

# Promoting Employee Well-Being through AI-Augmented Leadership

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**Abstract** — *Purpose:* This study aims to examine the direct effects of AI-augmented leadership on employee well-being within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

*Design/methodology/approach:* A quantitative approach was employed, analyzing survey data collected from 104 professionals in Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

*Findings:* The results reveal that AI-enhanced leadership has a positive and direct impact on employee well-being.

*Originality/value:* This study provides a pioneering analysis of how AI-assisted leadership directly influences employee well-being in the underexplored MENA region. It introduces a human-centered framework tailored to the region's unique characteristics, promoting ethical and context-sensitive adoption of AI technologies in organizations undergoing digital transformation.

**Keywords** — *AI-augmented leadership; Employee well-being; MENA region.*

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## 1. Introduction

The growing prevalence of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping leadership practices and organizational dynamics at a fundamental level. With AI increasingly integrated into decision-making processes, performance assessments, and human resource management, organizations are urged to reevaluate how leaders can utilize these technologies to better support their workforce.

The concept of AI-enhanced leadership envisions a framework where human capabilities are amplified through advanced systems, revolutionizing communication, transparency, and overall workplace experiences. Across several nations in the MENA region, such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, both governments and businesses are swiftly advancing the adoption of AI as part of comprehensive digital transformation agendas. Initiatives like Saudi Arabia's National Data and AI Strategy (2020), Tunisia's SmartGov program, and Egypt's Vision 2030 underscore a significant institutional drive toward AI-powered innovation, especially within the public sector and state-owned enterprises (OECD, 2023).

This study employs the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to investigate how AI-enhanced leadership functions as an organizational resource to foster employee well-being in the workplace. The research focuses on assessing the direct impact of AI-enhanced leadership on employee well-being specifically within the MENA region.

To explore these dynamics, a survey was conducted involving 104 professionals from Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia countries at the forefront of ambitious digital transformation efforts.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 AI-Augmented Leadership

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly reshaped the dynamics of leadership, particularly within technologically advanced organizations. AI-augmented leadership involves integrating intelligent technologies—such as algorithms, chatbots, predictive analytics, and decision support systems—into core managerial activities like communication, control, performance assessment, and strategic planning (Dellermann et al., 2022; Jussupow et al., 2023). Rather than replacing human leadership, AI serves to amplify its effectiveness by improving information management, ensuring consistency, and scaling actions seamlessly. However, this advancement introduces new concerns about accountability, transparency, and the ethical implications of automated decision-making (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

### 2.2 Employee Well-Being

Employee well-being is broadly defined as the interplay between perceived (hedonic) well-being and effective (eudaimonic) functioning in the workplace (Bakker and Oerlemans, 2011). This framework incorporates elements such as life satisfaction, emotional states (both positive and negative), autonomy, personal growth, and social connections.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), workplace well-being encompasses the overall experience of professional life, including the physical work environment, personal perception of work, and the

influence of organizational culture. In recent years, it has become a key strategic priority for organizations (Brough et al., 2023; Grant, 2022).

Research by Taris and Schaufeli (2015) and Page and Vella-Brodrick (2009) highlights four primary components of well-being: positive affect, negative affect, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction. Meanwhile, Bakker and Oerlemans (2012) consider employee well-being as a multidimensional construct focused on optimal functioning. This perspective includes factors like job satisfaction, engagement, burnout, and workaholism, encapsulating both enjoyable and challenging dimensions of workplace experience.

Diener and Ryff identify two essential facets of well-being: subjective well-being, tied to life satisfaction and emotional stability, and eudaimonic well-being, which emphasizes self-realization, personal growth, and development.

Further advancing this concept, Grant et al. (2020) introduced an integrative perspective where well-being emerges from a mix of hedonic and eudaimonic elements. They also highlight the role of social well-being alongside broader influences like culture, community, nature, and governance on employee experiences.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) offers a comprehensive framework for evaluating the impact of AI on employees. The model positions leadership as a resource that mitigates job-related stressors while boosting engagement levels (Bakker et al., 2023).

### 2.3 The MENA Region

Various countries in the MENA region, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Tunisia, have launched notable initiatives in artificial intelligence. However, empirical research in this region remains relatively sparse. Moreover, many organizations in MENA are characterized by hierarchical structures that can limit employee participation in the digital transformation processes (OECD, 2023). These distinctive traits establish the MENA region as a rich context for examining the real-world application of AI-augmented leadership and its potential impacts on human factors such as trust, stress levels, and overall well-being.

According to a recent study by e& and IBM (2024), around 65% of CEOs in the MENA region are advocating for the adoption of generative AI within their companies. Despite the promise of innovation, the region continues to face pressing challenges such as inadequate data reliability, underdeveloped infrastructure, fragmented national strategies, and shortages in skilled labor (Data & Policy,

2024). This study aims to empirically analyze how AI-augmented leadership directly influences employee well-being within organizations operating in the MENA region (Bakker et al., 2023).

## 3. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

To construct a model linking AI-enhanced leadership to employee well-being, this study draws on Bakker and Demerouti's Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (2017) and situational leadership approaches (Fiedler, 2023). However, this research enriches these classic theoretical frameworks by integrating an institutional and cultural perspective to explain the specific dynamics linking leadership, technology, and well-being in the MENA region.

Drawing on theories of intercultural organizational behavior (Gelfand et al., 2021) and socio-technical systems thinking (Brougham et al., 2024), she argues that the adoption of AI interacts with organizational culture and hierarchical relationships to influence employee well-being.

### 3.1 Theoretical Foundation: Job Demands–Resources and Augmented Leadership

In constantly evolving digital environments, AI systems can be both a resource and a constraint depending on how they are implemented and how employees perceive them (Meijerink et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) shows that resources such as supportive leadership or fair practices, and demands such as digital surveillance or information overload, influence employee well-being, stress, and engagement.

However, this framework remains incomplete on a global scale: contextual factors, including national culture or power distance, modify how AI-related resources affect well-being (Hauff et al., 2023; Hofstede, 2023).

In the MENA region, where authority often remains centralized, the adoption of AI illustrates this tension between control and empowerment, highlighting the relevance of the JD-R model to understanding the impact of AI on work and leadership dynamics.

### 3.2 AI-Augmented Leadership and Employee Well-Being

Employee well-being, according to organizational psychology, is a multidimensional concept encompassing both hedonic (pleasure, positive emotions) and eudaimonic (autonomy, engagement, meaning in work) aspects (Grant

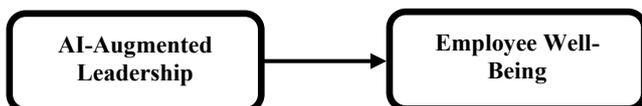
et al., 2020; Brough et al., 2023). The impact of AI on this well-being depends primarily on how leaders integrate and use these tools.

Transparent and participatory use of AI can reduce uncertainty, improve communication, and strengthen trust. AI-enhanced leadership, which uses technology to support decision-making, communication, and team management, does not replace the leader but rather enhances their cognitive abilities (Dellermann et al., 2022 ; Jussupow et al., 2023).

When deployed ethically and equitably, this type of leadership is a resource that promotes psychological health, a sense of fairness, and a feeling of autonomy at work, thereby directly enhancing well-being.

**H1 :** *AI-enhanced leadership is positively associated with employee well-being.*

**Fig.1: The research model (Showing a direct path from AI-Augmented Leadership to Employee Well-Being)**



#### 4.1 Research Design

To align with the exploratory and predictive goals of the study, a survey methodology was employed to gather data from employees working in various organizations across the MENA region. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect insights specifically from professionals in public and private sector entities undergoing digital transformation in three selected countries: Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

#### 4.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire targeting employees and leaders from both public and private sector organizations in Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

These countries were deliberately selected due to their active engagement in digital transformation efforts and their culturally diverse environments. To ensure the findings were relevant and impactful, a purposive sampling strategy was applied, focusing on professionals directly involved with or influenced by AI-driven leadership practices. This approach facilitated the collection of nuanced insights into the effects of AI integration in organizational contexts.

The data collection process spanned from December 2024 to April 2025 and utilized a combination of online surveys and physical copies distributed through professional networks, academic alumni associations, and HR departments within organizations. The purposive sampling specifically targeted knowledge workers, middle managers, and senior professionals with familiarity in using AI tools in the workplace. Out of an initial 137 responses, 104 were deemed valid and retained after a thorough data cleaning process that excluded incomplete or invalid entries.

The final sample covered a range of industries, including finance, healthcare, education, manufacturing, and public administration. Of the respondents, 58% identified as male and 42% as female, with 63% employed in the private sector and 37% in the public sector. Notably, more than 70% reported regularly using AI-enabled systems such as chatbots, analytical dashboards, and decision-making applications in their routine tasks. Geographically, the participants comprised 43 individuals from Tunisia, 31 from Egypt, and 30 from Saudi Arabia.

#### 4.3 Measurement Instruments

The structured questionnaire utilized validated scales tailored to the study's context. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree):

- **AI-Augmented Leadership:** This was assessed through a six-item scale adapted from prior studies (Dellermann et al., 2022; Jussupow et al., 2023), measuring how leaders depend on AI tools for decision-making, communication, and performance monitoring activities.
- **Employee Well-Being:** This component was evaluated using a seven-item scale derived from research by Danna and Griffin (2022), capturing cognitive and emotional facets of well-being at work.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted following a structured two-stage approach adhering to widely accepted practices for structural equation modeling (SEM):

- **Measurement Model Assessment:** Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via the SmartPLS 4.0 software, the study evaluated indicator reliability, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity (using Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios). This method was selected for its suitability for exploratory models involving latent variables and small-to-medium sample sizes (Hair et al., 2023).
- **Structural Model Testing:** Hypotheses were evaluated through bootstrapping (with 5,000 resamples), enabling

assessment of path coefficients, statistical significance, effect sizes ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance measures ( $Q^2$ ).

#### 4.5 Justification for Using SmartPLS

SmartPLS was chosen as the primary tool for data analysis based on several key considerations:

- Its compatibility with analyzing direct effect models.
- Its flexibility in accommodating non-normal data distributions commonly observed in the MENA region's context (Sarstedt et al., 2020).
- The integrated bootstrapping function that supports robust significance testing (Ringle et al., 2020).

### 5. Results

#### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics

This study surveyed 104 respondents, including employees from both public and private sector organizations in Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The participants ranged in age from 25 to 55, with 62% being male and 38% female. Approximately 54% of the respondents held mid-level managerial roles, while the remaining 46% occupied front-line positions. Additionally, about 68% reported that their workplaces had actively implemented AI technologies, primarily to support tasks such as performance tracking, scheduling, and decision-making processes.

#### 5.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated using SmartPLS 4.0 to determine construct validity and reliability.

**Table 1. Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Constructs**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
AI-Augmented Leadership	0.87	0.91	0.63
Employee Well-Being	0.91	0.93	0.68

All loading values exceeded 0.70 and discriminant validity was confirmed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio (<0.85).

#### 5.3 Structural Model Results

The structural model was evaluated using bootstrapping (5,000 resamples).

**Table 2. Hypotheses Testing Results**

Hypotheses	Path	$\beta$ (Beta)	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	AI-Augmented Leadership → Well-Being	0.32	3.84	<0.001	Supported

### 6. Discussion

This research focused on analyzing the direct effects of AI-augmented leadership on employee well-being within organizations in the MENA region. The findings offer strong empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis, providing crucial insights into the human-centered implications of AI leadership in emerging digital economies.

#### 6.1 Main Findings

The study establishes that AI-enhanced leadership exerts a direct and positive impact on employee well-being. Specifically, leaders who leverage AI to improve transparency, communication, and decision-making witness increased job satisfaction and reduced stress levels among employees.

#### 6.2 Theoretical Implications

Several theoretical contributions emerge from this study, particularly for the fields of artificial intelligence, leadership, and employee well-being. The research sheds light on leadership practices in the AI era, emphasizing the unique dynamics of the MENA region, where centralized management styles, unequal access to digital tools, and limited employee involvement are prominent. In such environments, integrating AI technologies without inclusive and transparent practices risks exacerbating existing power imbalances. The research highlights that enhanced efficiency through AI might be overshadowed by ethical and psychological challenges unless leadership shifts towards more equitable and participatory approaches. A noteworthy theoretical advancement is the extension of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to include AI-enhanced leadership as an emerging organizational resource. This form of leadership contributes to reducing stress-inducing uncertainties and actively promotes team well-being.

The study further underscores the importance of cultural and contextual factors when exploring AI-led leadership. In environments characterized by entrenched hierarchies, the advantages of AI for employee development may be constrained unless organizations implement inclusive leadership strategies and foster participative cultures.

#### 6.3 Managerial Implications

Practical recommendations derived from this study hold significant relevance for leaders, HR managers, and policymakers operating in the MENA region as well as other emerging economies. Firstly, organizations should perceive AI-driven leadership as a strategic competency that necessitates ethical training, effective change

management, and human-centered implementation. Leaders should also be equipped to utilize AI transparently, minimize ambiguity, and actively promote employee engagement to enhance well-being.

Secondly, sectors in the MENA region that maintain rigidly centralized management structures must revisit these practices. Transitioning to more inclusive and participatory leadership styles is critical to maximizing AI's positive influence on workforce well-being. Finally, public policymakers driving digital transformation must establish ethical regulatory frameworks and spearhead awareness campaigns on responsible AI utilization. Collaboration between governments and industries can facilitate the creation of ethical guidelines for deploying AI in leadership and human resource contexts.

#### 6.4 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its valuable findings, the study recognizes several limitations that suggest opportunities for future investigation. The cultural diversity within the MENA region presents challenges, as it cannot be generalized as a homogeneous entity. Variations across nations in factors such as power distance, institutional trust, and technological readiness likely influence how leadership interactions with AI unfold. Comparative studies or multi-level analyses could provide deeper insights into the role of cultural and organizational contexts in shaping these dynamics.

Additionally, while the study predominantly employed a quantitative methodology—effective for hypothesis testing—this approach limits understanding of nuanced emotional and subjective employee experiences. Integrating qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews would yield a richer analysis of relational dynamics and ethical concerns associated with AI integration.

Future research could also expand on the scope of this study by examining additional organizational or individual factors to better capture the multifaceted effects of AI-augmented leadership on employee well-being.

#### 7. Conclusion

This research set out to explore how AI-enhanced leadership directly influences employee well-being within the MENA region. Guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and recent studies on human-AI collaboration, a conceptual framework was developed and empirically tested using data from 104 professionals across Tunisia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. The findings affirm a significant positive correlation between AI-augmented leadership and improved employee well-being.

Ultimately, fostering human-centered leadership embedded in ethical principles and aligned with cultural considerations is vital for unlocking the full potential of AI in enhancing organizational health and employee satisfaction.

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