

CAREER RESILIENCE IN THE AGE OF AI: IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AMONG LOW- TO MID-SKILLED WORKERS IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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Abstract

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The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed labor markets, raising critical questions about workforce adaptability and governance (Batool et al., 2025; Chhibber et al., 2025). This study explored how low- to mid-skill workers in Thailand cultivate and sustain career resilience amid increasing AI integration and examined how corporate governance and sustainability frameworks influence this process. Employing a qualitative design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants from the retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors. Using content analysis, the findings revealed four interrelated themes: perceived vulnerability and awareness of AI-driven change, adaptive strategies for employability, organizational and governance support mechanisms, and sustainability implications for workforce development. The findings indicated that workers demonstrated multidimensional resilience through cognitive adaptability, behavioral flexibility, and emotional regulation, while inclusive governance practices—such as transparent communication and re-skilling programs—enhanced their confidence and adaptability. The study concludes that ethical, human-centered governance is pivotal for aligning technological transformation with equitable and sustainable workforce development in emerging economies. Ultimately, this study contributes to the literature by providing worker-centered empirical insights into how career resilience is co-constructed through individual adaptability and ethical corporate governance, thereby advancing understanding of workforce sustainability in AI-driven emerging economies.

Keywords: Career Resilience, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Workforce Sustainability, Corporate Governance

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, together with digital transformation and innovation, has become an integral feature of the contemporary economic landscape, fundamentally reshaping how organizations operate and compete. Through the strategic integration of advanced digital technologies—such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), big data analytics, and cloud-based systems—digital transformation functions as a critical driver of organizational adaptability and long-term competitiveness (Aldoseri et al., 2024; Farida & Sutopo, 2023; Le & Tran, 2026). At the same time, the rapid diffusion of AI and automation technologies has generated profound structural changes in labor markets worldwide. Advances in machine learning, robotics, and data-driven decision-making enable organizations to optimize production processes, enhance operational efficiency, and reduce costs, while simultaneously transforming job roles, skill requirements, and the nature of work itself (Rashid & Kausik, 2024; Salari et al., 2025). Yet these developments are not without risk. A substantial body of research demonstrates that routine and semi-routine occupations, particularly those concentrated among low-to-mid skill workers, are most vulnerable to technological substitution. Unlike high-skill professionals who may leverage AI to complement their expertise, lower-skilled workers often face threats of redundancy, reduced job security, and limited prospects for upward mobility. As such, the ability of these workers to cultivate career resilience—the capacity to adapt, re-skill, and sustain employability amid disruption—has become an urgent concern in debates on the future of work (Cramarenco et al., 2023; Giwa & Ngepah, 2024; Nigar et al., 2025).

Thailand provides a particularly salient case for examining these dynamics. As a middle-income economy with aspirations to transition toward innovation-driven growth, Thailand has embraced AI and digital transformation under the Thailand 4.0 policy framework. This national strategy seeks to move the economy away from labor-intensive production toward high-value industries powered by automation and digital technologies (Hongladarom, 2021; Darmayadi et al., 2025). While such policies promise economic modernization, they also raise concerns regarding the inclusiveness of development. Low- to mid-skilled workers, who constitute the majority of the labor force in sectors such as tourism, banking, and engineering, face heightened exposure to automation risks. For these workers, AI is not simply an abstract technological trend but a lived reality affecting job tasks, security, and long-term employability (Plumwongrot & Pholphirul, 2023; Weerasombat et al., 2022; Wong, 2024; Zvaigzne et al., 2025).

The challenges associated with AI extend beyond individual workers, encompassing broader organizational and governance dimensions. Corporate entities occupy a pivotal role in determining whether AI adoption mitigates or amplifies its disruptive effects within labor markets. Through responsible governance frameworks, organizations can strengthen workforce resilience by providing targeted training, re-skilling initiatives,

and inclusive employment strategies that support equitable and sustainable adaptation to technological transformation (Hilb, 2020; Goos & Savona, 2024; Shaikh, 2025; Siripipatthanakul et al., 2025). Conversely, insufficient investment in human capital may exacerbate social inequalities and undermine workforce sustainability. From a sustainability perspective, labor resilience is increasingly recognized as a central component of corporate responsibility, closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ensuring that vulnerable segments of the workforce are not marginalized in the digital transition is thus both a governance imperative and a social justice concern (Gemmell et al., 2021; Osian-Gabrie, 2024; A. Singh et al., 2024; Shafik, 2025).

Despite the acknowledged importance of workforce resilience in advancing both corporate governance and sustainable development objectives, existing research on AI and the future of work has largely concentrated on macroeconomic dynamics and the adaptation of high-skill professionals. The experiences and adaptive strategies of low- to mid-skilled workers—particularly within emerging economies such as Thailand—remain comparatively underrepresented in scholarly discourse. Much of the current literature privileges organizational or technological perspectives over worker-centered analyses. For instance, Limna et al. (2025) examined the implementation of ChatGPT and Gemini in a four-star hotel in Ao Nang, Krabi, Thailand, demonstrating that strategic AI integration can simultaneously enhance operational efficiency and guest satisfaction while complementing human service components. Similarly, Limna and Kraiwanit (2025) explored the role of ChatGPT in analyzing customer data and generating predictive insights to support customer-centric strategies in digital businesses, underscoring its potential to drive innovation and efficiency. However, such studies tend to overlook the micro-level mechanisms through which vulnerable workers navigate and adapt to AI-induced disruptions in the workplace.

This gap poses a significant concern: in the absence of empirical insights into how low- to mid-skilled workers experience and respond to technological transformation, governance and sustainability frameworks risk becoming detached from the lived realities of those most affected by automation and digitalization. Neglecting these dimensions may exacerbate social inequality, undermine employee trust, and weaken the long-term legitimacy of corporate governance systems. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to investigate how low- to mid-skilled workers in Thailand cultivate and maintain career resilience amid the growing integration of AI technologies. Furthermore, it aims to explore the implications of these adaptive processes for corporate governance and sustainable workforce development. The central research question guiding this inquiry is therefore:

RQ: How do low- to mid-skilled workers in Thailand develop and sustain career resilience in the age of AI, and what role do corporate governance and sustainability frameworks play in shaping this process?

By addressing this question, the study contributes to bridging a critical gap between technological innovation and social inclusion. It not

only provides nuanced insights into the lived experiences of workers navigating AI-driven transformation but also informs policy and governance models that can foster equitable and sustainable adaptation. Ultimately, the findings are expected to advance both theoretical understanding and practical approaches to workforce resilience, ensuring that the transition to AI-augmented economies supports human well-being and long-term institutional legitimacy.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a review of the relevant literature. Section 3 outlines the research methodology. Section 4 presents and analyzes the results. Section 5 offers a discussion of the findings. Section 6 concludes the paper, highlighting theoretical contributions, practical implications, and directions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The accelerating integration of AI into global labor systems has prompted extensive scholarly attention to its economic, social, and organizational implications. However, existing research remains unevenly distributed, with a predominant focus on macroeconomic effects and high-skill professional adaptation. The experiences of low-to-mid skill workers—who often face the most immediate risks of automation—have been comparatively neglected, particularly within developing economies such as Thailand. This literature review synthesizes current research across four interrelated domains: 1) the transformative impact of AI on labor markets; 2) conceptualizations of career resilience in the context of technological disruption; 3) the role of corporate governance and sustainability in shaping equitable adaptation; 4) empirical insights into AI adoption and workforce responses in Thailand. Through this synthesis, the review identifies critical gaps in understanding how governance frameworks and institutional practices influence the capacity of vulnerable workers to sustain employability and well-being in the age of AI.

2.1. AI and labor market transformation

AI has become a defining force in reshaping global labor markets, transforming the structure, content, and value of work across industries. Research consistently highlights that automation and machine learning disproportionately affect routine-based occupations, heightening the risk of job displacement among low-to-mid skill workers (Cramarencu et al., 2023; Giwa & Ngepah, 2024). While high-skill professionals typically benefit from AI as a complementary tool that augments productivity, lower-skilled segments often experience technological substitution that undermines employment stability and wage growth (Nigar et al., 2025; Wang, 2025). The literature emphasizes that these shifts are particularly pronounced in developing economies, where digitalization intersects with structural labor vulnerabilities and limited social safety nets (Plumwongrot & Pholphirul, 2023; Weerasombat et al., 2022). In the Thai context, AI adoption under the Thailand 4.0 policy framework has accelerated digital transformation in sectors such as

manufacturing, banking, tourism, and logistics. However, empirical evidence suggests that low-to-mid skill workers remain inadequately prepared to adapt to new technological demands (Hongladarom, 2021; Wong, 2024; Zvaigzne et al., 2025). Studies in similar contexts reveal that workers' ability to sustain employability depends not only on access to re-skilling opportunities but also on institutional and governance mechanisms that mitigate inequality and promote inclusive adaptation (Salari et al., 2025; Rashid & Kausik, 2024).

2.2. Conceptualizing career resilience in the age of AI

Career resilience refers to an individual's capacity to adapt to occupational changes, recover from career setbacks, and maintain employability amid uncertainty. In the AI era, career resilience extends beyond individual psychological endurance to encompass continuous learning, proactive skill development, and the ability to navigate technological disruptions. This construct aligns with employability theory, which positions adaptability, skill acquisition, and network development as essential to sustaining long-term career viability (Borg et al., 2023; Fotinatos-Ventouratos et al., 2023; Kong et al., 2024; Chung et al., 2025). Recent studies conceptualize resilience in the context of AI-driven transformation as a multidimensional construct encompassing three interrelated domains: 1) personal adaptability, reflecting motivation, emotional regulation, and openness to continuous learning; 2) professional agility, denoting technical and cognitive flexibility in engaging with emerging technologies; 3) institutional embeddedness, representing the organizational and policy frameworks that facilitate re-skilling and career transition (Gemmell et al., 2021; Babashahi et al., 2024; Giwa & Ngepah, 2024; Gandía et al., 2025; Nigar et al., 2025).

2.3. Corporate governance, workforce sustainability, and AI

Corporate governance plays a central role in shaping the human dimensions of technological transformation. As firms integrate AI, their governance frameworks determine whether automation leads to inclusion and sustainability or exclusion and inequality (Hilb, 2020; Goos & Savona, 2024; Ouabouch & Yahyaoui, 2025). Scholars argue that ethical and transparent governance practices—such as equitable access to training, participatory decision-making, and responsible AI deployment—are critical to sustaining workforce resilience. Governance systems that align human capital development with corporate sustainability goals can mitigate the adverse consequences of automation while reinforcing organizational legitimacy (Batoool et al., 2025; Shaikh, 2025; Siripipatthanakul et al., 2025). Moreover, the integration of AI into corporate governance is also linked to the SDGs, particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). From a sustainability perspective, AI-driven transformation must ensure that human welfare remains central to technological advancement (A. Singh et al., 2024; Shafik, 2025). Inclusive workforce policies that prioritize re-skilling, fair labor practices, and mental

well-being reflect not only ethical imperatives but also strategic resilience in competitive environments (Gemmell et al., 2021; Gandía et al., 2025).

2.4. Empirical studies on AI adoption and workforce adaptation in Thailand

Emerging research from Thailand highlights the transformative but uneven effects of AI implementation. Nongkhoo et al. (2025) indicated that the adoption of AI technology innovation in tourism enhances problem-solving capabilities and introduces new opportunities in the industry. Similarly, Thanyawatpornkul (2024) demonstrated how important AI can be in driving customer engagement and operational success for retailers. While these studies underscore AI's potential to enhance productivity, they primarily reflect managerial or technological perspectives rather than the adaptive strategies of lower-tier workers. Furthermore, other investigations collectively underscore the pivotal role of systematic re-skilling initiatives in enabling effective adaptation to AI-driven transformation. Shankar Verma et al. (2024), Imjai et al. (2025), and Kaewsawad and Duda (2025) highlight that employee readiness and organizational learning capacity are decisive factors underpinning successful AI adoption, linking workforce development to sustained organizational competitiveness. Consequently, employability is increasingly dependent on adaptability and digital literacy. Nevertheless, existing scholarship remains limited in exploring the governance and social mechanisms that facilitate low- to mid-skilled workers' transitions within AI-mediated work environments. Addressing this gap is critical, as governance and sustainability strategies that are not grounded in workers' lived experiences risk exacerbating inequality and undermining long-term workforce resilience. Accordingly, this study responds to the identified gap by adopting a worker-centered qualitative approach to examine how low- to mid-skilled workers in Thailand cultivate career resilience amid AI integration and how corporate governance and sustainability practices shape this process.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as it provides rich, context-specific insights into workers' lived experiences, adaptive strategies, and perceptions of organizational and governance support. This approach is particularly suited to an emerging economy context, where socio-economic dynamics, labor market structures, and cultural norms shape how workers navigate technological disruption. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were employed as the primary data collection method, allowing participants to articulate their challenges, strategies, and resilience-building practices while ensuring consistency across the study's thematic scope.

3.1. Interview guide design and validation

To explore the research question, a semi-structured interview guide was developed to investigate how

low- to mid-skilled workers perceive and build career resilience in the face of AI-driven changes. The guide was structured into six thematic sections: A) participant background and employment history, B) awareness and perceptions of AI in their industry, C) challenges and risks posed by AI to their current roles, D) strategies and skills adopted to maintain employability, E) organizational and governance support for workforce adaptation, and F) reflections on sustainable career development in the age of AI. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share personal experiences, while probes elicited concrete examples of retraining, upskilling, coping strategies, and interactions with workplace or policy-level support systems.

To ensure validity and contextual appropriateness, the interview guide was reviewed by academic experts in labor studies and corporate governance, as well as practitioners in workforce development. A pilot test with two workers provided feedback on language clarity and cultural relevance, particularly around terms such as "resilience" and "governance", which were reframed into everyday expressions like "stability", "support", and "rules in the workplace". These refinements enhanced accessibility and ensured that the instrument captured authentic perspectives of low- to mid-skilled workers

3.2. Sample selection

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants with direct experience working in sectors most affected by AI and automation, including manufacturing, services, and retail in Thailand. The inclusion criteria required participants to 1) be low- to mid-skilled workers (non-managerial or technical support roles), 2) have at least three years of continuous employment in their sector, and 3) be currently experiencing or anticipating changes related to AI adoption in their workplace. In total, 15 participants were selected to ensure a diverse mix of industries, gender, age groups, and geographic regions. This sample size was sufficient to capture a range of perspectives while achieving analytic depth, aligning with qualitative research guidance that saturation is often reached between 9 and 17 interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

3.3. Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as the primary method of data collection, given their flexibility and capacity to elicit nuanced responses. Interviews were conducted in September 2025, either face-to-face or via secure digital platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet, depending on participants' availability and preferences. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, providing sufficient time for participants to reflect on their experiences with AI-related workplace changes, career strategies, and perceptions of governance or organizational support. Ethical protocols were strictly observed. This study followed ethical standards for social science research in Thailand. Participants were fully informed of the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained before participation, and only individuals aged 18 years or

older were eligible. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no medical, physical, or psychological risks involved. Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained by removing identifiable information and reporting data in aggregated or pseudonymized form. Consistent with Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI) No. 3(3), this study qualifies for ethical exemption as it involved anonymous interviews without sensitive or biological data (Phuangsuwan et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the study was conducted with a strong commitment to ethical standards, ensuring confidentiality, respect for participants, and the integrity of the research process.

3.4. Data analysis

The interview data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to systematically interpret workers' narratives. This method enabled the identification of both explicit strategies and underlying themes related to career resilience. Transcripts were coded line by line, with initial codes clustered into categories such as perceived risks from AI, individual adaptive strategies (e.g., upskilling, networking), organizational practices (e.g., training, job redesign), and governance mechanisms (e.g., labor policies, corporate responsibility). Higher-order themes were synthesized to reveal patterns in

how resilience is constructed at both the individual and systemic levels. To ensure rigor, a collaborative coding process was implemented: the primary researcher conducted the initial coding, while two additional coders independently analyzed selected transcripts. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved, enhancing inter-coder reliability and minimizing interpretive bias. An audit trail of coding decisions and analytic memos was maintained for transparency and traceability. Data saturation was achieved by the thirteenth interview, with subsequent interviews confirming and reinforcing established themes. This process yielded a comprehensive thematic framework that captured the complex ways in which low-to-mid skill workers in Thailand navigate career resilience in the age of AI, with implications for corporate governance and sustainable workforce development.

4. RESULTS

The results are structured to provide both descriptive and analytical insights. Respondent profiles (Table 1) contextualize the data, followed by a content analysis of how low-to-mid skill workers in Thailand build career resilience in the age of AI and its connection to corporate governance and sustainability imperatives.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic information

No.	Gender	Age	Sector	Position	Years of experience	AI-related change observed
R1	Male	39	Retail	Sales assistant	5	Introduction of AI-based inventory and demand forecasting systems
R2	Male	34	Retail	Cashier	8	Deployment of automated checkout and digital payment platforms
R3	Female	37	Retail	Customer service staff	4	Use of chatbot systems for handling customer inquiries
R4	Male	42	Hospitality	Food and beverage coordinator	13	AI-supported demand planning and service tracking
R5	Female	33	Tourism	Tour booking officer	7	Implementation of AI-powered reservation systems
R6	Male	32	Retail	Visual merchandising assistant	5	Use of AI analytics for product display optimization
R7	Male	37	Tourism	Ticketing staff	12	Adoption of automated booking and feedback tools
R8	Female	34	Hospitality	Front desk receptionist	6	Integration of AI-assisted guest check-in systems
R9	Female	35	Hospitality	Concierge assistant	10	Use of AI-based virtual concierge platforms
R10	Female	41	Hospitality	Housekeeping supervisor	5	Scheduling optimization through AI-based task allocation
R11	Female	33	Hospitality	Guest relations officer	9	Sentiment analysis tools for service improvement
R12	Female	30	Tourism	Reservation staff	7	Real-time translation and chatbot integration for international guests
R13	Male	33	Retail	E-commerce support staff	6	Integration of AI-driven recommendation engines
R14	Female	39	Tourism	Travel consultant	8	Use of predictive analytics for customer preferences
R15	Male	31	Tourism	Customer experience representative	6	Use of generative AI for personalized travel recommendations

Table 1 provides a comprehensive demographic overview of the 15 participants who took part in the qualitative investigation on career resilience among low-to-mid-skill workers in Thailand's AI-affected sectors. The study involved 15 low- to mid-skilled workers drawn from three service sectors that are highly exposed to AI adoption in Thailand: retail, hospitality, and tourism. All participants occupied operational or frontline roles, such as sales

assistant, cashier, customer service staff, front desk receptionist, housekeeping supervisor, ticketing staff, and customer experience representative. These positions reflect roles where AI technologies are increasingly integrated into daily work processes rather than managerial or strategic decision-making levels. In terms of gender composition, the sample consisted of seven males and eight females, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution

with a slight predominance of female participants. This balance is particularly reflective of the hospitality and tourism sectors, where female employment is comparatively higher. Regarding professional experience, participants had between 4 and 13 years of work experience, demonstrating substantial exposure to organizational routines before AI integration. Most respondents fell within the mid-career range, with an average experience of approximately 7–8 years. This level of experience suggests that participants were not newcomers to their professions but had sufficient tenure to meaningfully compare pre- and post-AI workplace conditions and to reflect on changes in job roles, skill requirements, and career security. Overall, the participant profile indicates a diverse yet relevant sample of experienced low- to mid-skilled workers who are directly encountering AI-driven transformation in Thailand's service economy, making them well positioned to provide rich insights into career resilience and governance-related adaptation.

The findings addressed the study's central objective: to examine how low-to-mid skill workers in Thailand cultivate and sustain career resilience amid the growing integration of AI, and to identify how corporate governance and sustainability frameworks influence this process. Analysis of the 15 semi-structured interviews yielded four dominant and interrelated themes: 1) perceived vulnerability and awareness of AI-driven change, 2) adaptive strategies for sustaining employability, 3) organizational and governance support mechanisms, and 4) sustainability implications for workforce development.

4.1. Perceived vulnerability and awareness of AI-driven change

The findings revealed that most participants exhibited both awareness and ambivalence toward the accelerating integration of AI within their workplaces. Low- to mid-skilled workers in the retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors consistently recognized that AI was transforming how tasks were organized, monitored, and evaluated. Respondents described the introduction of systems such as automated checkout machines, AI-based reservation tools, and predictive analytics platforms as double-edged innovations—enhancing operational efficiency but simultaneously raising concerns about job displacement and redundancy. A retail cashier noted, *"The new self-checkout machines are faster and reduce mistakes, but sometimes I feel they are learning to do my job better than me"* (R2, personal communication, September 8, 2025). Similarly, a travel consultant reflected, *"AI systems can predict what customers want even before I ask. It's impressive but also worrying—if the system knows everything, what do they still need me for?"* (R14, personal communication, September 25, 2025).

This dual perception illustrates an underlying tension between technological optimism and occupational insecurity. Workers acknowledged the value of AI in streamlining repetitive tasks and improving coordination, yet they also perceived it as potentially eroding their professional identity and autonomy. A food and beverage coordinator in the hospitality sector reflected this ambivalence by

noting that AI systems helped organize service operations more efficiently but also reduced opportunities for personal judgment and discretion, stating, *"The system helps us plan better and avoid mistakes, but sometimes it feels like decisions are no longer really ours"* (R4, personal communication, September 12, 2025). However, rather than adopting a defeatist stance, participants generally displayed pragmatic acceptance of AI as an inevitable force of modernization. As a front-line hotel employee explained, *"We can't stop technology, but we can try to move with it"* (R9, personal communication, September 22, 2025). This awareness of technological inevitability marks the first stage of resilience development—an acceptance of disruption as a structural rather than personal challenge.

This theme suggested that awareness of AI's disruptive potential catalyzes an initial cognitive adaptation process among low-to-mid skill workers. Workers internalize the structural inevitability of technological change, reframing their vulnerability into motivation for self-adjustment. Such awareness becomes the foundation for career resilience, aligning with employability theory's emphasis on adaptability as a precursor to sustained career viability.

4.2. Adaptive strategies for sustaining employability

The finding emphasized the proactive efforts of participants to sustain employability through self-initiated and peer-supported adaptation. Many respondents demonstrated agency in developing new skills to remain competitive in an AI-driven environment. A hotel receptionist explained, *"I started taking online courses on customer communication and English for technology because I know AI tools use English terms that I need to understand"* (R8, personal communication, September 22, 2025). Others engaged in continuous digital learning, often through informal channels such as YouTube tutorials or advice from colleagues. A retail sales assistant stated, *"We teach each other how to use the new system. When one of us figures out a shortcut, we share it. That's how we all learn"* (R1, personal communication, September 8, 2025).

These findings highlighted three interrelated dimensions of adaptive behavior: 1) cognitive adaptability, reflected in workers' willingness to learn and understand new technological systems; 2) behavioral flexibility, evident in the adjustment of daily work routines to align with AI-enabled tools; 3) emotional resilience, demonstrated through the capacity to remain positive and motivated under conditions of uncertainty. Illustrating cognitive and behavioral adaptability, a visual merchandising assistant explained, *"I try to understand how the system analyzes data so I can adjust displays in a way that still uses my experience"* (R6, personal communication, September 18, 2025). Similarly, a tourism ticketing staff member emphasized learning through practice, stating, *"At first it was confusing, but after using the system every day, I learned how to work faster instead of fighting against it"* (R7, personal communication, September 18, 2025). Emotional resilience was also evident, as one participant reflected, *"At first I was afraid AI would replace me, but now I think if I learn to work with it, I can do my job better"* (R10, personal

communication, September 24, 2025). Together, these accounts illustrate that career resilience encompasses not only technical readiness but also psychological endurance and sustained motivation in AI-mediated work environments.

The data indicated that career resilience emerges through a dynamic process of self-directed learning, social collaboration, and emotional regulation. This supported the conceptualization of resilience as a multidimensional construct integrating personal adaptability, professional agility, and emotional stability. The proactive strategies identified in this study reflect a shift from passive dependency on employer-driven training toward a more autonomous model of self-managed career development, underscoring the growing agency of low- to mid-skilled workers in shaping their employability trajectories.

4.3. Organizational and governance support mechanisms

While individual initiative was vital, the findings demonstrated that corporate governance and institutional structures critically shaped the success of adaptation efforts. Participants employed in organizations characterized by transparent communication, structured re-skilling programs, and supportive management reported greater confidence in navigating technological transitions. A housekeeping supervisor in the hospitality sector noted, *“Our manager showed us how the AI system schedules rooms and why it helps reduce mistakes. When we understand the reason, we accept it more easily”* (R10, personal communication, September 24, 2025). Reinforcing the importance of communication and inclusion, a guest relations officer highlighted the value of being informed and consulted during AI adoption, stating, *“When the company explains what the system is for and asks how it affects our work, we feel more confident and less worried”* (R11, personal communication, September 24, 2025). In contrast, workers in less supportive environments expressed frustration when new technologies were introduced without adequate explanation or guidance. As a retail worker explained, *“Sometimes new systems appear suddenly without explanation. We are told to use them, but no one shows us how. Technology is not easy for everyone”* (R3, personal communication, September 12, 2025).

These contrasting experiences underscore the significance of governance mechanisms in mediating workers’ sense of control and inclusion. Effective governance was characterized by participatory communication, equitable access to re-skilling, and performance evaluation systems that valued adaptability alongside efficiency. In organizations where these elements were present, employees reported a stronger sense of trust and belonging. Conversely, environments lacking such structures were associated with anxiety, confusion, and reduced morale.

This theme demonstrated that organizational governance acts as an enabling or constraining framework for workforce resilience. Transparent decision-making and inclusive training opportunities create a governance ecosystem conducive to sustainable adaptation. Ethical and human-centered

corporate governance strengthens workforce sustainability and social legitimacy in the AI era. The findings thus position governance as a central determinant of how technological disruption translates into either empowerment or marginalization for low- to mid-skilled workers.

4.4. Sustainability implications for workforce development

A unifying theme across all interviews was the recognition that long-term employability depends not merely on technical skill acquisition but on a broader institutional commitment to sustainable workforce development. Participants consistently valued organizations that demonstrated genuine concern for employees’ long-term security, learning continuity, and career progression rather than focusing solely on short-term efficiency gains. A tourism booking officer articulated this concern by stating, *“I can learn new systems, but I hope the company also thinks about how to keep us in the future—not just train us and replace us later”* (R5, personal communication, September 15, 2025). Echoing the importance of institutional support for inclusive adaptation, a reservation staff member emphasized the role of learning infrastructure, noting, *“When the system includes translation and chat tools, the company also needs to teach us how to use them properly so we can grow with the technology”* (R12, personal communication, September 24, 2025). Similarly, an e-commerce support staff member highlighted the value of participatory development, explaining, *“AI helps recommend products, but the company still needs our experience, and they listen when we suggest improvements”* (R13, personal communication, September 25, 2025). These perspectives align with another respondent’s observation that *“Our company encourages us to see AI as a tool, not a threat. They give us workshops and listen to our feedback. That makes a big difference”* (R15, personal communication, September 26, 2025).

This emphasis on inclusive, human-centered adaptation highlights the ethical dimension of sustainable governance. Workers perceived that organizations integrating AI adoption with principles of fairness, mental well-being, and continuous learning contributed not only to productivity but also to social cohesion. Such integration also aligns with the United Nations SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), which emphasizes the creation of resilient labor markets through lifelong learning and equitable transition policies.

The findings revealed that sustainable workforce development functions as the macro-level expression of career resilience at the societal scale. When corporate governance aligns AI transformation with inclusive labor policies and human capital investment, it fosters collective resilience that benefits both organizations and employees. This reflects the growing recognition that sustainability and resilience are co-constitutive: sustainable governance enhances the adaptive capacity of workers, while resilient workers contribute to organizational and social sustainability.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the intricate relationship between individual adaptability, organizational governance, and sustainability in shaping how low- to mid-skilled workers in Thailand develop career resilience amid AI-driven transformation. Consistent with global scholarship, the results reaffirm that the future of work under AI is not determined solely by technological capability but by the interplay of human, institutional, and ethical factors that define how workers experience and respond to disruption (Cramarenco et al., 2023; George, 2024; Giwa & Ngepah, 2024; Nigar et al., 2025).

Participants in this study exhibited a high degree of awareness regarding the pervasiveness of AI and automation in their work environments, acknowledging that these technologies have altered traditional work patterns, decision-making processes, and even perceptions of occupational security. This aligns with previous research showing that AI disproportionately affects routine and semi-routine occupations, particularly in developing economies where social safety nets are limited (Plumwongrot & Pholphirul, 2023; Wang, 2025). Yet, the findings go further by illustrating that workers' awareness of AI is not purely passive recognition but an active cognitive adjustment that initiates the resilience process. Many respondents interpreted AI not as an uncontrollable threat but as an unavoidable evolution of work to which they must adapt. In line with Golgeci et al. (2025) and Wang (2025), awareness can evolve from fear to constructive engagement, and recognizing the inevitability of technological change can be a precursor to resilience.

In terms of adaptive behavior, workers demonstrated multidimensional resilience that integrated cognitive, behavioral, and emotional capacities. Participants' self-initiated learning efforts, peer collaboration, and willingness to embrace new roles are consistent with the conceptualization of career resilience as a proactive and lifelong process rather than a reactive one (Borg et al., 2023; Gemmell et al., 2021). Their emphasis on continuous upskilling and informal learning mirrors the employability theory's principle that individuals must take ownership of their skill evolution to maintain long-term viability (Fotinos-Ventouratos et al., 2023). What this study adds, however, is an emphasis on the emotional dimension of resilience—workers' capacity to maintain optimism, confidence, and self-efficacy even when faced with technological uncertainty. These psychological elements, while often underexplored in AI-focused labor studies, emerged as fundamental to sustaining motivation and openness to learning.

The organizational context also played a decisive role in shaping resilience outcomes. Workers employed in organizations that provided structured training, transparent communication, and participatory governance exhibited stronger confidence and less anxiety regarding AI integration. These findings corroborate Hilb's (2020) and Goos and Savona's (2024) arguments that ethical corporate governance acts as a safeguard against the social risks of automation. Conversely,

participants from firms that lacked communication and training support expressed frustration, confusion, and diminished trust in management. This divergence illustrates the extent to which governance frameworks—through policies, leadership practices, and decision transparency—mediate the human experience of technological change. In line with Shaikh (2025) and R. Singh et al. (2025), organizations that treat human capital development as a central pillar of governance not only protect workers' well-being but also strengthen organizational legitimacy in the face of automation.

From a sustainability perspective, the findings underscore that resilience and sustainability are deeply interdependent. Participants consistently linked their sense of long-term employability to the ethical and inclusive practices of their organizations. Companies that framed AI transformation as part of a long-term sustainable strategy—providing equal access to re-skilling and ensuring job continuity—were viewed as more trustworthy and socially responsible. This aligns with the broader literature on sustainable governance, which positions workforce inclusion and continuous learning as essential to achieving SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) (van Zanten & van Tulder, 2021; A. Singh et al., 2024; Maghsoudi et al., 2025; Shafik, 2025). The Thai context illustrates that sustainable workforce development is not only an economic necessity but also a moral and social imperative for equitable digital transformation.

Synthesizing these insights, the study reinforces that career resilience in the age of AI cannot be understood solely as an individual trait. It is a co-constructed phenomenon that emerges from the interaction between worker agency, organizational governance, and institutional responsibility. Individual adaptability enables workers to navigate disruption, but it is the organizational environment—defined by transparency, fairness, and ethical leadership—that determines whether this adaptability translates into sustainable employability. Overall, this study contributes to an evolving understanding of AI and labor transformation in developing economies. It demonstrates that resilience is both a psychological and systemic process that flourishes in environments where technological innovation is accompanied by ethical governance and social inclusion. For Thailand and similar economies, this insight holds important implications: the success of digital transformation will depend less on the speed of AI adoption and more on the capacity of organizations and policymakers to ensure that technological progress reinforces, rather than undermines, human dignity and sustainable development.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explored how low- to mid-skilled workers in Thailand cultivate and sustain career resilience amid the accelerating integration of AI technologies, and assessed how corporate governance and sustainability frameworks influence this process. Drawing on qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews with 15 workers across retail, hospitality,

and tourism sectors, the findings reveal that career resilience is a multifaceted construct shaped by the interplay of individual adaptability, organizational support, and governance ethics.

At the individual level, workers demonstrated an acute awareness of AI's transformative role in reshaping their work environments. Despite initial apprehension regarding job insecurity, many participants actively engaged in self-directed learning, peer collaboration, and emotional regulation to sustain their employability. This adaptability reflects a shift from reactive coping to proactive transformation, underscoring that resilience in the AI era extends beyond technical skills to encompass mindset flexibility and continuous learning.

At the organizational level, the study found that transparent communication, structured re-skilling initiatives, and inclusive management practices significantly enhance workers' capacity to adapt to technological change. Firms that effectively communicated the purpose and benefits of AI adoption fostered higher trust and lower resistance among employees. In contrast, environments characterized by limited training and abrupt technological transitions tended to exacerbate anxiety and reduce employee confidence. These insights affirm that governance practices emphasizing fairness, inclusion, and accountability are integral to fostering workforce resilience.

From a governance and sustainability perspective, the research underscores that responsible corporate governance is not merely a compliance mechanism but a strategic enabler of long-term adaptability and social stability. Organizations that align AI transformation with principles of sustainable development—particularly those emphasizing equitable access to training, employee well-being, and ethical technology use—contribute to a more resilient and inclusive workforce. Such alignment supports the goals of the United Nations SDGs by promoting human-centered technological advancement.

In conclusion, the study affirmed that sustaining employability in the age of AI requires more than technological proficiency—it demands a governance ecosystem that recognizes workers as co-creators of transformation. When organizations and institutions uphold ethical, transparent, and inclusive governance, they not only mitigate the disruptive impact of AI but also cultivate a resilient workforce capable of driving sustainable progress. By positioning career resilience as both a personal and structural capability, this research contributes to advancing a human-centered vision of

digital transformation that balances innovation with social equity and long-term sustainability.

This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to understanding workforce resilience in the context of rapid AI-driven transformation. Theoretically, it advances the concept of career resilience by extending it beyond individual adaptability to include structural and institutional dimensions, highlighting that resilience is not solely a personal attribute but a product of governance and policy environments. It positions resilience as a collective responsibility that integrates worker agency, organizational strategy, and institutional ethics. Practically, the findings call for coordinated action among organizations, policymakers, and educational institutions to strengthen workforce resilience in the AI era. Organizations should develop inclusive re-skilling programs for low-to-mid skill employees, ensure transparent communication regarding AI integration, and embed resilience-building strategies such as mentorship, job redesign, and well-being initiatives. Policymakers should promote equitable re-skilling initiatives, strengthen labor governance to ensure ethical AI adoption, and embed workforce resilience as a core pillar in sustainable development strategies. Educational institutions are encouraged to partner with industry to design lifelong learning frameworks that integrate digital literacy, critical thinking, and essential soft skills, alongside agile vocational programs that respond dynamically to evolving technological trends.

This study is limited by its qualitative scope and small sample size of 15 participants drawn from selected service sectors in Thailand. While this approach provided rich contextual insights, the findings cannot be generalized across all industries or national contexts. The study also relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by participants' subjective perceptions and recall bias. Additionally, the focus on low-to-mid skill workers excludes perspectives from higher management or policy-level actors who also influence governance dynamics in AI adoption. Future research should employ mixed-method or longitudinal designs to examine resilience trajectories over time and test relationships between governance practices, re-skilling initiatives, and employability outcomes. Comparative studies across industries or countries could reveal contextual differences in how governance frameworks shape workforce adaptation. Further investigation into policy-level interventions, psychological well-being, and digital literacy development would also deepen understanding of sustainable workforce resilience in the AI era.

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APPENDIX. QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions used in the interviews are listed below.

Section A: Participant background and work context

Purpose: To establish participants' occupational background and exposure to technological change.

Expected insights: Provides demographic and contextual grounding for interpreting career resilience patterns.

- Can you describe your current job role and main responsibilities?
- How long have you been working in this organization or industry?
- What kinds of technological or digital systems are currently used in your workplace?
- Have you noticed any significant changes in your work since these technologies were introduced?

Section B: Awareness and perceptions of AI

Purpose: To examine participants' understanding and attitudes toward AI in the workplace.

Expected insights: Reveals awareness, perceptions of technological inevitability, and emotional reactions to change.

- What does the term "artificial intelligence" mean to you in your work context?
- How has AI been implemented or used in your organization?
- How do you feel about AI becoming part of your daily work—does it make your job easier or more challenging?
- Do you believe AI could eventually replace certain tasks or positions in your workplace? Why or why not?

Section C: Challenges and risks of AI integration

Purpose: To identify perceived threats, insecurities, and barriers resulting from AI adoption.

Expected insights: Explores concerns about job loss, inequality, and reduced human autonomy in AI-mediated work.

- What challenges have you personally faced as a result of AI or automation in your job?
- Have you experienced any fear or insecurity about job stability due to AI?
- How has AI affected your opportunities for learning, promotion, or career advancement?
- What kinds of support do you think are missing when it comes to adapting to AI changes?

Section D: Adaptive strategies and skill development

Purpose: To explore how workers build career resilience through learning and adaptation.

Expected insights: Identifies individual and collective strategies — formal training, peer learning, and mindset shifts.

- What steps have you taken to adapt to technological or AI-related changes in your job?
- Have you participated in any training or self-learning activities to improve your digital or technical skills?
- How do you and your colleagues support each other when learning new systems or technologies?
- What motivates you to keep learning and adapting, even when facing uncertainty or change?

Section E: Organizational and governance support

Purpose: To understand the role of management and governance in facilitating adaptation.

Expected insights: Examines communication, inclusion, and ethical dimensions of AI governance.

- How does your organization communicate about upcoming AI or technological changes?
- What kinds of training or assistance have you received from your employer to help adjust to new technologies?
- Do you feel that your organization values employee input or feedback during technology adoption?
- What do you think your organization could do better to support employees' long-term adaptability?

Section F: Sustainable career development and future outlook

Purpose: To capture participants' long-term perspectives on resilience and sustainability.

Expected insights: Links personal resilience with sustainable workforce practices and governance ethics.

- How do you view your career future in an era increasingly influenced by AI?
- What does "career resilience" mean to you personally?
- How important is continuous learning for maintaining job security in the digital age?
- What do you think organizations and policymakers should do to ensure sustainable and inclusive workforce development?

Within the survey design, not all questions were administered to every participant. Specific items were intentionally omitted to ensure their relevance to the characteristics and context of particular respondents.