

Employee trust in AI linked to performance and adoption rates

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Many companies are making substantial investments in artificial intelligence (AI), which can enhance decision-making processes, foster innovation, increase productivity, and have other advantages.

New research published in the [*Journal of Management Studies*](#) shows that company employees' perceptions of how well AI performs (cognitive trust) and feelings towards AI (emotional trust) vary, and that these perceptions can affect AI performance and [adoption](#) in organizations.

Interviews with employees of a medium-sized software development firm revealed four different trust configurations: full trust (high cognitive/high emotional), full distrust (low cognitive/low emotional), uncomfortable trust (high cognitive/low emotional), and blind trust (low cognitive/high emotional).

Employees exhibited distinct behaviors under these different trust configurations: some responded by detailing their digital footprints, while others engaged in manipulating, confining, or withdrawing them. These behaviors triggered a "[vicious cycle](#)," where biased and unbalanced data inputs degraded AI performance, further eroding trust and stalling adoption.

The findings could provide insights into how managers should introduce AI into the workplace.

"AI adoption isn't just a technological challenge—it's a leadership one. Success hinges on understanding trust, addressing emotions, and meeting employees where they are," said corresponding author Natalia Vuori, DSc, of Aalto University, in Finland.

"Without this human-centered approach, even the smartest AI will fail to deliver on its promise."

More information: Natalia Vuori et al, It's Amazing—But Terrifying!: Unveiling the Combined Effect of Emotional and Cognitive Trust on Organizational Member' Behaviours, AI Performance, and Adoption, *Journal of Management Studies* (2025). [DOI: 10.1111/JOMS.13177](https://doi.org/10.1111/JOMS.13177)

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