help their coworkers more often. This kind of supportive behaviour can act as a social resource in JD-R terms. But there is also a negative side. The same pattern of asocial work can increase feelings of loneliness and lead to problems after work, such as trouble sleeping or unhealthy alcohol use, especially for employees who already experience high attachment anxiety. In global multinational companies, where teams are often spread across countries and rely heavily on digital tools, these risks can be even higher. The World Business Forum’s recent roundtable on AI and the future of work explicitly warns that AI must be applied in ways that protect and support human relationships. They call for policies that not only focus on efficiency, but also on human development, clear communication, well-being, and opportunities for real, face-to-face interaction (Bencan, 2025). Together, these insights suggest that MNCs must treat social connection not as a “nice to have” but as a critical resource that buffers the new cognitive and emotional demands introduced by AI.

2.4.2 The preparation for future skills and competences

These shifts in roles and development paths are also changing what kinds of skills employees need in order to flourish. According to the World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2023, demand is rising quickly for skills like analytical thinking, creative thinking, and the ability to work with AI and big data. At the same time, qualities such as resilience, flexibility, curiosity, a commitment to lifelong learning, and abilities in leadership and social influence are also expected to grow significantly in importance by 2027 (World Economic Forum, 2023). Chapalapalli’s essay for the World Economic Forum on human-centric AI argues that for AI adoption to truly succeed, companies need to redesign jobs and workflows so that human creativity and critical thinking are deliberately combined with AI-generated insights. This means not just adding AI to existing processes, but rethinking how people and machines work together (Chapalapalli, 2025). In this context, employees need a mix of technical, thinking, social, and self-management skills to truly flourish alongside AI.

In the near future, it is highly required for strong technical and data competencies, including basic AI/technological literacy (understanding what AI can and cannot do), the ability to interpret data, and the skills to work effectively with algorithms and intelligent systems. These capabilities help employees see AI as a helpful resource they can work with, rather than as a mysterious or threatening demand. It is ranked as top 3 skills on the rise from the World Economic Forum – Future of Jobs Report 2023.

Second, advanced cognitive competences are essential, such as the ability to frame problems clearly, think analytically and creatively, and weave AI outputs into complex and uncertain decisions. These skills are closely connected to the creativity gains observed by Jia et al. (2024) and to the emphasis on critical thinking highlighted by the World Business Forum Future of Jobs Report 2023.

Third, socio-emotional and relational competences become increasingly important in AI-mediated workplaces. These include cross-cultural communication, collaboration, leadership, and social influence, as well as the capacity to sustain supportive relationships even when work feels partly asocial. Such skills help convert the heightened need for human connection identified by Tang et al. (2023) into positive, prosocial behaviour rather than ongoing loneliness.

Lastly, self-regulatory and developmental competences, such as resilience, adaptability, ethical judgment, and a strong learning orientation, are crucial. In JD-R terms, these function as personal resources that strengthen the positive effects of job resources and help buffer the strain of demanding conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Both the World Economic Forum and the World Business Forum emphasise that continuous learning and ethical, human-centred decision-making are central to using AI in a sustainable and human-supportive way (Bencan, 2025).

For employees, flourishing in this future will be less about trying to compete with algorithms and more about developing the technical, thinking, social, and self-management skills needed to work with AI intelligently, keep learning, and stay deeply human in increasingly digital workplaces.

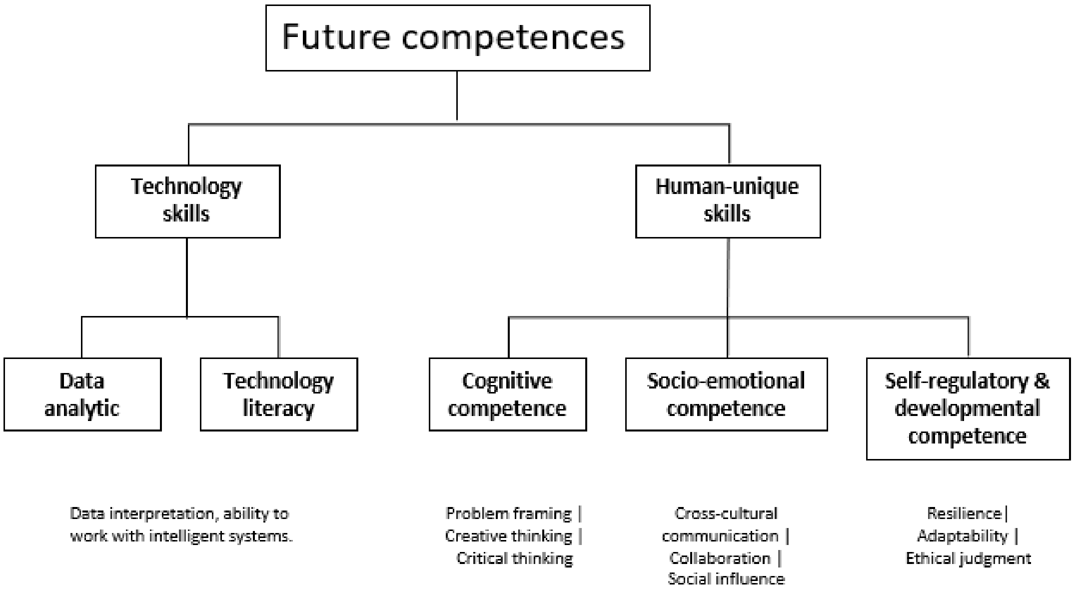

Figure 7. Employee competences and skills building for the future. Compiled by author from multiple sources.

2.5 The summary of the framework

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) is a well-established framework for understanding how workplace conditions affect employee well-being. It provides a valuable theoretical perspective for linking AI augmentation and automation to employee flourishing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). We identify two main pathways through which AI impacts employee flourishing: job demands and job resources, which serve as mediating mechanisms within the conceptual model and have different effects on outcomes like stress, motivation, and flourishing.

The first pathway is the Job Resources/Challenges Path (Positive Mechanism). Job Resources are the elements of a job that help achieve work goals, reduce demands, or promote personal growth and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). AI can offer new job resources, such as task automation that decreases workload, data analytics that improve performance, learning opportunities, and enhanced workplace safety (Brougham & Haar, 2018). Examples of job resources include supportive management, decision-making autonomy, opportunities to use skills, feedback, social support from colleagues, and sufficient tools or technology to do the job effectively. It can also introduce challenge stressors, novel and stimulating demands perceived as opportunities for growth. These resources and challenges together foster higher levels of motivation and engagement. This pathway is based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and Challenge-Hindrance stress theory (Crawford et al., 2010). When AI is viewed as a positive challenge, it can encourage thriving, innovation, and proactive behavior, all of which are signs of flourishing (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Additionally, this mechanism incorporates the fulfillment of basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For instance, AI that reduces repetitive tasks may increase autonomy by enabling employees to focus on more meaningful work, while also supporting competence by creating time for skill development. These experiences, in turn, strengthen engagement and well-being.

The second pathway is the Job Demands/Hindrances Path (Negative Mechanism). Job demands are aspects of a job that require ongoing physical or mental effort and can affect health and well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). They drain energy. Examples include heavy workloads, tight deadlines, unclear roles, or jobs that require significant emotional effort. While these demands are not always harmful, sometimes, they can be motivating. However, if they accumulate or are not balanced with adequate support and resources, they can lead to stress and fatigue. Additionally, AI can create new opportunities but also introduce extra challenges for workers. These include working harder and faster, learning unfamiliar systems, and feeling pressured to stay constantly connected (Tarafdar et al., 2019). AI can also increase stress by making job roles unclear, especially when its decisions are hard to understand or when workers fear losing their jobs (Parent-Rocheleau & Parker, 2022). In our MNC context, AI automation often introduces new challenges for employees. These may include learning unfamiliar systems, stricter performance monitoring, or technostress. More importantly, it can generate hindrances that block growth, such as fears of job loss or reduced autonomy. If these demands aren’t managed effectively, they are likely to raise stress levels and reduce employees’ ability to thrive at work.

AI adoption in multinational companies is also changing what growth at work looks like. Instead of following a simple, step-by-step career ladder based mainly on formal qualifications, employee development is becoming a continuous process of growing alongside technology. Tang et al. (2022) show that old assumptions such as “more conscientiousness is always better” no longer fully apply once intelligent machines start sharing core tasks with people. Jia et al. (2024) find that AI can create stretch environments, where employees face more challenging, non-routine tasks that encourage creativity and learning, if they are given enough support and have the right skills. At the same time, Tang et al. (2023) remind us that this kind of growth must remain socially and psychologically healthy, which means organisations need to actively manage the isolating or asocial side effects of AI-heavy work. Human-centric AI strategies from the World Economic Forum and the World Business Forum reach a similar conclusion: the MNCs where employees will truly flourish are those that deliberately design roles, cultures, and learning systems so that AI strengthens human potential instead of quietly replacing them.

By mapping AI adoption onto JD-R, a theoretical framework for our conceptual model is proposed as follows.

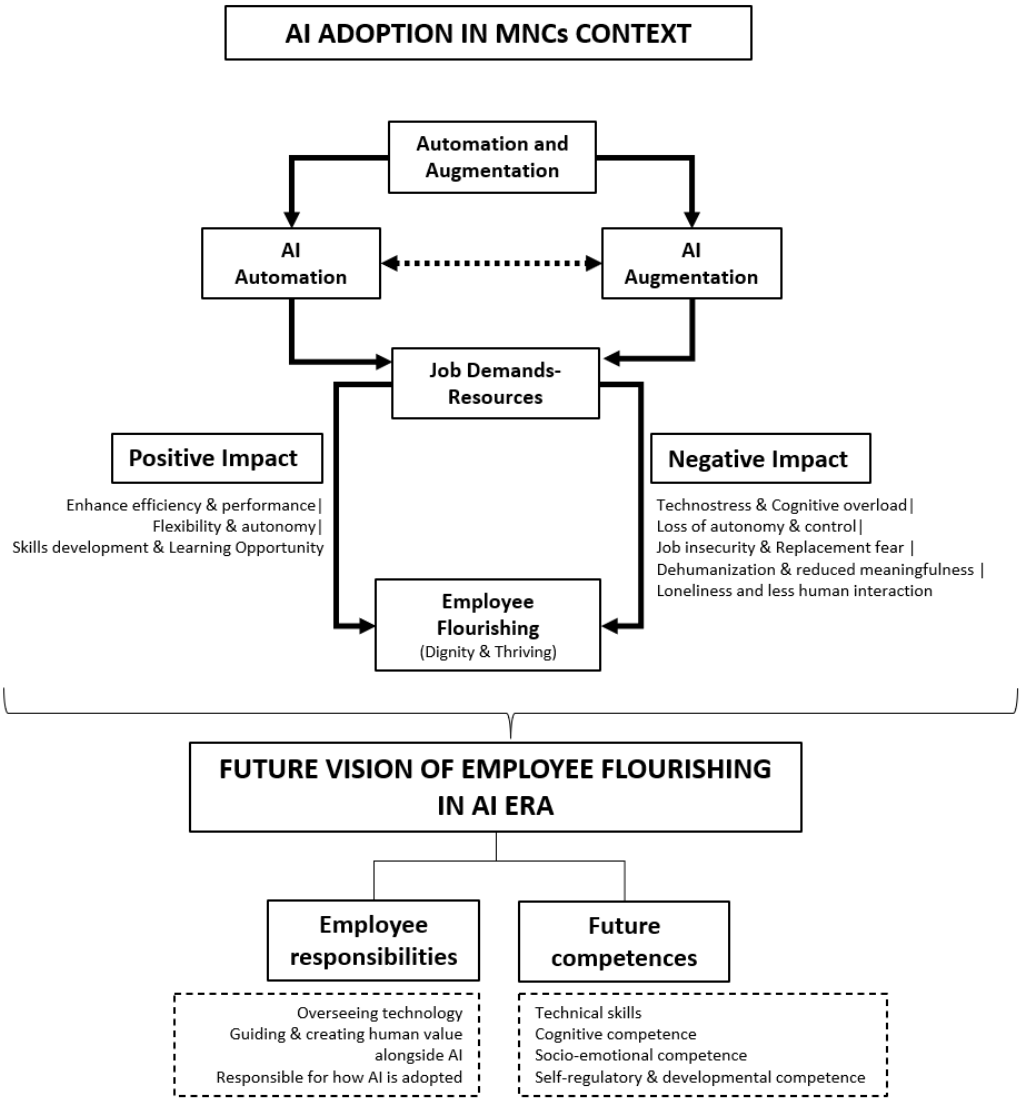

Figure 8. The proposed conceptual model through the JD-R lens.

3 Methodology

This chapter explains the research methodology used in this thesis and the reasons for these choices. It is organized according to the research onion by Saunders et al. (2023), covering the research philosophy, approach, method, and strategy. After that, the chapter describes how the data were collected and what kind of sample was used, followed by an explanation of the data analysis method. In the end, it discusses the study's reliability and validity.

3.1 Research design

The starting point for this research is a conceptual model that combines the Job Demands - Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) with current debates on job demand and job hindrance that impact to employee flourishing. Before carrying out research, it is important to define a research philosophy, as it shapes the lens through which the study is designed and interpreted (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Saunders et al., 2023). This thesis adopts an interpretivist stance, which is commonly used in qualitative research to gain a deep understanding of a specific situation (Goldkuhl, 2012). Interpretivism views humans as fundamentally different from physical objects, because they actively create and interpret meanings within social contexts (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). While subjectivist perspectives emphasize that reality is constructed through individuals' perceptions and experiences, allowing for multiple interpretations across contexts and time (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Saunders et al., 2023), critical realism extends this view by situating these subjective meanings within a deeper, stratified reality. In other words, critical realism acknowledges the richness and complexity of social reality highlighted by subjectivist ontology, but it also asserts that such interpretations are shaped by underlying structures and causal mechanisms that exist independently of human perception. This means that while employees' lived experiences and diverse viewpoints are valid and essential to understanding organizational life, they are not isolated; rather, they are influenced by broader institutional, cultural, and structural forces. Therefore, critical realism bridges the subjectivist recognition of multiple realities with a realist commitment to uncovering the mechanisms that generate them, enabling research to capture both the subjective richness of human meaning-making and the objective structures that shape those meanings.

From a critical realist view, AI systems, company policies, and organizational structures are real and have causal effects: for example, an algorithmic scheduling system can objectively alter workload or working hours. This aligns with JD-R, which considers demands and resources as real job features that impact health and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Simultaneously, interpretivism emphasizes that these real structures are experienced and understood through human meaning-making (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Two employees using the same AI tool may tell very different stories; one might find it empowering, while the other finds it dehumanizing. To understand flourishing, we need to listen to these subjective perspectives. That’s why interviews, not just objective metrics, are essential.

This thesis examines how employees in multinational companies experience the impact of artificial intelligence on their work and their well-being. The main idea is that AI influences work in two ways: as a resource or a demand that can either promote or hinder employee flourishing. The research questions focus on 'how,' not on 'how much” or “how many.” Because of this, a qualitative, interview-based approach is the most suitable choice. It allows employees to share their experiences with AI adoption in their own words and provides space for nuance, ambivalence, and emotion that surveys often overlook (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

By recognizing both levels, the study adopts an abductive logical thinking (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). It does not begin from scratch, but rather builds on the AI adoption in MNCs through the JD-R lens framework. At the same time, it avoids treating the framework as something to be rigidly proven. Instead, the process moves fluidly between theory and data. The framework shapes the questions and guides the early coding, but the interview material is given space to refine, enrich, or even challenge those assumptions. This reflects the essence of abductive reasoning; theory provides direction, however, unexpected insights from the data are welcomed as opportunities to reshape and strengthen that theory. Consequently, this study does not aim to provide an overview of AI's long-term impact on employee flourishing. Instead, it focuses on the current and emerging effects of AI adoption, whether experienced as a supportive resource or as an added demand, on employees' ability to thrive at work. The study highlights how AI can both foster and hinder flourishing in the present context, while also considering how employees can prepare themselves for personal growth and career development in line with the rapid transformations of the digital era.

3.2 Data collection and sample

This study looks at how employees actually experience AI in their daily work, not just how often they use it. Flourishing at work is about dignity, meaning, growth, and feeling that you are thriving, things that cannot be captured by simple checklists. They come through in the way people talk about their jobs, share stories of change, and reflect on their emotions. To uncover these experiences, semi-structured interviews were the main tool. They gave space for participants to explain what AI meant in their own context, to recall specific moments when it made their work easier or harder, and to connect those changes to feelings of stress, motivation, autonomy, learning, and overall flourishing. In this way, the interview became what Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) called a "professional conversation," one that brought out nuanced accounts of lived experience. It also reflects the JD-R perspective: only by listening to how employees describe demands and resources can be seen how AI is truly shaping their work lives.

The interview questions (Appendix 1) were developed in alignment with the theoretical framework (Figure 6). They were organized into four main areas: participants' background and professional experience, AI adoption in the workplace, ways in which AI supports or hinders employee flourishing, and organizational support for employees in adopting AI. A pilot interview was conducted to test the semi-structured guide, and the questions were refined based on the feedback. During the interviews, the guide served as a roadmap to ensure all relevant topics were covered, though the wording and sequence of questions were adjusted flexibly according to the flow of conversation. To support preparation, the questions were shared with participants beforehand, and the thesis topic was briefly introduced at the start of each interview.

The interviews were conducted during November and December 2025 through real-time, one-to-one sessions on Microsoft Teams (Saunders et al., 2023). Of the 14 interviews, 10 were recorded and automatically transcribed with the participants' consent, enabling the interviewer to focus on active listening and follow-up questions. Short notes were also taken during each session to provide backup and ensure that responses were not repeated. The transcriptions were later reviewed and corrected against the recordings. Four interviews were not recorded at the request of the interviewees, in which case only notes were used to capture the discussion. All interviews were carried out in English, the common workplace language. To improve readability, extracts were lightly edited for clarity (such as removing filler words) without altering their original meaning. In some cases, participants gave brief and direct answers, particularly when questions touched on sensitive aspects of their current employer, which limited further elaboration.

This study applied non-probability sampling, as it was the most appropriate approach for the purpose of exploring a phenomenon rather than producing statistical generalizations (Saunders et al., 2023). The study sought participants who were embedded in multinational organizations, where cross-border complexities, global policies, and diverse cultures shape everyday work; who actively use AI in their roles, enabling them to speak concretely about AI adoption; and who possess sufficient professional experience to reflect on how AI has influenced their job demands, resources, and overall flourishing over time. To meet these aims, the study employed purposive sampling with some criteria required that participants: be currently employed in an MNC or a company with clear multinational operations; regularly use AI-based tools or systems; and have at least twelve months of tenure within their organization. These criteria ensured that each participant represented an information-rich case, capable of providing meaningful insights into how AI adoption functions as either a job demand or a resource in shaping employee flourishing. Participants were approached via professional networks, LinkedIn, and snowball sampling (where existing interviewees recommended others who met the criteria). This is a common strategy when the relevant population is specialised, as in the case of employees who were both in MNCs and actively using AI (Saunders et al., 2019). These recommendations helped broaden the target population, with some interviewees even pointing to individuals from their alumni networks, thereby expanding the diversity and relevance of the sample.

The initial target population consisted of employees from international firms with interviewees based in Finland, the United States, and Vietnam. As the study progressed, the scope was expanded to include executives from MNCs in additional countries such as Switzerland and Thailand. The sample was reflecting a wide range of industries, including global food and beverage chains, heavy industries, logistics technology, HR solutions, marketing, and more. This diversity was intentionally sought to provide a broad understanding of how AI technologies were being adopted and developed in MNCs, and how they functioned as either demands or resources for employees. Technology firms were also included, given their central role in advancing AI platforms and introducing new functions that can serve as resources to support employee performance and growth. The idea is not to represent entire countries, but to create variation in context that lets you see how similar AI mechanisms play out in different settings.

An overview of the interviewees is provided in Table 2. The sample comprised 14 participants representing 14 different companies. Both male and female employees took part in, holding positions across diverse functions such as Global HRBP, IT, HR Learning & Development, Marketing, General Management, Product and Customer Experience, and Business Development. Their professional experience ranged widely, from as little as one year to more than three decades. The interviewees came from international organizations, including Microsoft, ABB, KPMG, Wipro & L’Oréal, Norbreeze Group, NUO For Life Retail, Austin Circuit Design, Ozitem Group, Bixso, TSC Auto ID, and VVOB. This diversity of backgrounds and industries offered rich perspectives on the research topic. Interview lengths varied between 39 and 68 minutes.

Table 1. The interviewees' overview.

Interviewee	Company	Interview code	Interview length
1	A	1A	54: 35
2	B	2B	59: 53
3	C	3C	45:49
4	D	4D	48:15
5	E	5E	55:29
6	F	6F	39:33
7	G	7G	61:46
8	H	8H	68:42
9	I	9I	57.25
10	J	10J	51:13
11	K	11K	65:23
12	L	12L	61:70
13	M	13M	57:13
14	N	14N	61:49

3.3 Data analysis

This thesis primarily applied an inductive approach to analyze the material in a way that remained faithful to participants' voices while also engaging with the theoretical framework. While it did not form hypotheses for testing existing theories, it integrated certain deductive elements, as the theoretical framework provided direction for both data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2023). Inductive research involved building theory from the data received, while deductive research focused on testing existing theories through data analysis (Bhattacherjee, 2012). In this thesis, reflexive thematic analysis is applied as the main method, a well-established approach commonly used in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022).

This approach was selected for three key reasons. First, it allows for the integration of both deductive and inductive reasoning. Initial codes were guided by the JD-R model and the distinction between AI automation and augmentation, while the analysis also remained open to unexpected ideas and expressions that did not fit neatly into these categories (Nowell et. al, 2017). Second, thematic analysis emphasizes patterns of meaning across the dataset. Rather than treating each interview as an isolated case, the analysis identified recurring ways in which AI was experienced, whether as empowering, threatening, confusing, or liberating, making it particularly suitable for the study's dual-pathway argument. Finally, thematic analysis is consistent with the study's abductive and interpretivist stance. Themes are not passively discovered, but actively constructed through a transparent, iterative engagement between the data and the theoretical lens (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

The analysis followed the six-step thematic process outlined by Saunders et al. (2023). The first stage involved familiarisation with the data by reviewing transcripts, which included watching the recordings and reading through the written material. Next, the data was coded by categorising segments according to their meanings. These codes were adjusted throughout the process, with new ones added as necessary. Once coding was complete, the codes were clustered into broader categories, which were subsequently developed into themes. In the final stage, the themes were defined, refined, and named to ensure they accurately reflected their relevance to the research questions. The themes that were found from the interview data are (1) the current status of AI adoption in MNCs, (2) AI adoption as a positive impact fostering employee flourishing, (3) AI adoption as a negative impact hindering employee flourishing, (4) the dual impact of AI adoption on employee flourishing and how it transforms the future role of employees, and (5) preparation for future core competencies required in the AI era.

3.4 Reliability – Validity – Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity in the strict statistical sense are less discussed in qualitative research. As an alternative to the conventional quantitative standards of validity and reliability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the idea of trustworthiness in qualitative research. It consists of four key dimensions: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which together serve as benchmarks for evaluating the rigor of qualitative studies. So the quality of this study met the traditional standards of reliability and validity and was strengthened in several ways.

In this study, credibility means how believable and trustworthy the findings are. It was supported by the in-depth interviews, which in qualitative research are similar to what internal validity means in quantitative research (Saunders et al., 2023). All interviewees took part voluntarily and with informed consent. The researcher used similar questions for each participant, which made it easier to compare answers between people from different countries. Credibility was further strengthened through ongoing clarification of meaning during the interviews and by consistently linking emerging themes back to established theories such as the JD–R model and flourishing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In addition, using secondary data from reliable sources helped support and confirm the study's conclusions, making the findings more solid.

In qualitative research, transferability refers to how well the findings from one study can be useful or relevant in other situations or contexts. It is similar to what external validity or generalizability means in quantitative research, which is whether the results can apply beyond the specific people or cases studied (Bryman, 2012). Because qualitative studies usually involve smaller samples, the goal is not to produce statistically generalizable results but to explore in-depth insights (Saunders et al., 2023). The same applies to this study. To enhance transferability, the research context, methods, and sampling process are described in detail. This allows readers and other researchers to determine whether the findings might be applicable to similar multinational company settings (Ahmed, 2024).

Dependability relates to reliability in a quantitative survey (Bryman, 2012) and was improved by maintaining transparent methodological documentation, including clear records of the sampling process, the interview guide, coding decisions, and theme development, along with the disciplined use of Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) six-step process. Specifically, the process of data collection, transcription, coding, and analysis was documented to increase transparency.

In qualitative research, confirmability is often compared to the concept of objectivity in quantitative studies (Bryman, 2012). It concerns how neutral the results are and whether they are free from the researcher's personal opinions or preferences (Kakar et al., 2023). While some level of bias can always exist in qualitative research, the researcher aims to base interpretations on what the data genuinely show, not on personal assumptions. In this study, confirmability was enhanced through member checking: parts of the interview transcripts were shared with participants to confirm that their views were properly understood and accurately represented (Ahmed, 2024). The researcher also carefully translated the interview excerpts to ensure the original meaning and tone of the participants' words remained intact.

4 Key Findings

This chapter presents the qualitative findings on how AI adoption is impacting employee flourishing in multinational companies (MNCs). Through thematic analysis of 14 in-depth interviews, five key themes were emerged: (1) the current status of AI adoption in MNCs, (2) AI adoption as a positive impact fostering employee flourishing, (3) AI adoption as a negative impact hindering employee flourishing, (4) the dual impact of AI adoption on employee flourishing and how it transforms the future role of employees, and (5) preparation for future core competencies required in the AI era. In the following sections, each theme is explored in more detail, with short quotes from the interviews (labelled by participant, e.g., 1A, 2B) to bring the participants' voices into the story and show the main patterns and tensions in their experiences.

4.1 AI adoption in the MNCs context

To have better understanding on how AI is being adopted in multinational companies, it is important first to look at the respondents' profiles and how they collaborate with AI in their day-to-day work. In the interviews, participants were invited to describe their current working status and arrangements, for example, whether they worked mainly on site, in a hybrid setup, or fully remotely. This background information helps situate their experiences and shows how AI is embedded in different organisational contexts and work patterns.

After establishing this profile, the discussion turned to their concrete use of AI in the workplace. To know the level of AI adoption in their workplace, participants were asked what kinds of AI tools or platforms they use in their daily tasks, how long AI has been present in their company, and how these systems were first introduced, for instance, through top-down corporate initiatives, pilot projects, or team-level experimentation. They also reflected on how comfortable and familiar they feel with these tools, and how important AI has become in their job compared with a few years ago. Together, these insights paint a picture of the current stage of AI adoption in the participating MNCs and provide the foundation for analysing how AI shapes job demands, resources, and employee flourishing in the following sections.

From the interviews, participants described a wide variation in AI adoption across organizations, ranging from highly advanced integration to nascent or minimal use. Some interviewees reported that their companies have been using AI for several years as an integral part of operations.

> *Since Day One. We are an AI-native company, so we didn't "adopt" it later; we started with it. It has been over 3 years already. (1A)*

> *The company started communicating about AI around 3~4 years ago, and applied AI in the workplace in 1-2 years. (4D)*

In contrast, some participants shared that AI was still only starting to appear in their organisations or was hardly used at all. Participant 6F, for instance, explained that their company has “not fully applied [AI] yet, just a few initiatives… this year,” while another simply noted that AI had “not yet” been adopted in their workplace (Participant 12L). Together, these stories show that AI is not moving at the same pace everywhere: some multinational companies are pushing forward quickly, while others are moving slowly or taking a very cautious first step.

> *Not fully applied [AI] yet, just a few initiatives from a small team or a few departments this year. (6F)*

> *Not yet at my company as a whole. (12L)*

Participants also described differences in how AI is rolled out and experienced across regions and departments, even within the same company. Many employees working in global organisations noticed that AI is not adopted in the same way or at the same speed in all parts of the world.

Yeah, colleagues from different countries and departments do experience AI differently at [A], and this is shaped by organizational strategy, cultural readiness, and functional priorities. AI adoption at [A] is not uniform, it reflects differences in departmental priorities, cultural readiness, and regional accessibility. While governance and training frameworks provide consistency, the lived experience of AI varies significantly across teams and geographies. (1A)

Yes, there are some differences depending on the department and background. Technical teams use AI heavily for brainstorming, documentation, problem-solving, and technical communication. Meanwhile, colleagues in operations or business-related roles may use AI more for reporting, summarization, or planning. Cultural differences also play a role, some teams are more comfortable experimenting with AI, while others prefer a more cautious approach. Overall, everyone uses AI, but the experience varies based on job functions and personal familiarity. (8H)

Similarly, another participant acknowledged that "*Yes, adoption levels vary depending on digital maturity in each market* " (9I). Participants linked these differences to several factors, such as local strategies, cultural readiness, available infrastructure, and the specific priorities of each function or department. Some companies have tried to create more consistency by introducing global AI guidelines and training programs (Participant 1A), but in practice, AI usage still often looks different from one region or team to another. At the same time, a few participants shared the opposite experience, saying that, from their perspective, AI adoption felt fairly similar across their whole organization. For example, Participant 4D suggested a uniform approach, and Participant 11K felt likewise that international colleagues were on the "same page" regarding AI use.

We feel quite similar in the same organization. (4D)

Same pages like us! (11K)

Overall, AI adoption in these multinational companies appears quite uneven. Some companies (and regions) are already deeply involved in using AI, while others are only in the early stages. As a result, employees have very different levels of exposure to AI and very different experiences with it.

Participants also described how AI was first brought into their workplaces, revealing two main patterns: a formal, top-down rollout and a more informal, bottom-up adoption. In several companies, AI was introduced through official programmes set by management. More than one interviewee used the word "mandatory" to explain how they first came into contact with AI at work, indicating that its use was expected rather than optional. for instance, through required training sessions or company-wide rollouts (Participants 1A, 2B, 4D, 7G, etc.)

> *It is applied mandatory from the company strategy, and apply widely in global as a whole. (1A)*

> *Again, as mentioned earlier, my company was born as a AI-native company so we implement tech and AI since day one, from the founder perspective. (2B)*

> *This is the tool that is widely used in our group from the management board. (3C)*

> *Yes, it is the direction from Global and we have a milestones to apply, to be inline with APAC region. (5E)*

> *It is top down, as the one in charge of Asia market, I am the decision maker to use which AI platform to enhance team productivitiy. (7G)*

> *Yes, it is top down, as an IoT company in logistic field, it is a must to use and test our product solutions and work with it daily. (8H)*

In contrast, a few participants working in less AI-developed environments said they mostly started using AI on their own, because there was little or no formal guidance from the company. Participants 6F and 12L, for example, explained that their AI use came from personal experimentation (“personal use”) rather than any official program.

Not really, it is normally for personal usage, as the Executive Boards in both Vietnam and SEA regions are still skeptical of AI deployment. (6F)

It is not necessary at the moment in my region. (12L)

This suggests that organizational support for AI adoption varies widely, from well-structured strategies with training and clear policies to a much more hands-off approach where employees have to figure things out by themselves. Generally, the interviews show that MNCs are at very different stages in their AI journey and differ in how systematically they implement AI, which leads to a wide variety of employee experiences with AI at work.

4.2 AI adoption as a positive impact that fosters employee flourishing

Even though AI is used to different degrees across companies, a clear pattern in the interviews is that many employees see it as something positive that supports their work. They often described AI as a helpful tool that boosts their productivity, keeps them more engaged, and improves their overall work experience. Several participants talked with real enthusiasm about how AI has taken over some of the boring, repetitive parts of their jobs, giving them more time and energy to concentrate on tasks they find meaningful and satisfying.

My job used to be 80% manual "grunt work"-”like digging through dense reports’ and 20% "actual thinking." AI has completely eaten that 80%. It does all the digging for me in seconds. (2B)

It's a total game-changer for both engagement and creativity. It's not so much about 'coping’ - it's more that AI automated all the boring 'coping' work I used to

> *do (like manual research). Now, my job is 100% the 'fun' part: high-level strategy and design. I'm more engaged because I'm only doing the hard, valuable problems. I'm never bored. I'm more creative because AI is a 24/7 sparring partner. I can throw 10 crazy ideas at it at 2 AM, and it will challenge them, combine them, and help me find the one good idea in the-mix. So my everyday task has changed. I've moved from being a doer to a designer and strategist. I don't perform the analysis anymore; I interrogate the AI's analysis. It has freed me up to do the work that actually matters. (2B)*

This vivid account illustrates a common sentiment that AI frees employees from repetitive tasks, boosting their engagement and creativity. With AI handling routine work (such as data processing or basic research), participants found themselves "never bored" (Participant 2B) and instead faced strategic, innovative tasks that made work more intellectually stimulating. Similarly, Participant 8H reported that

> *Yes, absolutely. AI gives me more mental space to think creatively and stay engaged. It allows me to test ideas quickly â€" for example, creating fast prototypes with GPT and Figma AI. Because I can experiment rapidly, I'm more motivated and involved in the creative side of product development. AI also helps me reorganize and restructure workflows for myself, for clients, and even for the company, which makes the work more dynamic and exciting. (8H)*

These experiences suggest that, for many employees, AI works like a spark for personal growth and new ideas, making their work richer and more interesting.

Beyond making work feel more interesting, AI was often described as hugely improving efficiency and performance, which in turn can boost feelings of achievement and help reduce stress. Several participants gave concrete examples of saving large amounts of time and getting more done with the help of AI tools. One participant, for instance, shared that analysing hundreds of pages of reports, something that used to take several days, can now be completed in minutes with AI support, allowing them to "*skip 90% of the manual work and spend 100% of [their] time on strategy*" (Participant 2B).

> *The New Way: Last week, this exact scenario happened. I uploaded five industry reports (totaling 300+ pages) to an AI. I asked, "Summarize these. What are the top 3 market opportunities and the biggest 3 risks?". I got my answer in 2 minutes. It's not just easier; it completely changed the task. I skipped 90% of the manual work and spent 100% of my time on strategy. It's the difference between being a data-digger and a strategist. (2B)*

Others echoed that AI helps accomplish more in less time, leading to efficiency gains across their departments.

> *AI delivers speed, scale, and smarter workflows, enabling rapid innovation and operational excellence. For Microsoft, it drives competitive advantage, customer trust, and long-term growth through responsible, enterprise-grade AI integration. (1A)*

> *Efficiency gains, Better decisions, Enhanced employee experience, Creativity boost, Accelerates R&D and reduce fault/risk. (5E)*

By taking over low-value, repetitive tasks and accelerating everyday workflows, AI does more than just increase output; it also helps employees focus on higher-quality, more strategic work they can feel proud of. This often strengthens their sense of achievement in their roles. Some participants even connected these efficiency gains directly to better well-being. For example, Participant 1A shared that AI "*has drastically improved my work-life balance*," because getting more done in less time meant fewer late hours and less pressure. Others described how AI helps lower everyday stress by handling routine tasks; Participant 7G, for instance, felt that AI helped "*reduce stress at work*" through better data handling and decision support. Together, these stories show that AI can act as a supportive tool that empowers employees, making their work not only more productive, but also less tiring and frustrating.

It has significantly improved my work-life balance. (1A)

Yes, help me reduce stress at work, saving time. (7G)

Participants also talked about how AI can make collaboration and learning at work better, which in turn supports a more fulfilling work life. Several interviewees mentioned that AI tools make it easier to communicate, share information, and access what colleagues have already done or discovered. This kind of smoother knowledge-sharing helps teams learn from each other more quickly and work together more effectively.

The main benefits of AI in our department are improved communication, faster problem-solving, and the ability to brainstorm ideas more effectively. AI helps us express complex technical concepts clearly, structure documentation, and reduce the time spent on repetitive tasks. For the company as a whole, AI increases productivity, accelerates workflow, and supports better decision-making. It also helps unify communication across teams and countries, making collaboration smoother and more efficient. (8H)

In an MNC context, another interviewee appreciated that AI (such as translation and summarization tools) enabled easier interaction with international colleagues, thereby "*making work more dynamic and exciting*" (8H).

More creative & more engaged, when I meet with international business, AI help me to translate and summary meeting. (7G)

Many participants also felt that using AI had helped their personal growth. Working with AI often pushed them to learn new tools, skills, and ways of thinking, which they described as motivating and rewarding (this is discussed in more detail under Theme 5). For example, when employees used AI-powered analytics or decision-support tools, they could get useful insights much faster, "*get more analytics done in a short time [and] better reports*," and this made them feel more confident and capable in their roles (Participant 5E). Overall, these reflections suggest that when AI is introduced in a thoughtful way, it can create a work environment where employees really flourish: they feel more engaged and creative, work more efficiently, collaborate better with others, and experience a stronger sense of achievement and balance in their daily work.

> *I get more creative with my work using AI. Example is I could get more analytics done in a short time, better reports and presentation. (5E)*

> *AI gives me more mental space to think creatively and stay engaged. It allows me to test ideas quickly - for example, creating fast prototypes with GPT and Figma AI. Because I can experiment rapidly, I'm more motivated and involved in the creative side of product development. AI also helps me reorganize and restructure workflows for myself, for clients, and even for the company, which makes the work more dynamic and exciting. (8H)*

> *AI helps me experiment with different ideas quickly, such as drafting content or creating visual materials, which encourages a more creative and interactive workflow. (14N)*

4.3 AI adoption as a negative impact hindering employee flourishing

Alongside these positive narratives, participants also identified to significant challenges and downsides of AI adoption that can hold back employee flourishing. A major concern was job insecurity and the risk of becoming redundant. Across the interviews, there was a clear undercurrent of worry that AI might replace human roles, leading to layoffs or fewer opportunities. Several participants mentioned this fear openly. Participant 1A joked that *"Other than losing my job to AI, nothing major"* had bothered them, an offhand comment that still reflects a real fear of being replaced. For some, this was not just a worry but a reality, participant 11K shared that their company had "*to restructure*

& fire… 1/3 of staff" because of AI-related changes, showing a direct link between AI and job losses. Experiences like these naturally damage employees' sense of security and well-being, as uncertainty about the future and seeing colleagues lose their jobs can raise stress and lower morale. Even in companies without layoffs, many employees felt pressure to prove they were adding value beyond what AI could offer. This sense of competing with AI was captured by Participant 2B, who said their biggest challenge was not typical work stress but the thought, '*Will a new AI model today make the last three months of my work obsolete?*' The rapid pace of AI advancement fueled a constant concern about staying relevant.

> *Other than losing my job to AI, nothing major. AI's effectiveness does depend on clean, unbiased data and responsible governance. While AI accelerates analysis, strategic decisions (balancing customer needs vs. engineering feasibility) still require expertise. (1A)*

> *Have to restructure & fire out 1/3 of staff (!) (11K)*

> *My difficulty isn't: "Will AI take my job?" My difficulty is: "Will a new AI model today make the last three months of my company's work obsolete?" (2B)*

Many participants said they felt overwhelmed by how fast things are changing with AI and by the constant need to keep learning. The rapid evolution of AI tools and practices in their industries was exciting, but also stressful. Participant 2B described this clearly, saying that "*the industry is moving at a breakneck pace… It's incredibly volatile*." This insane speed made it hard for employees to keep up with new systems and ways of working. Participant 9I also noted that "*the main difficulty is keeping up with new tools and updates*," which "*creates pressure to learn quickly*." For people who are not very tech-focused, or who work in companies without strong training and support, this pressure felt even heavier. One interviewee admitted that, at first, they felt "*overwhelmed trying to keep up with [AI] updates and determine the best way to* *integrate new tools*" (Participant 14N). Although this person eventually found it easier with time and practice, not everyone may adjust as smoothly.

> *Insane Speed: The industry is moving at a breakneck pace. We're building our entire business on a foundation that is fundamentally reinvented every few months. It's incredibly volatile. (2B)*

> *The main difficulty is keeping up with new tools and updates, which sometimes creates pressure to learn quickly. (9I)*

> *At first, I feel overwhelmed trying to keep up with updates and determine the best way to integrate the new tools into my daily work. However, with practice and guidance, these challenges have become more manageable. (14N)*

On top of the learning pressure, managing other people's expectations about AI brought its own kind of strain. Participant 2B spoke about a "*hype vs. reality gap*," where clients and stakeholders often expect "*sci-fi magic*" from AI, even when that is not realistic. As a result, employees found themselves in "*a constant battle*" to calm unrealistic expectations and focus on what AI can actually deliver. This situation can be emotionally draining, as they have to defend their work, explain limitations, and handle the disappointment that sometimes follows when AI does not live up to exaggerated hopes.

> *The Hype vs. Reality Gap: This is the most confusing part. Clients often come to us expecting sci-fi magic. Our job is to bring them back to earth and deliver a real, practical solution that actually works, which is often less "magical" than they see online. It's a constant battle. (2B)*

Another way AI adoption can hinder flourishing is through its impact on the human and social aspects of work. Some participants felt that interactions between colleagues had become less personal and more distant as technology took a bigger role.

> *It's not that it's difficult or stressful; I just feel a significant loss of humanity in the communications between staff members. (3C)*

> *But less engagement because people are now more focusing in work on PC instead of chatting with each other for helping and networking purposes. (4D)*

This suggests that relying on AI for communication or support may unintentionally reduce direct human contact and empathy at work. Similarly, participant 4D also noticed "*less engagement*" since AI has been introduced. In other words, as tasks became more efficient and screen-based with AI, casual conversations and peer support declined, which can weaken teamwork and the sense of connection that often helps people flourish in their jobs.

Additionally, participants raised concerns about over-reliance on AI and trust in its outputs, which can create new types of stress. Participant 8H explained that "*AI can automate a lot of tasks, but it still requires human validation to avoid mistakes. When people depend on AI blindly, it creates risks, especially in tasks that involve accuracy or customer communication. This sometimes causes extra stress because we still need a balance between automation and human oversight. In short, AI is powerful, but the best results come when humans and AI work together, each verifying and supporting the other*," and explaining that if team members accept AI results without checking them, mistakes can happen. This participant found it necessary to maintain "*human oversight*" and double-check AI's work, which "*sometimes causes extra stress*." Having to constantly verify AI's output can feel like a burden and can even reduce the efficiency that AI is meant to provide. Along the same lines, others pointed out that the quality of AI-driven decisions is only as good as the data and algorithms behind them, leading to worries about data quality, bias, and errors. For example, Participant 4D noted that "*in order to apply AI, we need to build the system to record the big data so that we can apply AI. Those systems require big investment of time & cost for both hardware and software and qualified people to prepare. Another issue is trust, because the outcome of AI depends on the quality of big data input, so the quality of big data is also a problem*." These technical and ethical challenges can be frustrating for employees who are trying to integrate AI into their daily work.

Some participants also felt that they were not personally supported during their company's AI transition, which can make it harder for them to flourish because it adds to feelings of uncertainty and dissatisfaction. In organisations where AI adoption was still minimal, a few interviewees said they had "*no idea*" how AI might affect them (Participant 10J) or had "*not really*" experienced any clear benefits or challenges yet (Participant 6F), suggesting that there was little communication or guidance around AI. This lack of information can leave employees feeling confused and on their own. Overall, while AI can bring strong advantages, the interviews also highlight several downsides: worries about job security, constant pressure to adapt, reduced human connection at work, and new kinds of mistakes or stress related to AI use. These factors can get in the way of employees' ability to truly thrive, especially if organisations do not actively manage the transition and give their staff the support they need during the changes.

4.4 The dual impact of AI adoption on employee flourishing and how it transforms the future role of employees

Interestingly, many participants' stories reflect a dual impact of AI, they acknowledged both the empowering and the challenging aspects, and this nuanced view often came with reflections on how AI is reshaping the very nature of their roles. Employees are experiencing a fundamental transformation in their work, with AI serving as both a tool that boosts their capabilities and a force that changes what their job means. A clear pattern in the data is that AI is pushing employees to evolve from traditional task executors into more strategic, oversight-oriented roles, even though this shift also brings new complexities. As Participant 2B put it, AI has shifted them from being a "*doer*" to a "*designer and strategist*," and similar views appeared in other participants' responses. With routine tasks increasingly handled by machines, the human role is increasingly about guiding AI, interpreting its insights, and bringing in the human judgment and empathy that technology cannot replace.

> *So my everyday task has changed. I've moved from being a doer to a designer and strategist. I don't perform the analysis anymore; I interrogate the AI's analysis. It has freed me up to do the work that actually matters. (2B)*

> *A lot of my customer CRM work time has been reduced by a lot. I also do not have to take notes at meetings. AI handles repetitive tasks (e.g., summarizing feedback, drafting reports), freeing you to concentrate on strategic decisions, roadmap planning, and customer experience improvements. (1A)*

> *AI supports me in organizing information more efficiently, which allows me to focus more on the quality of the trainings and on preparing reports. (14N)*

> *AI can definitely replace many repetitive daily tasks such as data entry, drafting routine documents, summarizing information, and organizing communication. By automating these activities, AI frees up a significant amount of my time. This allows me to focus on more strategic, high-value work instead of spending hours on tasks that are repetitive and time-consuming. In practice, AI supports the entire workflow, but its biggest benefit is helping me shift my energy to important tasks that require critical thinking, creativity, and decision-making. (8H)*

Several participants described this change in their work as a mix of gains and losses, something that felt both exciting and uncomfortable at the same time. They often enjoyed the new, more strategic side of their roles but also noticed some downsides in the day-to-day experience. For example, Participant 4D reported that AI made their work more data-driven and creative, "*Yes, in creative meaning, because AI can provide more data and save time to prepare the document. But less engagement because people are now more focusing in work on PC instead of chatting with each other for helping and networking purposes*." This captures the dual impact well: AI can boost efficiency and creativity, while also reducing social interaction and possibly weakening team spirit. Similarly, although many participants can now tackle more complex problems with AI's help, a few pointed out that this came with higher expectations and pressure. One manager noted that because AI took care of simpler tasks, leadership now expects employees to handle bigger responsibilities and deliver insights more quickly, which can be a double-edged sword, empowering but also stress-inducing (from earlier comments by Participant 4D and 9I). Nonetheless, most interviewees saw these changes as a natural evolution of their roles rather than a pure loss. They understood that to stay valuable, they need to step into new responsibilities that complement AI, even if it means letting go of some familiar tasks.

Moving forward for the future, most participants felt strongly that their jobs will change a lot in the next five years because of AI. Many expect their roles to focus even more on high-level tasks, while AI takes over an even bigger share of routine work. "*Five years from now, I imagine my job will be more focused on strategic, creative, and high-value tasks, while AI handles more routine and data-intensive work. I expect to use AI as an intelligent assistant to enhance decision-making, improve collaboration across teams and countries, and generate insights faster*," predicted Participant 14N, reflecting a common optimism that mundane work will be further reduced. Participant 1A shared a similar view, imagining a move from a traditional product management role into "AI strategy leadership, blending technical expertise with governance and customer advocacy," in other words, guiding AI initiatives rather than handling everyday tasks.

One of the most vivid descriptions came from participant 2B, who hoped their role would shift from "*Chief Builder to 'Chief Philosopher*.'" "*My job will evolve from 'Chief Builder' to 'Chief Philosopher.' My main task won't be to define the 'how' the AI will handle that. My job will be to define the 'why': the direction, the ethics, and the ultimate goal*." This captures a clear trend in the interviews: employees expect their future value to lie in defining purpose, asking the right questions, and guiding AI in an ethical and meaningful way, providing the insight and vision that AI itself cannot. The idea of becoming more of a "philosopher" or solutions architect, rather than a builder, highlights just how much skill is needed and job definitions are expected to shift (leading into Theme 5 on future competencies).

At the same time, participants were clear that the future with AI will not be only positive; the dual impact is likely to continue. One concern is that organizations may become much leaner as AI takes on more work, which could mean fewer people and changes in how teams are structured. Participant 7G envisioned that "*One experience guy can work more jobs, less people involved*," implying that a single AI-supported employee might replace several roles. While this reflects higher efficiency, it also suggests fewer job opportunities and a growing demand for multi-skilled super employees, which could intensify competition among workers. Additionally, some participants that performance pressure will rise, if AI speeds up processes, companies may respond by increasing targets and expectations. As noted earlier, Participant 4D mentioned that faster AI-driven business cycles "*make more stress*," hinting that the future could demand an even quicker pace of working and adapting. These perspectives highlight a clear tension: future roles may become more interesting and strategic, but also more demanding and shaped by tighter resources. Employees will need to find ways to use AI to increase their impact while also managing the rapid changes it brings to how work is organised and experienced.

4.5 The preparation for future core competences required for employee flourishing in AI era

Because AI is changing work so deeply, participants stressed that ongoing learning and new skills are essential for employees who want to flourish in this new era. A key theme was the need to stay adaptable and take active responsibility for one's own development.

> *AI can amplify your impact, accelerate your learning, and open new career paths, but flourishing requires adaptability, ethical awareness, and proactive skill-building. (1A)*

This sentiment captures the consensus that AI can be a powerful ally, but only if employees also grow their own skills and mindset so they are not left behind. Adaptability came up again and again, the readiness to update skills, try new tools, and even shift into new roles or ways of working as AI keeps evolving. Participants also highlighted ethical awareness as an important competence, noting that understanding issues like fairness, bias, and transparency is part of being a responsible professional in an AI-driven workplace. Proactive skill-building, in their view, covers both technical and soft skills: learning how to use AI tools effectively, while also strengthening critical thinking, communication, and other human capabilities that AI cannot replace.

Many interviewees said that AI has pushed them to build new technical skills. Several have developed expertise in areas that barely existed a few years ago.

> *Yes, entirely new skills. Specifically "AI Architecture" and "Prompt Engineering." I have learned how to manage and direct silicon workers, not just human ones. (2B)*

Response shared participant 2B, referring to the new ability to guide AI systems (“*silicon workers*”) effectively. This example illustrates how employees are expanding their technical toolkit, mastering how to use AI platforms, write good prompts or questions for AI, and smoothly integrate AI-generated output into their daily work. Likewise, participant 14N said that working with AI “*working with AI tools has helped me develop new skills, including technical proficiency, analytical thinking, and improved communication. It has strengthened both my practical abilities and my overall professional growth*,” and others mentioned, “*I am a bit more tech-savvy on exploring how the AI platform operates to master my work, analytical skills, and communications to excel in my job*” (9I). Importantly, participants did not see technical skills as separate from thinking skills. They linked them closely to analytical abilities: interpreting AI-generated data, checking its reliability, and drawing meaningful conclusions. Critical thinking and judgment came up repeatedly as core requirements. Employees felt they needed to question AI results and use their own expertise to decide what made sense.

> *Your value is no longer in doing the work or knowing the answer. Your value is in : Asking the right question, Critically judging the AI's answer, Having the strategic*

> *vision to know what to build next. Stop being the user of the tool. Be the architect of the solution. (2B)*

As stated in the response of participant 2B, this reflects a larger change: employees increasingly have to act as curators and overseers of AI. Instead of doing every task manually, they must become skilled at choosing the right questions, validating AI outputs, and using AI-driven solutions in a smart, strategic way.

Alongside technical skills, participants stressed how important soft skills and meta-skills are for flourishing with AI. Communication, creativity, and the ability to learn quickly came up again and again. Communication, creativity, and learning agility were frequently noted. For instance, participant 3C observed that working with AI improved their communication skills ("*Especially on communication skills, I learn how to express my thoughts in different manners to behave correctly in most of the situations*.") to get desired outcomes, learning not only how to talk to the AI, but also how to explain AI-driven insights to colleagues. Others highlighted creativity and problem-solving: since AI can now generate options or handle basic analysis, the human role is more about imaginative thinking and designing new strategies.

> *AI makes my work feel more meaningful because it allows me to focus on the strategic and creative parts of my role. I can restructure work processes, design new solutions, and understand problems more deeply. Instead of spending time on repetitive tasks, I can work on areas where I add real value. AI also helps me understand my own work better, the goals, the impact, and the big picture, which increases my sense of purpose. (8H)*

Learning how to learn was also seen as essential, participant 5E remarked, "*I'm learning a great deal with AI as the world is moving fast and we always need to update ourselves.,"* capturing the idea that ongoing, self-directed learning is now part of the job. For some, AI felt like a kind of mental training ground.

> *AI isn't a cushion; it's a whetstone. It makes me stronger by automating 100% of the "easy" work I used to do. This means my entire day, every day, is spent only on the "hard" work - the most complex, strategic, and creative problems. It's a 24/7 "gym for my brain." I'm not getting stronger by lifting "easy weights"; I'm getting stronger because my "AI assistant" has taken all the easy weights away, leaving me only with the heavy lifting. (2B)*

Participant 2B described AI as a "*24/7 gym for my brain*" – not to make things easier in a relaxing way, but because "*AI isn't a cushion; it's a whetstone*", meaning it doesn't just make life easier, it sharpens your skills through constant use and challenge. From this perspective, employees are encouraged to see AI as something that stretches them rather than replaces them. Participants suggested that flourishing in the digital era means treating AI as a partner that pushes you to grow. Participants advised that thriving in the digital era means embracing AI as a partner that pushes you to evolve.

> *You flourish by stopping your competition with AI. If your job is to do a repetitive task, you will lose. You must evolve. You flourish by becoming the one who directs the AI. Your value is no longer in doing the work or knowing the answer. Your value is in: Asking the right question, Critically judging the AI's answer, Having the strategic vision to know what to build next. Stop being the user of the tool. Be the architect of the solution. (2B)*

As participant 2B summed it up, "*You must evolve. … Stop being the user of the tool. Be the architect of the solution*." In practice, this means developing the confidence and vision to guide AI: deciding what goals to set, how to judge its outputs, and how to ensure the technology truly serves both human and organizational needs.

Finally, the interviews also showed that organisations play a big role in helping employees develop the skills they need for the future. Many participants talked about the kinds of training and support their companies offer, or sometimes fail to offer, for AI adoption. Experiences varied a lot. Some described strong, well-organised training programmes.

We have onboarding, training session and workshop as well as on-going coaching/support to our employeed when they use the tool. (5E)

Mindset & skillset training through webinar, elearning. (3E)

We have in-house trainer to educate people in the company (4D)

Mandatory learning path on (1) Responsible AI Training: Mandatory learning paths on [A]'s six Responsible AI principles. Guidance on impact assessments, Sensitive Uses, and governance processes. (2) Copilot Enablement: QuickStart sessions, webinars, and habit-building programs (e.g., Great Copilot Journey). Role-based training for everyday productivity. (3) Security & Compliance: Purview AI Hub for monitoring prompts and enforcing DLP. Security for AI Assessment aligned to global standards. (4) Governance & Control: Copilot Control System for lifecycle management and reporting. SharePoint Advanced Management playbooks for oversharing prevention. (5) Builder/Pro-User Training: Azure AI Foundry workshops on safety evaluations and prompt security. Labs for responsible LLM design and content safety. (1A)

These efforts indicate that organizations recognize the need to upskill their workforce and are investing in structured learning opportunities. However, this is not the case everywhere. A few participants said their companies offered little or no formal AI training. "Not yet, not fully," admitted participant 10J about whether any guidance had been provided, and Participant 12L similarly said there was "not yet" any company-driven training available. In such environments, employees often have to rely on their own initiative or outside resources to learn, which can put them at a disadvantage. Beyond formal courses, participants also stressed the importance of organisational culture and leadership support. They valued workplaces that encourage experimentation and knowledge sharing. For instance, Participant 2B credited "*the freedom to experiment without bureaucracy*" in their company as a key factor that allowed them to develop AI expertise. Others appreciated supportive managers and a culture that accepts mistakes as part of the learning process; Participant 8H noted backing from both line managers and headquarters when integrating AI into daily work.

> *Our company provides ongoing guidance on how to incorporate AI into daily workflows. Instead of formal classroom-style training, we focus on practical, hands-on adoption, sharing best practices, internal examples, and recommended tools that suit our engineering environment. Team leaders often demonstrate how they use AI for brainstorming, documentation, and problem-solving, encouraging others to follow. We also remind employees to always verify data, understand the limitations of AI, and apply human judgment before finalizing any output. (8H)*

Many agreed that having autonomy, a supportive manager, good tools, a positive team culture, flexibility, and ongoing training (mentioned across participants 1A, 5E, 8H, 12L, 13M, among others) helped them cope with challenges and grow their competencies.

> *Yes, all of the factors like autonomy, supportive manager, good tools, team culture, flexibility, and training. etc. that helps me accomplish the task well. (1A)*

> *There are lots of support like: my line managers and head quarters, providing me good prompt and request to develop the solutions through AI platform, lots of training and flexibility at the workplace, … (8H)*

> *Autonomy, supportive manager, good tools, team culture, flexibility , training. (13M)*

> *Flexibility to use different type of AI tools. (12L)*

> *Autonomy with helpful tools for the team; good managers that do their job well and support team performance; clear communication and highly accountable and together we grow culture. (5E)*

These findings suggest that to truly flourish in the age of AI, employees benefit not only from their own efforts but also from organizational structures that provide learning opportunities, psychological safety to experiment, and access to modern AI tools. In summary, the data indicate that thriving in an AI-transformed workplace will depend on a combination of individual adaptability and skill-building (technical, analytical, ethical, and creative skills) and organizational commitment to nurturing these competencies through training and supportive work environments. Employees and companies that proactively cultivate these core competencies are better positioned to sustain employee flourishing as AI continues to evolve the nature of work.

5 Discussions

This section revisit to the conceptual theoretical framework proposed in Figured 8 and develops it further in light of the qualitative findings, showing how AI adoption influences employee flourishing in different ways to have a better understanding the role of the two actors - managerial and non-managerial employees in multinational companies (MNCs) for future employee flourishing. The discussion is organised around the main themes that emerged from the finding chapter: (1) the current status of AI adoption in MNCs, (2) AI adoption as a positive impact that fosters employee flourishing, (3) AI adoption as a negative impact that hinders employee flourishing, (4) the dual impacts of AI adoption and how it is reshaping employees' future roles, and (5) how employees and organisations can prepare for the core competencies needed to flourish in the AI era.

5.1 AI adoption in the MNCs context

The first theme shows that AI use differs a lot both between MNCs and inside them. Some companies are "*AI-native*," where AI has been part of everyday work "*since Day One.*" Others are only trying "*a few initiatives this year*," and some have "*not yet*" started using AI at all. The World Economic Forum (2025) emphasizes that AI adoption remains uneven across industries and regions, with some organizations advancing rapidly while others face resource constraints or move more cautiously (World Economic Forum, 2025a; World Economic Forum, 2025b).

From a JD-R point of view, these differences matter because AI-related demands and resources are added on top of what already exists in each local setting. In digitally advanced teams, where there is structured training and "mandatory learning paths on Responsible AI principles," AI is more likely to be experienced as an extra resource, bringing new tools, new skills, and new career opportunities, within an environment that already has many supports in place. In a less mature environment, where employees mainly use AI on their own through "*personal use*" and self-driven experimentation, AI is more likely to feel like a demand than a resource. It becomes something they feel they have to learn by themselves, without much support from the organisation. This finding supports the idea that technology like AI should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of a wider socio-technical system, where tools, people, structures, and culture all interact (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Chuang et al., 2025).

5.2 AI adoption as a positive impact that fosters employee flourishing

Many interviewees felt that AI was a powerful support in their work, helping them feel more engaged, creative, and capable. Several described how AI "*automated all the boring 'grunt work'*," so they could spend 100% of their time on the fun and meaningful parts of the job, such as strategy, design, and complex problem-solving. Some even referred to AI as a "*24/7 sparring partner*" (participant 2B) that keeps them "*never bored*." These stories fit well with the JD-R model's idea that strong job resources increase motivation, engagement, and personal growth.

Participants' experiences also match recent research on AI as an augmentation tool. Jia et al. (2024), for example, show that when AI handles the repetitive, clearly defined parts of work, employees can use their mental energy for higher-level tasks, which boosts creativity, especially for more skilled workers. This was echoed in comments about having "*more mental space to think creatively and stay engaged*" (participant 8H) and being able to experiment rapidly in product development.

AI was also seen as a resource that improves efficiency, performance, and even work–life balance. Interviewees talked about skipping 90% of the manual work and spending their time on analysis or strategy instead, with some explicitly linking these productivity gains to less overtime and lower stress. This aligns with Chuang et al. (2025), who find that effective use of AI and generative AI can raise productivity, work engagement, and job satisfaction, even though AI also brings new forms of technostress. In JD-R terms, AI becomes a motivational resource when it increases autonomy, competence, and the meaningfulness of tasks, while cutting down low-value demands.

Finally, the data show that AI can support social interaction and learning. Participants described using AI to improve communication, brainstorm ideas, and collaborate across cultures. For example, by using translation or summarisation tools. These benefits fit with global trends highlighted by the World Economic Forum, which points to analytical thinking, creative thinking, AI and big-data literacy, and collaboration as key skills that will be increasingly in demand by 2027–2030 (**Table 3,** World Business Forum, 2023). When MNCs combine AI tools with structured learning opportunities, employees seem to use AI as a kind of "*gym for the brain*," strengthening both their technical and thinking skills over time.

Top 10 skills of 2023

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

1.	Analytical thinking	6.	Technological literacy
2.	Creative thinking	7.	Dependability and attention to detail
3.	Resilience, flexibility and agility	8.	Empathy and active listening
4.	Motivation and self-awareness	9.	Leadership and social influence
5.	Curiosity and lifelong learning	10.	Quality control

Type of skill

Cognitive skills · Self-efficacy · Management skills · Technology skills · Working with others

Source
World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2023.

Note
The skills judged to be of greatest importance to workers at the time of the survey

Table 2. Top 10 skills of 2023 (World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs 2023)

5.3 AI adoption as a negative impact hindering employee flourishing

In addition to these resource narratives, the results in the qualitative study also show that many AI-related job demands can weaken employee flourishing. A joke "other than losing my job to AI, nothing major" had bothered one participant, and the response that "1/3 of staff were fired" after AI-driven restructuring made it clear that these fears are very real. This matches broader estimates that around 41% of jobs worldwide will be affected by AI (Clifford, 2025), especially in advanced economies, with some roles being upgraded and supported by AI and others facing reduced demand.

A second group of demands is linked to speed and constant learning pressure. Participants described the AI world as “moving at a breakneck pace,” creating a steady need to “keep up with new tools and updates” and to prove they are still relevant (“will a new AI model today make the last three months of my work obsolete?”). Chuang et al. (2025) similarly find that AI-related technostress increases exhaustion and work–family conflict, even when productivity improves. From a JD-R perspective, AI clearly functions as a job demand when employees do not have enough time, training, or support to integrate it into their work in a sustainable way.

Third, participants talked about the social and relational costs of AI at work. Several felt there was a “significant loss of humanity in communications” and “less engagement because people are now focusing on work on the PC instead of chatting with each other.” This resonates with Tang et al. (2023), who find that AI-mediated work can become more asocial, as people spend more time interacting with systems than with colleagues, their need for human connection grows, but if that need is not met, it can lead to loneliness, and unhealthy coping after work.

Participants also described new mental and ethical pressures linked to AI. They spoke about the burden of checking AI quality, worrying about data accuracy and bias, and constantly managing the “hype vs reality gap” when stakeholders expect “sci-fi magic” from AI. These experiences align with research on AI-induced technostress and responsibility overload, where employees feel accountable for errors or failures in systems they did not design and do not fully understand (Chuang et al., 2025). Taken together, the data support recent JD-R studies showing that AI brings both powerful resources and serious hindrance demands, and that its overall effect on well-being depends on how well this balance is managed.

5.4 The dual impact of AI adoption on employee flourishing and how it transforms the future role of employees

A third key insight from the interviews is the dual impact of AI adoption on what work looks like and how employees see their future roles. Many participants described a clear shift in their jobs, from being a "*doer*" who carries out tasks to becoming more of a "*designer and strategist*" (participant 2B). Some even imagined moving from "Chief Builder" to "Chief Philosopher," focusing on the "why" matter of the work, its direction, ethics, and purpose, while AI increasingly takes care of the "how" direction. This fits with research on complementarity and role theory; Tang et al. (2022) show that intelligent machines are taking over more of the structured, routine parts of work, which pushes employees to rethink how they add value and changes what good performance means in reality.

At the same time, participants were aware of the potential downsides of this future. Several expected organisations to become "*leaner*," where "*one experienced guy can work more jobs, [with] fewer people involved*," and where faster AI-driven processes "make more stress." In other words, the future role is seen as more strategic, but also more demanding. Thus, the future role is perceived as more strategic but also more demanding, consistent with the idea of high-resource / high-demand AI configurations: employees gain scope, autonomy, and intellectual challenge, but also face heightened performance expectations, cognitive load, and accountability (Chuang et al., 2025).

The interviews also suggest that AI may shape the roles of managers and non-managers in different ways. While the data do not compare these groups systematically, many accounts imply that managerial employees are more likely to move into AI-related strategy, governance, and AI orchestration roles, for example, taking on "AI strategy leadership, blending technical expertise with governance and customer advocacy" (Participant 1A). Non-managerial employees, by contrast, more often described their experience in terms of task automation, monitoring, and the shrinking of routine work. This mirrors broader survey evidence that managers tend to use AI more often for strategic and analytical tasks, while frontline staff experience it through standardisation, tracking, and productivity pressure. Using the JD–R lens, managers and non-managers thus appear to face different mixes of AI-related demands and resources: managers deal with high cognitive and ethical demands but gain richer information and decision-making tools, whereas non-managers may feel more exposed to job insecurity and identity threats unless organisations provide clear, supportive development paths.

5.5 The preparation for future core competences required for employee flourishing in AI era

The final theme focuses on how employees and organisations can prepare for the core skills needed in the future. Participants repeatedly highlighted three key elements: adaptability, ethical awareness, and proactive skill-building. They talked about developing new, emerging skills such as "*AI architecture*" and "*prompt engineering*" (participant 2B), alongside more familiar abilities like critical thinking and clear communication. Participant 2B also widely shared a reflection that summed this up well: "*your value is no longer in doing the work or knowing the answer… [but] in asking the right question and critically judging the AI's answer*." This points to a broader shift toward roles that are more about thinking, evaluating, and guiding, rather than just executing tasks.

These insights fit closely the World Economic Forum, for example, identifying analytical thinking, creative thinking, AI and big-data literacy, leadership and social influence, and curiosity and lifelong learning as some of the most important skills that will grow in demand by 2027–2030 World Business Forum, 2023. Similarly, the World Business Forum stresses that AI should "balance efficiency with human development," and that companies must prioritise critical thinking, ethics, and space for innovation, not just speed and output (Bencan, 2025). From a JD–R perspective, these competencies can be seen as personal resources: qualities that help employees make better use of the tools and support available to them, while also protecting them from stress and overload

(Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). In other words, these skills help people not only to cope with AI, but to flourish with it.

At the same time, the interviews showed that organisational support for building these capabilities is uneven. Some companies invest in mindset and skillset training, provide in-house AI trainers, and run responsible AI programmes. Others, however, still offer "*not yet*" any formal support, leaving employees to figure things out on their own or learn in their free time. Given that employers expect roughly 44% of core skills to change by 2030 (**Figure 9** - World Economic Forum, 2023), and that many workers do not yet have good access to training, this gap is a serious risk. It suggests that without deliberate investment in learning and development, flourishing in AI-intensive MNCs may become uneven and unequal, easier for those in well-supported environments, and much harder for those left to self-teach.

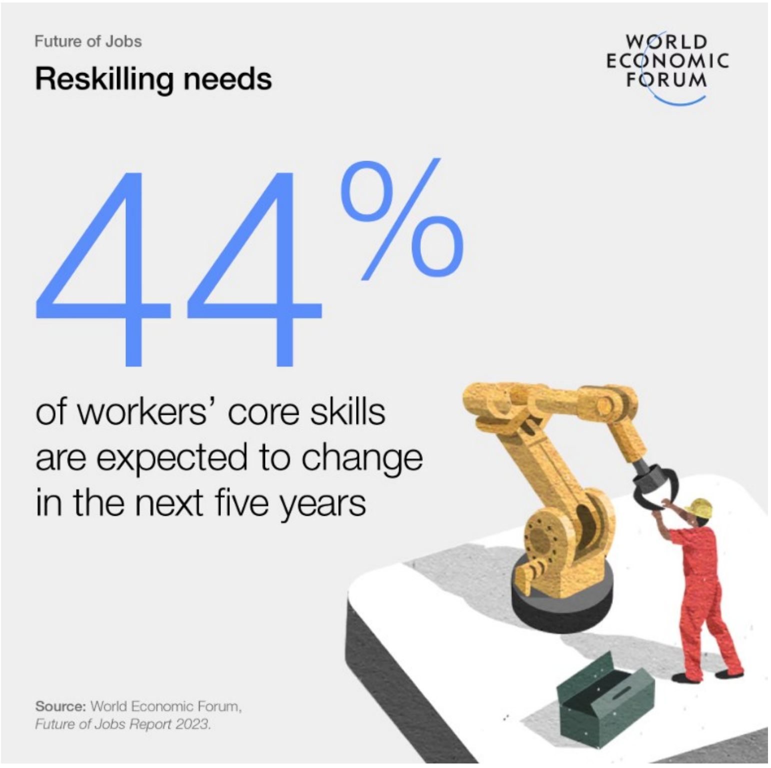

Figure 9 – Percentage of worker core skill change, World Economic Forum – Future of Jobs Report 2023.

5.6 Updated theoretical framework

The original framework conceptualised AI adoption in MNCs as a combination of AI automation and AI augmentation that jointly feed as a job demand or job resource that has the dual impacts (either positive or negative), in turn, shape employee flourishing. The interview data broadly support this view but also suggest several refinements.

the findings reinforce the centrality of JD-R as the mechanism linking AI to flourishing. Employees repeatedly framed AI in the language of demands and resources: on the resource side, they emphasised efficiency gains, flexibility and autonomy, and learning opportunities; on the demand side, they emphasised technostress, cognitive overload, loss of control, job insecurity, dehumanisation and loneliness. This closely mirrors Chuang et al.'s (2025) empirical demonstration that AI-related resources (such as feeling effective with AI and having access to generative tools) boost productivity, engagement and satisfaction, while AI-related demands (like technostress) increase exhaustion. In other words, the qualitative findings validate the model's centre: AI automation and augmentation reshape the portfolio of job demands and job resources, and flourishing depends on the net balance between them (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This dual experience is in line with JD–R research showing that the same job feature can be seen as both a challenge (something that helps you grow) and a hindrance (something that holds you back), with different effects on motivation and stress. Conceptually, this means the model is best viewed as having two parallel pathways, a resource pathway and a demand pathway, both triggered by AI and both leading, in different ways, toward either employee flourishing or its erosion.

The lower centre of the model conceptualises employee flourishing in terms of two key dimensions: dignity and thriving. On the thriving side, employees described feeling more competent, creative, and engaged when AI removed routine work, enabled rapid experimentation, and opened access to knowledge. These accounts echo Jia et al.'s (2024) field evidence that AI-augmented call-centre agents became more creative and achieved higher sales because AI freed them from script-bound tasks and gave them better data to address complex customer questions.

On the dignity side, flourishing was threatened when AI adoption undermined autonomy, identity, and relational connection. Participants spoke about "*losing the human side*," "*less interaction with colleagues*," and "*fear that my role will disappear*" as core concerns. These experiences fit Tang et al.'s (2023) finding that heavy interaction with AI systems increases loneliness and after-work strain unless organisations invest in social resources and human connection.

At the bottom of the framework, the future vision of employee flourishing in the AI era separates what employees are responsible for from the competencies they will need. The interview findings help clarify this part. Participants repeatedly stressed their own role and agency. They did not see themselves as passive users of AI, but as people who oversee it and act as ethical gatekeepers. Several described their job as needing to "*guide and create human value alongside AI*" and to be "*responsible for how AI is adopted*" in their teams. This reflects key ideas in human-centric AI discussions, which argue that successful AI adoption is not just about teaching people how to use tools, but about giving them real influence over how those tools are used. Conceptually, this suggests that employee responsibilities should be moved to the centre of the model as part of the JD-R system itself: agency and ethical responsibility can be seen as personal resources that help turn AI from something imposed on employees into an area where they actively use judgement, shape decisions, and feel in control.

The qualitative data also help to clarify the four competence clusters shown in the framework. First, technical skills include AI and data literacy, understanding the limits of different tools, and basic skills in prompting and interacting with AI. This reflects WEF's view of "AI and big data" as one of the fastest-growing core skills and aligns with BCG's findings that employees who receive even a few hours of AI training plus coaching are much more likely to use AI regularly and confidently (PR Newswire, 2025). Second, cognitive competence covers analytical thinking, creative thinking, and the ability to frame problems well. Participants frequently noted that their value now lies in “asking the right question and critically judging the AI’s answer,” which echoes Jia et al.’s (2024) finding that AI boosts creativity when workers have the cognitive capacity to combine AI suggestions with their own knowledge. Third, socio-emotional competence includes communication, collaboration, cross-cultural sensitivity, and leadership, skills that are essential for counteracting the “asocial” tendencies of AI-mediated work described by Tang et al. (2023) and for coordinating complex, global AI projects. Finally, self-regulatory and developmental competence involves resilience, adaptability, ethical judgement, and a strong learning orientation. JD–R research views these personal resources as buffers that protect employees from high demands and strengthen the impact of available resources (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), while WEF’s New Economy Skills report highlights curiosity, flexibility, and self-directed learning as crucial for staying employable in an AI-intensive labour market (see **Figure 10 & 11**, World Economy Forum – New Economy Skills report 2025). Together, these clusters sharpen the “future competences” part of the model and underline a key idea: in the AI era, employee flourishing depends on continuously developing both human strengths and hybrid human-AI skills throughout one’s career.

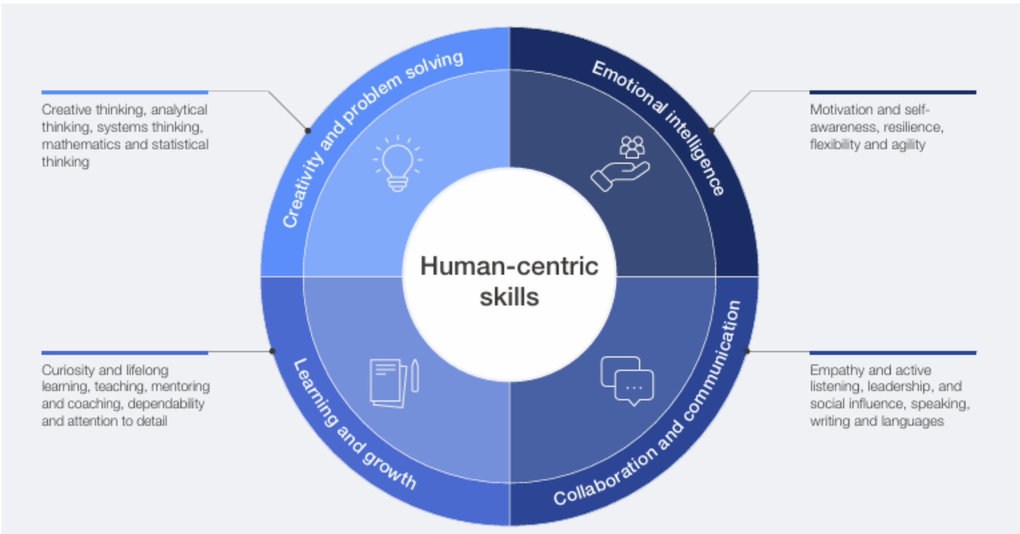

Figure 10. Human-centric skills defined, New Economy Skills - Unlocking the Human Advantage (World Economy Forum, 2025, p. 6)

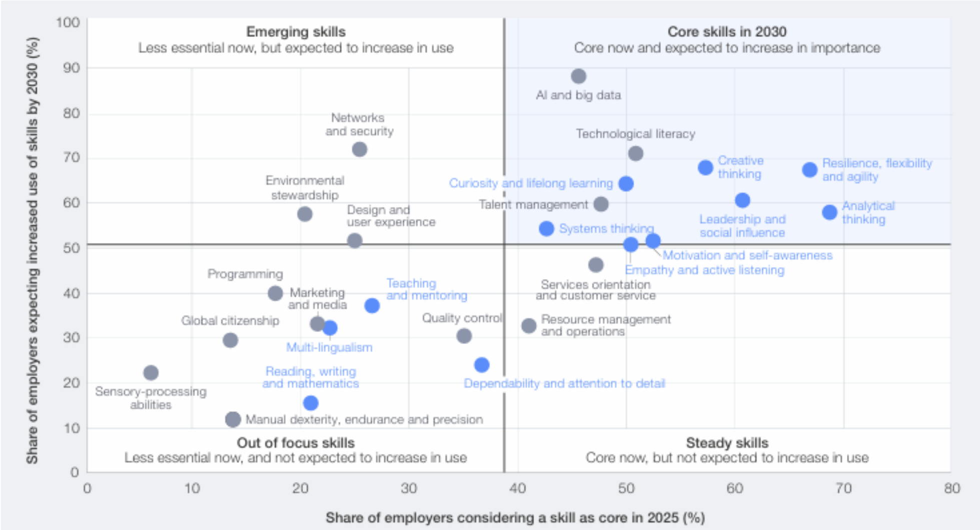

Figure 11. Share (%) of employers that consider human-centric skills to be core in 2025 and expect increased use by 2030, New Economy Skills - Unlocking the Human Advantage (World Economy Forum, 2025, p. 9)

The qualitative findings and secondary evidence also suggest that the model should be viewed through two different lenses: managerial employees vs. non-managerial employees. For managers, AI was most often experienced as a form of augmentation. They described using AI tools to access richer data, automate reporting, and support forecasting and decision-making. Many talked about how AI helped them build scenarios, monitor global operations, and free up time for strategy, coaching, and stakeholder communication. This is in line with survey evidence from Gallup and Business Insider, which shows that managers and leaders are among the heaviest users of AI at work, with roughly a third of managers using AI frequently compared with a much smaller share of individual contributors (Gallup, 2025; Altchek, 2025). Within the framework, managers therefore tend to sit closer to the "positive impact" pathway: they benefit from greater efficiency, more autonomy, and increased learning opportunities, and they often have a say in how AI is implemented. At the same time, they face their own specific demands. Managers carry broader spans of control, higher accountability for AI-enabled decisions, and the emotional burden of supporting teams who worry about being replaced. BCG's

AI at Work report describes this as an emerging AI leadership gap, where leaders act as both champions and shock absorbers of AI-driven change (Boston Consulting Group, 2025). From a JD-R perspective, whether managers flourish in this context depends on whether organisations provide enough social and structural resources, such as clear governance, training in AI orchestration, and peer support forums, to balance these heightened demands.

Non-managerial employees, by contrast, tended to encounter AI first as automation. They described tools that standardise tasks, monitor performance, and take over routine activities. For some, this was a welcome relief from repetitive work and opened the door to more interesting responsibilities, which fits the positive-impact side of the model. For others, however, AI made their work feel thinner or less meaningful (“AI does the real work; I just handle exceptions”), increased the pace and intensity of work, and raised concerns about surveillance and job loss. This mix reflects Chuang et al.’s (2025) finding that AI can be both a resource that boosts performance and a demand that creates stress, as well as WEF evidence that many routine roles are at risk of being displaced or fundamentally reshaped in the coming years (Chapalapalli, 2025). For non-managers, flourishing depends strongly on whether they have access to training and mobility pathways that turn automation into an opportunity to move into new tasks and roles, rather than a threat to their current job. Yet global surveys show a persistent gap: although a large share of workers already use AI regularly, only a minority have received formal training or clear guidance on how to use it safely and effectively. This helps explain why many non-managerial employees in the study experienced AI more as a source of stress, cognitive overload, uncertainty, and isolation than as a platform for growth, especially in settings where AI was rolled out from the top down with limited communication.

In summary, the findings suggest that the same conceptual model plays out differently for these two groups. Managers are more likely to find themselves in a high-augmentation, high-responsibility position, where flourishing depends on support for new leadership and ethical demands. Non-managers are more often in an automation-heavy, resource-poor position, where flourishing hinges on inclusive reskilling opportunities, a say in how work is redesigned, and protection of dignity and social connection. Recognising these different starting points is crucial for designing AI strategies that genuinely support flourishing across all levels of the organisation.

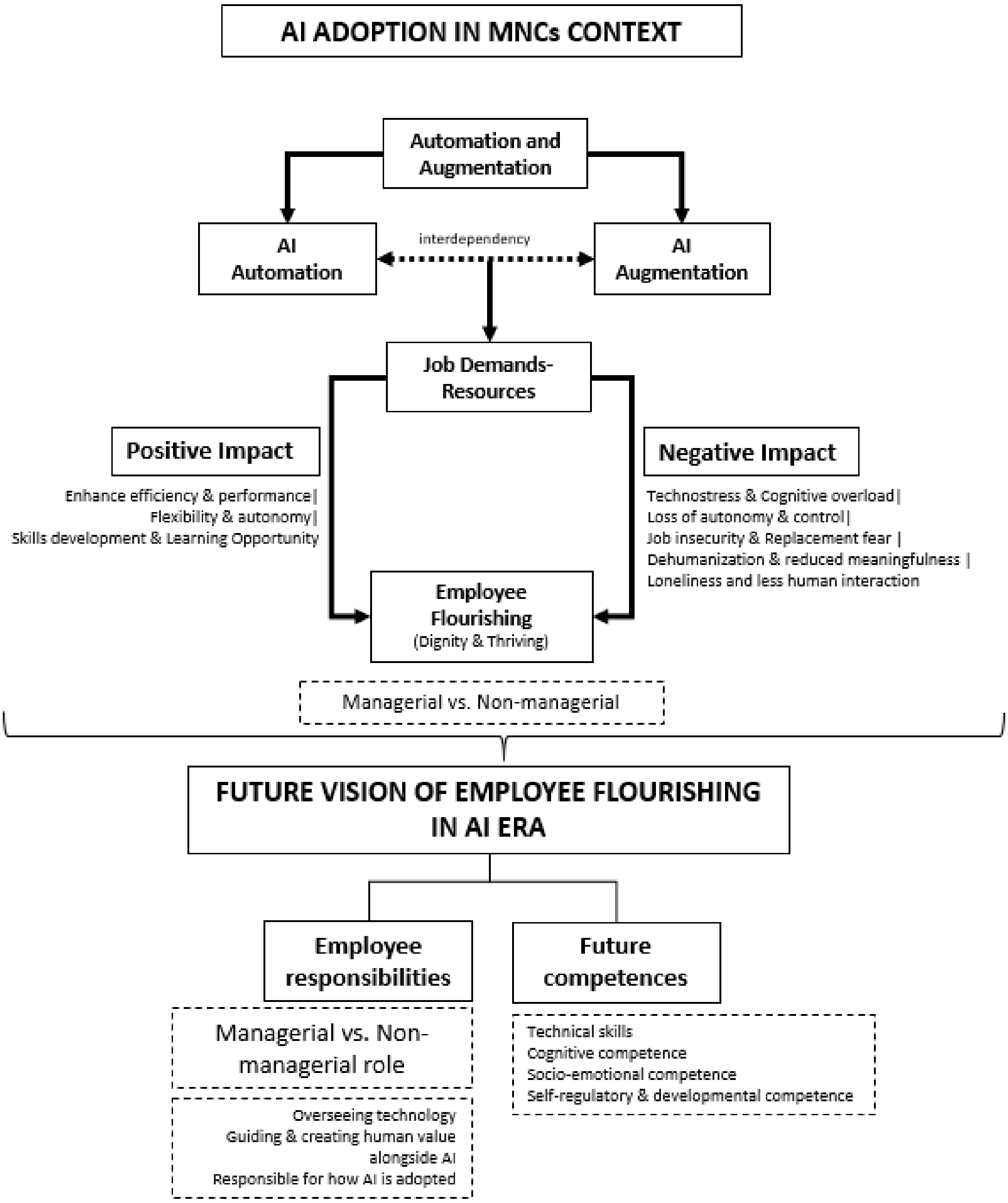

Figure 12. Updated conceptual framework.

6 Conclusions

This chapter brings together the main results of the study, discusses what they mean in practice, and outlines its limitations and ideas for future research. It begins by addressing the research questions and summarising the key findings. It then turns to the practical implications for international auditing firms, practising auditors, and regulatory bodies. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the study's limitations and proposing directions for future scholarly work.

6.1 Key findings

This section recaps the key findings by addressing the three research questions of this study.

RQ1: How does AI influence employee flourishing as a resource or a demand in MNCs?

The findings reconfirm that AI has an ambivalent effect on employee flourishing in MNCs; it operates both as a job resource and as a job demand. On the resource side, participants frequently described AI as practical support that automates tedious tasks, provides rich information and insights, and even boosts confidence by acting like a super-assistant. This helped them feel more competent, more autonomous (doing tasks alone that previously required specialists), and in some cases more connected to others, for example, through AI tools that bridge language barriers in global teams. Many also reported personal growth, as working with AI encouraged them to learn new skills and expand their roles, reinforcing a sense of progress and development.

At the same time, AI clearly appeared as a demand, in line with the Job Demands-Resources theory. Employees felt pressure to keep up with rapid AI developments, invest time in continuous learning, and monitor or double-check AI outputs, which added cognitive load and responsibility. Uncertainty about how roles would change, worries about future relevance, increased work intensity (some companies implicitly expect employees to handle more volume since AI makes things faster, which can heighten workload. Furthermore, when AI is used for automation, employees may face job insecurity or even job loss, a severe demand in terms of psychological stress and real career impact. Losing coworkers or fearing one's own role might be cut can undermine one's sense of security and belonging, aspects of flourishing.

Importantly, whether AI was experienced more as a resource or as a demand depended on context. In organisations with high AI adoption and strong support, training, ethical guidelines, clear strategies, and involvement of employees, AI was mostly seen as a net positive. Demands such as learning new tools were buffered by available resources. In contrast, in firms with little or fragmented AI adoption and weak support, employees more often experienced AI as an additional burden, with limited visible benefits and heightened anxiety about the future. For example, one marketing specialist's company had not officially rolled out AI, so she had to experiment on her own; without guidance or integration, AI wasn't making a big positive difference for her, but it still imposed a future demand (she worries the moment AI is fully adopted, she'll have to scramble to catch up and handle higher expectations). Therefore, the organisation makes a big difference in how AI is experienced: when there is strong support (training, guidance, clear communication), AI feels more like a helpful resource. When support is weak or missing, AI is more likely to feel like an extra burden or demand.

Lastly, during the empirical survey, it was found that employee role also mattered: managers tended to emphasise benefits and rarely feared job loss, while non-managerial employees, especially in routine roles, felt the pressure and insecurity more strongly. Overall, AI's impact on flourishing is dual and context-dependent: it supports well-being when resources outweigh demands, and risks harming it when demands dominate.

RQ2: How does AI adoption as a resource or demand foster empoyee flourishing in MNCs?

The findings show that AI can genuinely support employee flourishing when it is used as a job resource, enriching people's daily work and overall well-being. Many interviewees described very concrete ways AI made their work lives better. Once the tedious parts were automated, people had more space to experiment, brainstorm, and tackle higher-level problems. Many described working with AI as "fun," "exciting," or a "game-changer," and felt more absorbed and interested in their work. For some, AI even increased the meaning of their job by letting them focus on the parts that matter most, strategy, customers, and human relationships.

In overall, AI fostered flourishing when it saved time, reduced drudgery, boosted performance, expanded autonomy, supported learning, and shifted attention toward meaningful tasks, especially in organisations that actively supported employees in using it. Under those conditions, people didn't just work better; they felt better: more energised, capable, and valued.

RQ3: How does AI adoption as a resource or demand hinder employee flourishing in MNCs?

In this question, the study looks at the dark side of AI adoption in MNCs, how it makes employee flourishing harder by adding new pressures and problems. The interviews show that when AI is not well managed, it easily turns from a helpful tool into a source of strain. One major issue is the constant pressure to learn and adapt. Because AI tools change so quickly, many employees feel they are on a never-ending learning treadmill, with new tools, new updates, and new ways of working. Some joked that every day feels like onboarding with a new colleague, but behind the humour was real fatigue. Without proper training and time, people end up self-studying late at night or on weekends, which can cause stress, mental overload, and a lingering fear of never really catching up. Other demands were more ethical and relational. Some employees were uneasy when their company did not clearly address the ethical side of AI, issues like fairness, privacy, and the human impact of AI-based decisions. Others worried about over-reliance on AI and losing their own skills, or about the loss of "human touch" at work as communication and processes became more automated. When people feel less connected to their colleagues, their values, or the meaning of their work, their ability to flourish suffers.

In short, AI hinders flourishing when its demand side is left unchecked: learning fatigue, heavier workloads, insecurity, ethical discomfort, skill atrophy, and reduced human connection all showed up as risks. Whether these demands damage well-being depends on how much support employees receive. Organisations that balance AI with training, realistic goals, open communication, ethical guardrails, and space for human connection are far more likely to protect and even strengthen employee flourishing.

6.2 Theoretical contributions

This study contributes four main points to the literature on AI adoption at work, especially in the MNCs context and employee flourishing.

Firstly, it conceptualises AI adoption in MNCs as a dynamic, hybrid job characteristic that simultaneously contains elements of automation and augmentation. It addresses the gap on the effects of automation and augmentation in general by extending the fact of automation-augmentation into the MNCs context. Instead of seeing AI as only a “good” resource or only a “bad” demand, the findings illustrate how different ways of using AI change the balance between job demands (like technostress, overload, insecurity, and reduced human contact) and job resources (such as efficiency, autonomy, learning, and creativity). This extends Job Demands-Resources theory, which distinguishes resource and demand pathways to well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), treating AI as something that can feed into both sides (demands and resources) at the same time. It also complements recent JD-R work demonstrating AI’s dual impact on productivity and strain (Chuang, Chiang, & Lin, 2025) by grounding these mechanisms in rich qualitative data.

Second, the thesis integrates JD-R with the emerging both automation and augmentation perspectives. The updated framework explains how automation and augmentation are linked, and how different mixes between them lead to different levels of strain and support. When AI is used mainly to augment people's work, it tends to create positive challenge demands alongside strong resources. When it is used mainly to automate tasks, it is more likely to create negative hindrance demands, unless organisations also redesign roles and invest in reskilling (Jia, Luo, Fang, & Liao, 2024). This moves beyond earlier studies that focused only on performance or stress, by connecting AI use directly to employee flourishing.

Third, the thesis adds an actor-specific view by comparing managers and non-managers. It shows that managers are usually in a high-augmentation, high-responsibility situation: they benefit from better data and strategic support from AI, but also face more role stretch, accountability, and emotional pressure. Non-managerial employees, especially in routine roles, experience AI more through automation and monitoring, which can increase insecurity and threaten their flourishing if they do not have access to augmentation tools and learning opportunities. This actor-sensitive JD–R view complements macro evidence from the Future of Jobs Report 2023 that technological change is polarising roles and skills.

Finally, the study connects role theory and complementarity theory to the idea of flourishing. It argues that employees' future responsibilities (such as overseeing technology, creating human value with AI, and being accountable for how it is used) and their future competences (technical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and self-regulatory skills) can be seen as personal resources that help rebuild a good fit between humans and AI. It also incorporates recent evidence that heavy AI interaction can erode social resources and increase loneliness (Tang et al., 2023) by explicitly embedding socio-emotional and relational competence in the conceptual framework. By also acknowledging that intense AI use can weaken social connections and increase loneliness, the framework puts dignity, meaning, and thriving, rather than just the absence of burnout, at the heart of how we assess AI's impact on work.

6.3 Practical implications and recommendations

6.3.1 Implications for MNCs and HR leaders

For multinational companies, these findings highlight that AI adoption is not just an IT project or a tool rollout, it is a socio-technical redesign. In other words, when AI comes in, work itself changes: how tasks are done, how people feel, and what it takes to thrive. AI will truly support employee flourishing only when its benefits as a resource (efficiency, autonomy, learning, creativity) clearly outweigh the extra demands it creates (pressure, uncertainty, technostress).

This means MNCs should deliberately design AI for augmentation, not just automation. The focus should be on use cases where AI frees people from low-value, repetitive work and gives them more space for thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and relationship-building. Research shows that when employees keep decision-making power and use AI as a “thinking partner,” their creativity and performance can grow significantly.

At the same time, AI needs to be governed in a human-centric way. Clear guidelines on responsible AI, honest communication about what AI can and cannot do, and involving employees in how AI is introduced all help protect dignity, fairness, and autonomy. This is very much in line with global discussions (e.g., the World Economic Forum) that stress balancing efficiency with human development.

Finally, HR must see AI as a reason to build inclusive reskilling systems, not just offer a few advanced courses to specialists. With a large share of skills expected to change in the coming years, AI literacy, data skills, critical thinking, and collaboration should be treated as core capabilities for everyone. Learning paths should be accessible to non-managerial employees and frontline staff, not only to managers and experts.

6.3.2 Implications for managerial employees

Managers play a decisive role in how AI is experienced day to day. The findings suggest that many managers are becoming AI orchestrators: they translate corporate AI strategies into local practice, choose where AI fits into workflows, and support their teams through the change. Their job is increasingly about making AI useful and human-friendly rather than just “enforcing” its use.

This means managers have to balance efficiency with human connection and development. They are the ones who decide, for example, whether saved time is reinvested into learning, innovation, and coaching, or simply converted into higher output targets. They also face new responsibilities, such as monitoring AI outputs, setting realistic expectations, being honest about AI’s limits, and protecting their team from technostress and overload.

Because of this, organisations should invest in AI-savvy leadership development. Manager training should combine basic technical understanding of AI with themes from the JD-R perspective: how to design jobs that have healthy levels of challenge and support, how to create psychological safety so people feel comfortable learning and experimenting, and how to make ethical decisions about AI use.

6.3.3 Implications for non-managerial employees

For non-managerial employees, flourishing in AI-rich MNCs depends heavily on moving from being passive users of imposed tools to becoming active shapers of their own human-AI workflows. The interviews show that when employees have a say, tools to work with (not just tools that watch them), and support to learn, AI feels like an opportunity. When those elements are missing, AI feels like pressure.

Non-managers benefit when they have access to augmentation tools, not only monitoring and automation systems that track their performance. They also need time and space to experiment with AI and see how it can genuinely help them. Developing the four competence clusters identified in the framework, AI literacy, higher-order thinking skills, socio-emotional skills, and self-regulation, helps employees see AI as a learning partner rather than a threat.

Equally important are clear internal mobility pathways out of roles that are highly automatable. When employees can see how to move into more augmented, higher-value roles, and are offered training and support to do so, AI adoption feels more like a career opportunity than a countdown to redundancy

6.4 Limitations and future research suggestions

Even though this study has contributed valuable, insightful outcomes to the influence of AI adoption on employee flourishing in MNCs context, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting these findings.

First, the study is based on in-depth interviews with a relatively small group of employees connected to one main multinational company context. This approach is very useful for getting rich, detailed stories and understanding how people experience AI in their everyday work. However, it also means the results cannot be assumed to represent everyone. Employees working in other industries, countries, or very different company cultures might experience AI in other ways, so the findings should be seen as illustrative rather than universally applicable.

Second, the research is cross-sectional, meaning it captures a snapshot in time. AI is changing very fast, and the balance between what it automates and what it augments, as well as the mix of job demands and resources, may shift as tools become more mature, and organisations should learn how to use them better. To really understand how employee flourishing develops over time in relation to AI, future studies would need to follow people for longer periods (for example, through longitudinal designs). Third, all the data come from self-reports. Participants describe their own perceptions and experiences, which is essential for this kind of research, but these accounts can be influenced by memory gaps, the desire to appear competent or positive, or wider stories about AI being either very good or very dangerous. The study did not include objective data such as measured AI usage, performance statistics, or health indicators, which could complement the interview material.

Fourth, the study treats management and non-management as one broad target audience - employee. In reality, there may be important differences within these groups (e.g., between first-line and senior managers, or between highly skilled professionals and routine front-line workers) that the present design cannot fully unpack.

Additionally, although the study reviewed structural, relational, and contextual mediators of AI's impact on employee flourishing, it did not fully capture cross-cultural differences or systematically compare global versus local training and leadership strategies within multinational companies. These differences were acknowledged in the literature and data, but were not systematically analyzed. For instance, the sample included respondents from the United States, Finland, Switzerland, Vietnam, and the Asia-Pacific region, but the study did not examine country-specific practices or cultural norms in depth, considering that those factors are equally and broadly generalized across different cultural or organizational settings.

Finally, the thesis focuses mainly on white-collar, knowledge-based work. It does not systematically study blue-collar roles or gig-economy work, where AI may show up in different ways, such as algorithmic scheduling, productivity tracking, or automated rating systems. In those settings, the ways AI supports or harms flourishing could look quite different.

These limitations do not undermine the main insights of the study, but they do mean the results should be generalised with care. They also point to clear opportunities for future research, for example, expanding to quantitative research with a sample size covering other sectors and countries, including objective indicators, and exploring more diverse types of work, industry, profession, and role levels.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Section 1. Background and Professional Experience

1. Can you briefly describe your job role, responsibilities and experience?

Section 2. AI usage in the workplace

2. May I know what kinds of AI platforms or systems do you use in your daily work?
3. How long has your company been applying AI in the workplace?
4. Can you let us know the names of the AI platforms or systems that are currently being used in your company?
5. How familiar and comfortable do you feel using these tools?
6. How were these AI systems introduced in your organisation? Probe:
7. Was it a top-down initiative, a pilot, or something your team adopted on its own?
8. What kind of communication or training did you receive?
9. Compared to a few years ago, how important is AI in your job now?

Section 3. AI in your daily work – AI automation

10. How has AI helped and changed the way you perform your everyday tasks? What exactly changed in your work because of this automation?
11. How do you personally feel about these tasks being automated? Probe: What do you see as the main benefits? What concerns or downsides do you see?
12. Has the use of AI raised any feelings of job insecurity or uncertainty about your future role?
13. How has AI impacted your way of collecting information and analyzing it to make your own decisions at work? How do you personally feel about these tasks being automated?
14. Do you feel or think that AI can replace some of your repetitive daily tasks, or mainly support you in the entire working process? Has AI automation affected how your performance is monitored or evaluated?

Section 4. AI in your daily work – AI augmentation

15. Do you feel that since the day of AI deployment in your company, the working

process is smoother, more convenient, and you can complete your daily tasks more efficiently? Further explain: what does AI help you to do better or faster, so AI will act like an assistant or partner rather than replacing your work?

16. Do you think that you are now capable of taking on more jobs and responsibility for personal growth in your career? So it means that it has freed you from routine tasks so you can focus on more creative/strategic parts?
17. How do your managers or leaders encourage the implementation and widespread use of AI in your team?
18. Does your company have any instructions, training, or company policy on AI usage? What kinds of training or support has your organization provided to help you use AI effectively?
19. What aspects of your work environment help you cope with challenges and do your job well? For example: autonomy, supportive manager, good tools, team culture, flexibility, training, etc.

Section 5. AI and employee flourishing at work

20. How do you feel emotionally when working with AI tools? Do they make you feel supported, anxious, or neutral?
21. Does AI make you feel more engaged and creative in coping with your work? Could you explain a little bit about this? To explain more clearly, to what extent do you feel that your work allows you to grow and develop as a person and professional?
22. Do you feel respected and valued in your workplace?
23. How does AI affect your communication or collaboration with your colleagues after all the current AI platforms have been implemented for widespread usage within the company?
24. Has AI changed how meaningful your work feels to you? There’s no right or wrong answer. AI might make work feel more meaningful, less meaningful, or no different. Please kindly elaborate more on your thoughts on the meaningfulness of the work to you after using AI to support for work in your daily tasks.
25. Have you learned new skills because of working with AI tools? For example, Technical skills, analytical skills, communication, or something else?
26. How has AI affected your ability to achieve goals or feel a sense of accomplishment?
27. How does the fact that using AI for supporting your daily tasks influence much to your work-life balance mood or your overall well-being/working spirit in any way?

Section 6. Moving forward.

28. How do you describe the overall approach to AI usage in your company? In more detail, how would you describe your company's overall attitude towards AI – enthusiastic, cautious, skeptical, something else?
29. What kind of training or guidance has your company provided to help employees adapt to AI?
30. Do you think employees' opinions are considered when your company decides how to use AI?
31. Does your company address ethical or human aspects of AI — such as fairness, transparency, or bias?
32. Do your colleagues from different countries or departments experience AI differently in your organization?
33. How does AI usage impact the collaboration with your colleagues within teams, across departments, and across business entities in your country at an international scale? For example, attitudes toward technology, hierarchy, risk, or privacy.
34. Do you think what are the main benefits of using AI in your departments in particular and for the company in general are?
35. If you could change one thing about how your company uses AI, what would that be?
36. How do you imagine your job will look five years from now as AI continues to evolve?
37. What do you think AI can do for you so you can grow stronger in the future? And how to flourish in your career in this digital era?

Section 7. Closing.

38. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experience with AI or how it affects your motivation, teamwork, or well-being?