



Title: Transformational Leadership in the Digital Workplace: Effects on Workplace Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life through AI Acceptance

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Transformational Leadership in the Digital Workplace: Effects on Workplace Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life through AI Acceptance

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the nature of work, but the benefits for any individual worker will rely on leadership and employees' acceptance of new technologies. This research investigates the direct and indirect relationship between transformational leadership and satisfaction and quality of work life in the manufacturing and service sectors of Pakistan with the mediation of acceptance of the use of AI in the workplace. A cross sectional design with quantitative approach was used. The respondents were 521 employees who were selected by convenience sampling method and data were obtained by physically using questionnaire and analyzed by partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results suggest that transformational leadership has a positive effect on both employee satisfaction and quality of work life as well as on employee acceptance of AI. In addition, there are positive impacts on employee outcomes from the acceptance of AI. Additionally, the relationships between transformational leadership and the outcomes of workplace satisfaction and quality of work life are supported by AI acceptance as a mediator in all the proposed hypotheses. Inspirational, supportive, intellectually stimulating, and individually considerate leadership leads to favorable conditions in which employees see the usefulness, manageability, and compatibility of AI in their work. In exchange, robust acceptance allows staff members to access efficiency, autonomy, learning chances, and also work-related health and well-being. This study brings Social Exchange Theory (SET) to the field of AI in the work environment and provides empirical evidence in a context from an underrepresented emerging economy. The development of transformational leadership should be integrated with transparent communication of AI to the employees, participation by employees in the implementation process, training employees on AI, and providing employees with technical support.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, AI-Acceptance, Workplace Satisfaction, Quality of Work Life, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

AI is an ubiquitous organizational tool for analysis, action, automation, and knowledge. Its growth is transforming employees' work, skills and job experiences. Workplace AI, as a tool, can help to optimize tasks, enhance safety, and promote well-being, but can also increase uncertainty, learning demands, surveillance concerns and anxiety if not managed well (Chuang

et al., 2025; Filippelli et al., 2026; Savolainen et al., 2026; Soulami et al., 2024; Valtonen et al., 2025). Digital transformation is therefore not only a matter of technology, but also of leadership and social factors associated to adoption of the technology by employees.

It is a challenge for both manufacturing and service sectors in Pakistan, organizations are looking for productivity and digital competitiveness, some are more ready than others, and resources are limited. Manufacturing employees are more probable to be working with AI-powered production, planning, and quality-control solutions; service workers are more likely to be dealing with customer service, information processing and decision support solutions that are AI-powered. The industrial and emerging-economy studies indicate that employee satisfaction and work quality are influenced by the workplace environment, autonomy, resources, security, and managerial support (Gazi et al., 2024; Gazi et al., 2024; Raza & Yousufi, 2023). Lacking support, AI can therefore be seen by the recipient as a hindrance instead of a help.

The acceptance of the employees needs to be examined in detail, as it is the prerequisite for the AI investments to become part of everyday work. Employees who feel like AI is helpful, easy to understand, supported, and a good fit with their job are more prospective to learn and use it in their work. Rather, low acceptance can generate resistance, avoidance and underutilization. Recent research links AI attitudes with learning opportunities, engagement, autonomy, job crafting, and employee well-being (Aulia & Lin, 2025; Hu et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025; Prentice et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2026). Therefore, the aspects that affect AI acceptance, both before and after, are important to know.

Transformational leadership is a likely antecedent because it connects people to a vision, encourages new thinking, exemplifies positive change and focuses on development. AI acceptance refers to the positive attitude and willingness of employees to adopt and utilize AI-powered systems in their daily tasks. Workplace satisfaction is a positive reaction to work and quality of work life is an indicator of work's contribution to well-being, security, participation, growth and work-life compatibility. Relationships amongst transformational leadership and trust, engagement, satisfaction, motivation, and technology-related behavior have been demonstrated in recent research (Abu-Qutaish et al., 2025; Agaoglu et al., 2025; Kohnen et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025).

Still, there is no evidence that these relationships could be tested as a package in the manufacturing and service industries in Pakistan. Leadership and employee outcomes without considering AI acceptance are typically examined in prior studies, or the studies emphasis on leadership and employee outcomes in AI adoption context at workplace, specifically in terms of performance, knowledge sharing, creativity, and job crafting, rather than quality of work life and satisfaction (Hu et al., 2025; Pham et al., 2024; Prentice et al., 2023; Zirar et al., 2023). While leadership has been explored as a precondition for using AI, the intervening role of AI acceptance between transformational leadership and outcomes of well-being have not yet been explored in depth (Agaoglu et al., 2025; Fousiani et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025).

The need for rationalization of the study is to bring together the leaders, technology acceptance, and employee well-being in one process. Transformational leaders can articulate the rationale for the introduction of AI, demonstrate ethical practices and offer learning materials. These activities could help to demystify the use of AI and make it more accessible and beneficial.

Once accepted, AI can lessen repetitive workloads, better enable access to information, boost perceived control, and facilitate task completion, which can positively influence quality of work life and satisfaction. This is consistent with results of studies that indicate that AI value comes not just from the adoption but from the optimization of the tasks, autonomy, learning, and supportive organizational conditions (Aulia & Lin, 2025; Chuang et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025; Valtonen et al., 2025).

The empirical scope consists of 521 employees from manufacturing and service sector of Pakistan. PLS-SEM is used to evaluate data with convenience sampling method through a physical questionnaire. The direct impact of transformational leadership on workplace satisfaction, quality of work life and AI acceptance are assessed as well as the impact of AI acceptance on both and its mediating effects. The combination of manufacturing and service firms allows the study of two environments with varying task characteristics, customer engagement, technological and knowledge intensity. The study thus provides a broad initial test of the proposed mechanism in an emerging-economy employment context.

The main basis of SET is provided. It implies that workers react favorably to positive treatment and resources that are provided by the organizations representatives, and that they return the favor with positive attitudes and constructive behaviour (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Personnel might perceive all of these as benefits from transformational leaders: respect, support, developmental concern, and confidence. With leaders offering participation, learning and clarity, AI acceptance could be a two-way street. Once accepted, it allows workers to achieve benefits from their work resources that increase employees' satisfaction and quality of work life. This logic is supported by evidence that transformational leadership and perceived organizational support AI adoption (Wang et al., 2025).

The research makes contribution to literature by connecting AI acceptance as how transformational leadership is conveyed to two employee outcomes. Breaks the deadlock between digital transformation and AI research from a productivity point of view. In addition, evidence from underrepresented context in workplace AI research, such as Pakistan, is supplied. In practice, the results can be used to inform the implementation of AI in leadership communication, employee engagement, learning support, and safeguarding employees' wellbeing. Thus, the study aims to determine if transformational leadership improves job satisfaction and quality of worklife both directly and indirectly, mediated by AI acceptance. The integrated model provides a trade-based description of employee well-being and acceptance led by leaders.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Understanding

Social exchange theory assumes that employment relationships are transactional, with an obligation to respond in kind to positive organizational treatment with positive attitudes and behaviours (Blau, 1964). Economic rewards are not the only drivers of response from employees; they also assess respect, fairness, care, developmental support and access to valued resources. An employee's trust and sense of obligation is increased when an organization's representatives offer these benefits, which leads to a higher-than-expected level of employee participation (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al., 2017). The current model is for transformational leaders to represent the organization. They communicate

that workers are appreciated and nurtured during periods of technological shifting through vision, encouragement, intellectual stimulation, and integrity. This can be met by employees with an open mind to AI, learning and accepting AI work practices. Once the AI is accepted by employees, they can get the benefits from the AI, such as easier access to information, better task completion, more autonomy and more opportunities to learn, which can lead to a higher level of satisfaction and quality of work life for workers. This exchange process is supported by recent evidence showing that transformational leadership leads to greater employee usage of AI as a result of perceived organizational support (Wang et al., 2025). SET thus provides a connection between leadership resources and AI acceptance, while explaining how AI acceptance can facilitate the spread of leadership's positive impact to employee well-being outcomes.

2.2 Workplace Satisfaction

Workplace satisfaction is a positive reaction of an employee towards work and environment in which the job is working. It represents achievement of expectations regarding significant work, recognition, relationships, supervision, development, equity and working environment (Locke, 1976; Spector, 1997). Satisfaction is not just a passing state, but is a general appraisal based on a number of work experiences. Previous research has discovered a connection between overall organizational effectiveness, satisfaction and performance (Judge et al., 2001). Digital experiences are integrated into this assessment in today's workplaces. AI can enhance satisfaction if it minimizes repetitive tasks, aids in decision-making, boosts employee autonomy or enhances their performance competencies. But when AI generates insecurity, overload, opacity or a loss of control, satisfaction can be reduced. From a recent study, then, the effects of technology are seen as having mixed consequences, not always good (Filippelli et al., 2026; Chuang et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025). Leadership is key as change is interpreted in part through managerial communication and support. Transformational leadership can enhance employees' satisfaction by setting clear goals, acknowledging achievements, fostering employee involvement, and building employee capacity (Lee et al., 2024; Raza & Yousufi, 2023; Abu-Qutaish et al., 2025). Satisfaction is regarded as a result of transformational leadership and employee acceptance of AI in the current study.

2.3 Quality of Work Life

Quality of work life is multi-dimensional evaluation of psychological, physical, social and developmental needs of the work environment. The initial manifestations focused on work conditions, compensation, growth, integration, participation, rights, social relevance of work, and work-life balance (Walton, 1973). In later models, quality of work life was similarly described as degree to which a job adds to one's enjoyment of life, competence, belonging, and wellness, not just as a source of income (Van Laar et al., 2007; Sirgy et al., 2001). The construct is more encompassing than workplace satisfaction as it reflects the sustainability and human quality of the work experience as a whole. According to recent industrial evidence, the quality of work environment, organizational climate, cooperation, autonomy, availability of resources, rewards, security and satisfaction are aspects that have influence on quality of work life (Gazi et al., 2024). Leadership can have an impact on many of these conditions through resource allocation, participation facilitation, demand management and individual needs recognition. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that supportive leadership is linked to employee wellbeing and work-life balance (Bayati et al., 2025; Kohnen et al., 2024). Further benefits for

the acceptance of AI could include improved quality of work life if employees have access to technology to ease burden, access to knowledge, improve safety, and have control. Its benefits, however, must be clearly implemented, properly trained and well led.

2.4 Transformational Leadership

Idealized influence is the idea that the leader can be an ethical, credible and trusted role model. Staff see leaders' integrity, willingness to take responsibility and consistency of behaviours with shared values. This behavior creates identification and respect, which leads followers to be more accepting of the organization's goals and transformation (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass, 1985). In AI-driven workplaces, staff members could ask themselves how AI will impact fairness, security, autonomy and professional identity. Responsible leaders who clarify ethical limits, and hold themselves accountable will minimize suspicion and show that AI should be used to enhance, not diminish, employees. Reliable role modelling can therefore reinforce positive work interpretations and acceptance. There is recent evidence that transformational leadership facilitates trust and positive employee actions, and supportive leadership conditions facilitates use of AI by employees (Lee et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). The idealized influence may then enhance satisfaction and quality work life by establishing trust in leadership and technology.

Inspirational motivation has to do with describing a desirable future, a meaningful collective purpose, and employees' belief that they are able to accomplish it. Transformational leaders communicate clearly and optimistically to link the daily work to a bigger picture (Bass & Avolio, 1994). When implementing AI, it is important to provide employees with more than just instructions on how to use it, as they must be made aware of the importance of change, role changes, and the role technology can play in supporting human contribution. A positive AI vision can minimize ambiguity and get people on the same page as they embrace learning, innovation, service quality, and operational improvement. It can also foster favorable beliefs about usefulness that are key to technology acceptance (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Davis, 1989). Recent research has shown that leadership communication and motivating employees leads to employee involvement, innovative behavior, and positive reactions to technological change (Abu-Qutaish et al., 2025; Agaoglu et al., 2025; Pham et al., 2024). Empowerment through inspirational motivation might then improve employee well-being by providing a rational motive for change and provide support for successful change adaptation.

Intellectual stimulation involves leadership behaviors that stimulate employees to challenge assumptions, look for alternatives, work creatively to solve problems, and experiment. Transformational leaders rather blame reasonable errors and ask employees to rethink the issue and join in the improvement process (Bass, 1985; Podsakoff et al., 1990). This behavior is pertinent when it comes to AI acceptance since successful utilization typically doesn't happen by simply complying with it. Workers need to be testing applications, analysing outputs, understanding the limitations, and rethinking practices that involve appropriate human-AI collaboration. Intellectual stimulation provides an opportunity to learn new skills, and to see AI as a learning opportunity rather than an uncontrollable threat. AI implementation can be a positive influence on learning and knowledge sharing if employees receive support from management and positive orientations towards technology (Hu et al., 2025). In addition, human-AI collaboration requires self-efficacy and leadership resources to empower employees to deal with complexity (Wang et al., 2026). Intellectual stimulation builds acceptance and

satisfaction and enhances quality of work life through competence, participation and problem-solving.

Individualized consideration is when leaders take into account employees' individual abilities, concerns, and learning needs. Transformational leaders coach, listen, give developmental feedback, and adjust support to make the change, but they do not treat all employees as interchangeable targets of change (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Carless et al., 2000). Differences in digital literacy, exposure, anxiety, and confidence among employees can result in unequal experiences with AI implementation. Individual attention enables training, reassurance and technical assistance to be tailored to these differences. This support can enhance the sense of organizational caring and alleviate employees' concerns about being left behind when transitioning to technology. SET argues that personalized interactions lead to mutual commitment and favorable attitudes (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Kurtessis et al., 2017). Studies reveal that factors like supportive leadership, learning resources and positive perceptions of AI are crucial for engagement and well-being (Aulia & Lin, 2025; Savolainen et al., 2026). In this way, individualized consideration increases a company's acceptance of AI and improves the performance of its employees, ensuring the technology's growth is gradual, inclusive, and caters to human requirements.

2.5 AI Acceptance

Performance expectancy states to degree to which employees think utilizing AI will result in better performance outcomes such as efficiency, accuracy, decision quality, productivity, and service effectiveness. The belief stems from the perceived usefulness in TAM and is still central to the UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Davis, 1989). When AI can manage demanding tasks, eliminate monotonous tasks, or provide pertinent information quickly without undermining human expertise, workers are more likely to adopt it. The data revealed that perceived performance benefits can impact generative AI adoption and usage intentions, as evidenced by organizational evidence (Kim et al., 2024). Additionally, AI has been linked to task optimisation, engagement, and performance when used alongside employees' capabilities (Prentice et al., 2023; Valtonen et al., 2025). Transformational leaders can enhance performance expectancy by showcasing applications of AI, linking AI to shared goals, and making sure that implementation addresses work issues. There should then be a positive atmosphere for workplace satisfaction and quality of work life to develop in conjunction with these expectations for positive performance.

Effort expectancy relates to the ease of learning and using an AI system. Recognizing potential benefits doesn't necessarily mean that employees will be motivated, as interfaces may be unclear, outputs may be hard to interpret, and it may take a great deal of time to become competent. According to the research in the field of technology acceptance, ease of use is a prerequisite for positive attitudes towards usage (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). AI's relevance is particularly in effort expectancy as employees need to know how to prompt and verify, what the boundaries are, and what to watch for. Too many demands in learning can result in anxiety and avoidance, while a staged approach and intuitive tools can help to foster confidence. AI self-efficacy, learning opportunities, and technological orientation are found to influence employees' engagement with AI (Hu et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2026). Coaching, experimentation, and training customized to employees' needs are ways that

transformational leaders can enhance effort expectancy. AI is accepted when it is manageable, leading to better work processes, less strain, satisfaction, and work life quality.

Social influence is the degree to which crucial organizational stakeholders expect, support, or value employees' use of AI. The adoption may be perceived as safe and desirable or not, depending on the supervisors, co-workers and/or the organizational norms (Venkatesh et al., 2003, 2012). When technology is new or outcomes are unknown, employees turn to social cues to guide their actions. Transformational leaders have substantial influence as they create a vision for the group, set an example for the group, and share meaning with the group. If leaders responsibly leverage AI tools and view them as a space for constructive experimentation, staff may be more open to their use. Conflicting messages or strong-arm tactics on the other hand can erode trust. Leadership, competitive climate, organizational support, and AI framing are seen to impact the use and acceptance of AI at workplace (Fousiani et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). Social influence is most beneficial in combination with dialogue and employee voice. A positive environment can normalize learning, decrease the stigma around it, and enable AI acceptance to help improve satisfaction and quality of work life.

Facilitating conditions are the workers' beliefs that they have access to organizational and technical resources to use AI. These encompass appropriate technology systems, sound infrastructure, training, technical assistance, ethical policies, and compatibility with existing tasks (Venkatesh et al., 2012, 2003). In the absence of these resources, the acceptance can be symbolic only and not translated into a sustained usage of these resources. In resource-limited environments, connectivity, digital skills, system quality, and managerial support can be different, which can result in different experiences of adoption. Recent reviews highlight that factors such as organizational readiness, employee capability, governance, and implementation support are crucial for AI outcomes (Zirar et al., 2023; Soulami et al., 2024; Savolainen et al., 2026). Transformational leaders can orchestrate the resources, clear obstacles, support training, and coordinate support. Acceptance becomes more robust when employees feel confident that the organization can support them in safely and effectively leveraging AI. The right conditions also help to promote quality of work life because AI implementation is not an extra burden.

2.6 Hypothesis Development

2.6.1 Transformational Leadership with Workplace Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life

Transformational leadership should increase job satisfaction as it is a function of supervision, recognition, meaning, and development. Idealized influence establishes trust, inspirational motivation links work to purpose, intellectual stimulation leads to participation, and individualized consideration meets personal needs. These behaviors help to foster perceptions of fairness, competence, belonging, and managerial care that lead to a satisfying work experience. According to SET, employees respond to supportive leadership with positive reactions towards their work and organization (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). In recent times, transformational leadership has been linked with job satisfaction, trust, motivation, engagement and career satisfaction in the organization (Abu-Qutaish et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2024; Raza & Yousufi, 2023). Therefore, a positive perception of transformational leadership is expected to boost employee satisfaction.

H1: Transformational leadership positively influence job satisfaction.

Enhancement in the quality of work life, as a result of the influence that transformational leaders have on the resources and conditions through which work is experienced. A compelling vision adds meaning, the intellectual stimulation supports autonomy and growth, individualized consideration adds developmental support, and the ethical role modeling adds security and trust. These behaviors allow the employee to handle demands and receive recognition, participation, competence, and social integration. Employees' quality of work life is more influenced when they feel that they have sufficient resources, supportive relationships, fair treatment and opportunities for growth (Gazi et al., 2024; Sirgy et al., 2001; Walton, 1973). In recent years, there have been additional research studies linking supportive and transformational leadership to employee well-being and the quality of work life (Bayati et al., 2025; Kohnen et al., 2024). Transformational leaders are thus responsible for creating a more sustainable and human work experience.

H2: Transformational leadership enhances positive quality of work life.

2.6.2 Transformational Leadership and AI Acceptance

We should enhance AI acceptance through transformational leadership by influencing employees' perceptions of technological change. Transformational leaders communicate a compelling and significant vision, model responsible leadership, facilitate problem solving, and offer individualized learning assistance. These behaviors can influence the perceptions of usefulness, ease of management, social support, and resources that are essential to technology acceptance (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). Leadership also helps to minimize uncertainty by providing clarity on how AI can be used alongside humans to work, and how it can help to make the workplace safer for learning. Research in recent years suggests that transformational leadership is a significant predictor of employee use of AI in part by means of perceived organizational support (Wang et al., 2025). Research on AI in leadership also focuses on vision-focused and support-based leadership, together with learning and trust in implementation (Agaoglu et al., 2025; Fousiani et al., 2024). To ensure that employees are more engaged in the AI initiative, they should expect to have positive reviews and be eager to use the tool. They should therefore be rewarded with positive reviews and be ready to use the tool to encourage positive employee evaluations and willingness to use the AI.

H3: Transformational leadership positively affects the acceptance of AI.

2.6.3 AI Acceptance with Workplace Satisfaction and Quality of Work Life

The adoption of AI should improve employees' job satisfaction, as those who are positive about the use of AI are more likely to consider it a work tool. By leveraging accepted AI, repetitive tasks can be minimized, information can be accessed with greater ease, decisions can be enhanced, and employees can complete tasks with greater confidence and efficiency. These benefits enhance the sense of competence, control, achievement and meaningfulness. Conversely, low acceptance can result in avoidance and frustration, and in conflict between the needs of technology and employee preferences. In a recent study, Aulia & Lin (2025) found that constructive AI was positively related to engagement, task optimization, autonomy, learning, and well-being; Hu et al. (2025) reported similar correlations with constructive AI and such factors as engagement and autonomy; Prentice et al. (2023) observed that engagement and autonomy were positively correlated with constructive AI; and Valtonen et al. (2025) found constructive AI positively correlated with learning and well-being. While AI may generate new

demands, when it is accepted well, it is more likely that the employees will be able to get the resources they need. The employees should therefore rate their workplace more positively if they are more accepting of AI.

H5: Acceptance of AI has a positive effect on workplace satisfaction.

The acceptance of AI should enhance the quality of work life when a worker can use technology without going through resistance and strain. Employees who accept AI will be more likely to use it for accessing information, coordination, learning, safety, and to reduce repetitive demands. These resources can improve autonomy, capability, productivity and work-life management. Acceptance can also help to lessen uncertainty and boost confidence in meeting future needs. Research in recent years has revealed that the impact of AI on well-being is influenced by employees' attitudes, feelings of autonomy, learning opportunities, and the ratio of technologized resources to demands (Chuang et al., 2025; Filippelli et al., 2026; Liu et al., 2025; Savolainen et al., 2026). High acceptance is likely to create a sense of aid, not threat, when using AI. It should therefore help to make the working experience more manageable, safe and development oriented.

H5: Acceptance of AI has a positive effect on quality of work life.

2.6.4 AI Acceptance as Mediator

Influence on workplace satisfaction may happen through increased AI acceptance, which in turn could be brought about by transformational leadership. Transformational leadership can potentially improve workplace satisfaction by first promoting the acceptance of AI. Leaders set a realistic vision of Artificial Intelligence, demonstrate ethical behavior with technology, make learning materials available and remind staff that technology will help them contribute more. These actions effectively build up with beliefs of usefulness, ease of use, social support, and facilitating conditions, which lead to acceptance. When accepted, AI offers task efficiency, access to information, autonomy, and learning benefits, which enhance satisfaction. This sequence is based on the SET, which stipulates that the support provided by the leader will be returned in terms of openness to organizational change, and the acceptance of technology, in turn, will provide resources that generate positive job evaluations (Blau, 1964; Wang et al., 2025). Leadership and organizational support influences the use of AI and constructive use of AI positively contributes to engagement and well-being (Aulia & Lin, 2025; Prentice et al., 2023). It is therefore, expected that there will be a negative relationship between the two variables.

H6: AI acceptance mediate relationship between transformational leadership and workplace satisfaction.

The enhancing of the quality of work life may be attributed to acceptance of AI. Transformational leaders offer meaning, trust, individualized support and learning, which diminish uncertainty about implementation of AI. Such employees are more likely to adopt AI into their workflows and to access less repetitive work, more control, increased knowledge access, safety, and skill development. These resources focus on dimensions of quality of work life such as well-being, autonomy, growth, security and sustainable demands. The latest research highlights the potential of AI to enhance employee well-being by optimising tasks, and how leadership and supportive climates influence the willingness of employees to use AI

(Hu et al., 2025; Valtonen et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Therefore, transformational leadership should be passed down in part via the positive acceptance of employees towards AI.

H7: AI acceptance mediate relationship between transformational leadership and quality of work life.

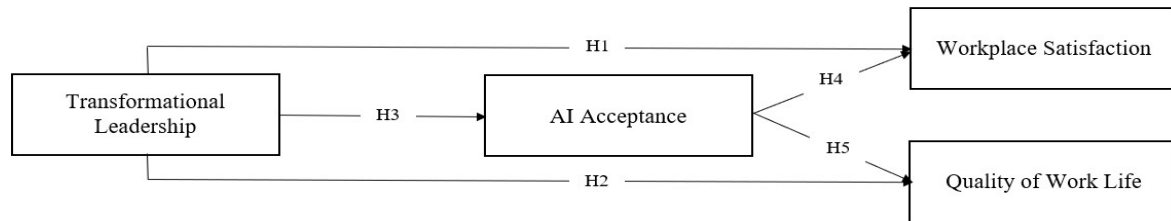


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

1. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection Procedure

Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling approach, is used in this quantitative study to gather data (Attiaq et al., 2023). This sampling procedure aids to target the employees and is cost effective. The data was collected from various large manufacturing and service sector organizations' employees about their quality of work life and satisfaction. A physical survey were conducted to collect the final questionnaire. For data analysis, a total of 511 forms were taken into consideration.

3.2 Demographic Profile

The respondents that participated in the data collection included both men and women from a range of age groups and educational backgrounds. Complete particulars are shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic	Category	Percentage (Frequency)
Gender	Male	63.2 (323)
	Female	36.80 (188)
Age (In years)	21-30 years	19.76 (101)
	31-40 years	36.99 (189)
	41-50 years	24.65 (126)
	Above 50 years	18.60 (95)
Education	Matriculation	7.04 (36)
	Intermediate	18.00 (92)
	Bachelors	37.38 (191)
	Masters	25.44 (130)
	Above masters	12.14 (62)
Experience	Less than 5 years	27.00 (138)
	5- 10 years	30.72 (157)
	11-15 years	25.24 (129)
	Above 15 years	17.04 (87)

3.3 Measures

A five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 represents strongly agree, was used to rate each measurement item. The measuring tools were adapted from previous studies. Transformational leadership is quantified using scale of five items by Bass and Avolio

(1994). Five items are borrowed from Venkatesh and Davis (2000) for evaluating AI acceptance. Five items have taken from Weiss et al. (1967) to quantify workplace satisfaction. Finally, twelve items have taken from Huang et al. (2007) to measure the quality of work life.

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

We employed PLS-SEM for the analysis. PLS-SEM is a statistical method for simulating complex relationships between observable and latent constructs (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021). In this case, using PLS-SEM is practical and prudent. This study examines new or relatively understudied interactions in relation to employee job-related outcomes. This study employed PLS-SEM due to the multi-path complexity of the model, the predictive focus of the research, and the exploratory purpose of understanding the psychological aspects impacting sustainable food consumption behavior. Its modest sample size and adaptability to non-normative data further supported its use. Examining the outside model (measurement model) and evaluating inner model (structural model) are the two phases of PLS-SEM.

2. Results

4.1 Common Method Bias Test

Examining common method bias (CMB) is crucial in cross-sectional studies. As per results of Harman-Single Factor test, the maximum explained variance was 41.11%, which is below the 50% cutoff (Hair et al., 2017). These results showed that there isn't a serious problem with CMB.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Analysis

Construct	Dimensions	Code	Loadings > 0.60	Alpha > 0.70	CR > 0.70	AVE > 0.50
Transformational Leadership		TL_1	0.771	0.877	0.880	0.671
		TL_2	0.847			
		TL_3	0.844			
		TL_4	0.834			
		TL_5	0.796			
AI Acceptance		AI_1	0.796	0.852	0.853	0.628
		AI_2	0.821			
		AI_3	0.793			
		AI_4	0.796			
		AI_5	0.754			
Workplace Satisfaction		WS_1	0.727	0.853	0.855	0.631
		WS_2	0.818			
		WS_3	0.798			
		WS_4	0.831			
		WS_5	0.792			
Quality of Work Life	Work Life Balance			0.931	0.932	0.569
		QL_W1	0.849			
		QL_W2	0.874			
	Job Characteristics	QL_W3	0.861	0.768	0.768	0.683
		QL_J1	0.833			
		QL_J2	0.796			
	Supervisory Behavior	QL_J3	0.849	0.773	0.774	0.688
		QL_S1	0.841			
		QL_S2	0.808			
	Compensation and Benefits	QL_S3	0.839	0.804	0.805	0.718
		QL_C1	0.848			
		QL_C2	0.860			
		QL_C3	0.834			

Note: Alpha- Cronbach Alpha, CR- Composite Reliability, AVE- Average Variance Extracted

4.2 Measurement Model

According to Cheah et al. (2018), reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are the three important components of measurement model assessment. Since scores are over 0.70, the Dijkstra Henseler (ρ_A), Cronbach's alpha (α), and composite reliability (CR) values are compatible (Hair et al., 2017). These results show that every variable is consistently measured and has good dependability. Furthermore, convergent validity is established when average variance extracted (AVE) scores exceed the recommended level, i.e., > 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and outer loading scores are above the suggested criterion, i.e., 0.60 (Hair et al., 2017). All constructs are connected and share a respectable amount of variation as per convergent validity values (see Table 2).

The research gauge discriminant validity employing the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Remarkably, all of the studied variables (Table 3) maintain values below 0.90, indicating high discriminant validity (Kline, 2023).

Table 3: HTMT Validity Analysis

Variables	TL	AI	WS	QL
Transformational Leadership (TL)				
AI Acceptance (AI)	0.890			
Workplace Satisfaction (WS)	0.792	0.830		
Quality of Work Life (QL)	0.798	0.887	0.886	

4.3 Structural Model

The inner model uses the 5-steps process after assessing measurement model to confirm its validity and reliability. The collinearity problem is addressed by evaluating the variance inflation factor (VIF). Table 4 displays that VIF scores are still much below 5 (Hair et al., 2017). We conclude from this finding that there are no collinearity problem with model.

We next use the bootstrapping approach with 5000 resamples to evaluate the hypothesis outcomes. Based on Table 4, we observe that transformational leadership (H1: $\beta = 0.348$, $p < 0.00$) favorably effect workplace satisfaction; this indicates if leaders show strong transformational behavior in their organizations, in response workers are more satisfied at their workplace. Transformational leadership (H2: $\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.00$) favorably effect quality of work life; this indicates if leaders show strong transformational behavior in their organizations, in response quality of work life will increase at workplace. Transformational leadership (H3: $\beta = 0.771$, $p < 0.00$) favorably effect AI acceptance; this indicates if leaders show strong transformational behavior in their organizations, in response workers are more willing to accept and adopt AI. AI acceptance (H4: $\beta = 0.440$, $p < 0.00$) favorably effect workplace satisfaction; this conveys those workers who demonstrate high level of AI acceptance, they experience significant level of work satisfaction at their job place. AI acceptance (H5: $\beta = 0.574$, $p < 0.00$) favorably effect quality of work life; this disclose that employees those are open to AI tend to experience a greater quality in their work life (also see Figure 2). Table 4 shows that each predictor explained variance (R^2) is 59%, 55%, and 65% for AI acceptance, workplace satisfaction, and quality of work life respectively.

Table 4: Structural Model Evaluation

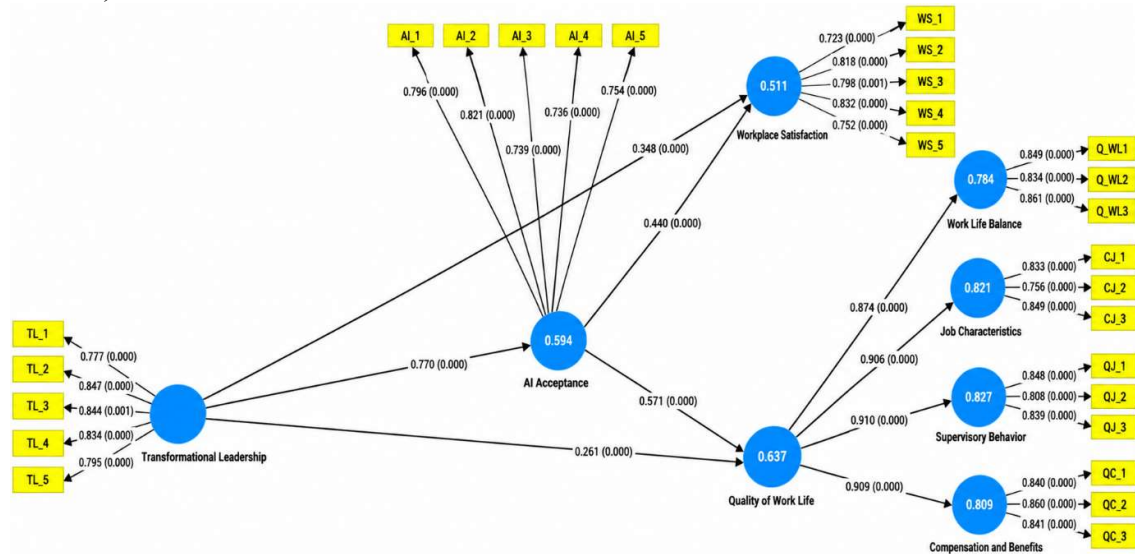
Hyp.	Path	Beta	t value	p-value	R ²	VIF	f ²	Q ²
H1	Transformational Leadership → Workplace Satisfaction	0.348	6.740	0.000	0.55	2.463	0.175	0.34
H2	Transformational Leadership → Quality of Work Life	0.281	5.266	0.000	0.65	2.463	0.390	0.37
H3	Transformational Leadership → AI Acceptance	0.771	36.332	0.000	0.59	1.000	1.463	0.36
H4	AI Acceptance → Work Satisfaction	0.440	8.410	0.000	0.55	2.463	0.109	0.34
H5	AI Acceptance → Quality of Work Life	0.574	12.280	0.000	0.65	2.463	0.094	0.37
Mediation Analysis					LCL (2.5%)	UCL (97.5%)		
H5	Transformational Leadership → AI Acceptance → Workplace Satisfaction	0.339	8.151	0.000	0.271	0.406		
H6	Transformational Leadership → AI Acceptance → Quality of Work Life	0.442	11.706	0.000	0.382	0.505		

VIF- Variance Inflation Factor, LCL- Lower Confidence Limit, UCL- Upper Confidence Limit

The relative significance of each pathway was then determined by computing the effect size (f^2) (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Three categories can be used to classify effect sizes: small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35). The effect size (f^2) results are shown in Table 4. The predictive significance of the model is evaluated using a blindfolding approach (Q^2). According to Hair et al. (2017), the endogenous constructs have Q^2 values that are higher than zero, ranging from 0.34 to 0.37. This suggests that the model has predictive power.

4.4 Mediation Analysis

To investigate the mediating role of AI acceptance, mediation analysis is carried out. H6 is depicted that AI acceptance mediate relation among transformational leadership and workplace satisfaction, which is accepted and showing partial mediation as $\beta = 0.339$, t value= 8.151, $p < 0.000$, lower confidence interval (LCI) = 0.271 and upper confidence interval (UCI) = 0.406. H7 showed that AI acceptance mediate relation among transformational leadership and quality of work life, which is accepted and showing partial mediation as $\beta = 0.442$, t value= 11.706, $p < 0.000$, LCI = 0.382 and UCI = 0.505.

**Figure 2: Structural Model**

5. Discussion

The results indicate that H1 and H2 are accepted as transformational leadership favorably effect the workplace satisfaction and quality of work life. Staff seem to consider vision, ethics, stimulating resources and individual support as helpful in the workplace. This kind of leadership can bring meaning, participation, development and bring less ambiguity in the process of change. This explanation aligns with findings that link transformational leadership, leadership behaviours to satisfaction, motivation, engagement, trust, well-being, and work-life quality (Abu-Qutaish et al., 2025; Bayati et al., 2025; Kohnen et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024; Raza & Yousufi, 2023). It also fits with the industrial research that organizational climate, autonomy, relationship, security, resources and satisfaction provide bases for quality of work life (Gazi et al., 2024; Gazi et al., 2024).

There was also support for H3 that indicated a favorable relation between transformational leadership and AI acceptance. The discovery indicates that employee acceptance is not just a matter of technology, but also of social construction, which takes place in the leadership communication, example, support and resource provision. Transformational leaders can act as change agents by helping to define AI as an opportunity, to discuss what that means, to be okay with experimentation, and to facilitate learning. This outcome aligns with research findings that transformational leadership is a predicting factor of employees' use of AI via their perceived organizational support, and that leadership climate influences their attitude and behavior towards AI (Agaoglu et al., 2025; Fousiani et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). It can also be combined with the study of Hu et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2026, which shows that expected usefulness, effort, social influence, readiness, learning support and employee confidence are critical factors in the acceptance of AI.

It shows that workplace satisfaction and quality of work life are both enhanced by AI acceptance and support of H4, H5. Those employees who are willing to accept AI could have greater abilities to access its resource-generating benefits such as task optimization, information access, autonomy, learning, and decreased repetitive effort. These advantages can lead to competency and control, not stress. The results are consistent with previous studies linking the use of constructive AI to higher engagement, performance, learning, well-being, and positive work experiences (Aulia & Lin, 2025; Prentice et al., 2023; Valtonen et al., 2025). They also highlight the dual impact literature, which suggests that AI can be a facilitator of wellbeing when resources outpace demands, but anxiety, opacity and insecurity can reverse outcomes when not supported by implementation (Chuang et al., 2025; Filippelli et al., 2026; Liu et al., 2025; Savolainen et al., 2026; Soulami et al., 2024).

Lastly, both H6 and H7 were supported, thus verifying the mediation of AI acceptance among transformational leadership and workplace satisfaction and quality of work life. Transformational leadership then seems to have a direct on-relation impact on employees' well-being as well as an indirect technology-related impact. Leadership builds trust, meaning, learning support, and positive expectations; these in turn facilitate acceptance of AI and allow workers to reap the benefits of the technology. This approach builds on existing studies that suggest a need to explain the interaction between leadership and AI and how it impacts employee outcomes, as opposed to viewing the adoption as a technical event (Wang et al., 2025; Zirar et al., 2023). The findings suggest that in manufacturing and service industries, AI projects are likely to yield more positive outcomes in enhancing the working environment when they are accompanied by supportive and growth-oriented management practices.

6. Theoretical Implications

The research contribute theoretically by broadening the scope of SET to AI enabled employment relationships. This type of leadership is demonstrated to offer valuable resources which employees reciprocate not only with positive attitudes at work but also with positive acceptance of technology. The acceptance of AI is therefore a medium that links leader behavior to individual satisfaction with the job and quality of work life. Additionally, the model incorporates leadership and technology-acceptance research, which have been evolving in different lines. The study does not view acceptance of AI as a goal to achieve, but rather as a means to gaining employment-related benefits. It looks at satisfaction and quality of work life at same time, thereby differentiating the job evaluation from a more comprehensive evaluation of employee health. The study was then expanded to the Pakistani context, providing further evidence that extends the context of the already existing theory beyond the strictly Western and technologically advanced context. The results indicate that the social significance attributed to AI, which is partly due to leadership, is of theoretical significance as much as the functional aspects.

7. Practical Implications

AI adoption isn't just about the software—it's a leadership and employee-experience endeavor. Leaders need to articulate the purpose of AI, model responsible use of AI, engage employees in the process, and clarify the need for human judgment. Training must be tailored to the role and hands-on, and include technical assistance. Working time should be allowed for experimentation and forums for raising concerns about accuracy, fairness, privacy, workload and job security should be provided for employees to raise concerns without fear. Organizations need to evaluate the acceptance of AI during implementation and determine the need for extra support for specific groups. Digital vision, ethical role modeling, coaching, intellectual stimulation and individualized thought should be focus of transformational leadership development. For manufacturing companies, it is important to integrate AI into their processes for safety, quality, and process optimization; for service companies, it is crucial to leverage AI for customer support, information quality, and employee discretion. Finally, happiness and quality of the work life should be measured in combination with productivity so that productivity can be increased without pushing people to their limits, curtailing autonomy, or creating insecurity.

8. Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This study has some limitations that should be considered when evaluating the findings. First, because convenience sampling may not accurately reflect workers in Pakistani manufacturing and service companies, the results may not be as broadly applicable as they may be. Secondly, a cross-sectional survey was used to gather data; therefore, causal relationships among transformational leadership, AI acceptance, workplace satisfaction, and quality of work life cannot be established. Third, reliance on self-reported responses may have increased the possibility of common method bias and social desirability bias. Fourth, the study was limited to employees from two sectors, while differences across industries, organizational sizes, occupational levels, and geographic regions were not examined. Finally, AI acceptance was assessed as a single mediating mechanism, although other psychological and organizational factors may explain the proposed relationships.

Future research should employ probability sampling and longitudinal or time-lagged research designs to improve representativeness and causal interpretation. Comparative studies may be

conducted across sectors, provinces, and countries to test the stability of the model. Future scholars may also include moderators such as AI literacy, technological readiness, organizational support, job insecurity, or AI anxiety. Additional mediators, including psychological empowerment, trust in AI, and perceived usefulness, should also be investigated.

9. Conclusion

There are some restrictions to be noted which should help in the interpretation and further studies. First, the cross-sectional study design limits causal inferences, and longitudinal or time-lagged designs should address changes in leadership, acceptance, and employee outcomes across the various stages of implementation. Second, because of the convenience sampling, the results would not be generalizable even though the sample was large, consisting of 521 employees. Future studies need to be conducted at both provincial and organizational level using probability, stratified, or multistage sampling methods at the industry and occupational level, and by organizational size. Third, social-desirability and common-method bias could exist in the self-reported questionnaire information. Several data sources, objective indicators of AI use and supervisor evaluations should be included. Fourth, manufacturing and service workers were compared together; future studies could explore the differences between sector, occupation and organization by conducting multigroup analysis. Other moderators such as AI literacy, AI anxiety, Trust in AI, organizational support, ethical climate, and job insecurity should also be considered. Lastly, future research could explore how the acceptance of AI impacts various tasks, such as routine, creative and customer-facing or safety-critical tasks, and compare these effects across different emerging and developed economies in Pakistan.

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