

Drivers of AI adoption at work: Employee motivation, trustworthiness perceptions, and confidence

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1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a disruptive technology that revolutionizes the way businesses operate and offers significant potential and numerous benefits (Pāvāloia and Necula, 2023). Despite its economic value and impact on business operations, the role of humans in AI application must not be underestimated. In this context, we speak of human-AI collaboration or simply "working with AI" (Anthony et al., 2023). Digital transformation can only be achieved if people are willing to apply AI tools, and this willingness depends on their perceptions of them (Ahn and Chen, 2022). In this context, motivation is key. Kang et al. (2024) define motivation as an "internal state that activates an individual's internal driving force or physical energy that inspires behavior and directs them to achieve goals that exist in the external environment." It is central to organizational performance and personal wellbeing (Chong and Gagné, 2019) and a powerful driver of technological progress (Peukert, 2025). Research on user motivation did not begin with the emergence of AI tools. Stahlbrost and Bergvall-Kareborn (2011), for example, highlighted the importance of motivation in technological innovation and explored user motivations for technological advances in online networking. More recently, several studies have examined motivational factors related to AI usage.

Trust in AI tools is another topic that has gained popularity among researchers. Much

like motivation, trust can increase, and distrust can decrease, the level of AI adoption (Afroogh et al., 2024).

Not only trust in AI can act as either an accelerator or a brake for effective AI adoption, but also trust in humans plays a role (Montag et al., 2024). According to Pinski et al. (2023), humans do not always delegate tasks efficiently. One reason is a lack of AI literacy, which may affect users' confidence. Chong et al. (2022) identified a positive correlation between self-confidence and the degree to which AI decisions are rejected or accepted.

Much research has been conducted to identify the driving forces behind people's willingness to use AI. This study aims to consolidate the findings of existing literature and validate them empirically. Three key aspects—motivation, trust, and confidence—are represented in each of the following research questions:

RQ 1: What motivates employees to use AI tools in their work?

RQ 2: How do employees perceive AI in relation to key trustworthy-AI dimensions?

RQ 3: How does confidence in interacting with AI tools affect employees' motivation to adopt AI?

2. Literature review

The suitability of a task to be automated is supplemented by human perceptions of task delegation. Lubars and Tan (2019) use the term task delegability, which refers to humans'

preference for a task to be delegated from a human to an AI application. This preference is rooted in individuals' motivation to perform the task themselves, their perception of the task's difficulty and risk, as well as their trust in the AI agent. There are many additional factors that influence people's motivation to apply AI tools at work. Skjuve et al. (2024) mention productivity, novelty (i.e., curiosity about technology), creative work, learning and development (e.g., the explanation of complex topics in simple words), entertainment or fun (e.g., answers generated by ChatGPT), and social interaction as key motivators. Their findings are supported by other research. According to Al Naqbi et al. (2024), generative AI has revolutionized work productivity across several domains. This improvement is reflected in various ways, such as an accelerated pace of work, reduced error rates, enhanced creativity, and better decision-making. A study on key motivational factors driving chatbot use found that the most frequently reported motivator was productivity, which could be achieved through fast and efficient information sharing (Brandtzaeg and Følstad, 2017). Another study aimed at quantifying the productivity benefits of generative AI showed that time savings could be achieved. Although the results varied across industries and occupational fields, the survey revealed that work productivity increased as a consequence of these time savings (Bick et al., 2025).

The literature shows that productivity is closely related to AI-supported workload reduction. A perceived reduction in workload has a positive effect on employee engagement and, consequently, on company performance (Rožman et al., 2023). Workload does not relate only to productivity. Employees' wellbeing may suffer when workload is too high, which may result in elevated stress levels or even burnout (Bakker and de Vries, 2021). In the context of employee wellbeing, task optimization through job crafting must also be considered (Valtonen et al., 2025). According to Tims et al. (2013), job crafting refers to redesigning job demands according to one's needs, abilities, and preferences and has been shown to have a

positive impact on job satisfaction and employees' wellbeing. The introduction of AI has enhanced opportunities for job crafting. Routine tasks tend to be delegated to AI, while employees retain their core responsibilities (Law and Varanasi, 2025). The choice between delegating tasks to AI or performing them manually depends on human preferences regarding the task. Tasks that humans do not enjoy or do not feel capable of performing are more likely to be delegated to AI. Moreover, delegability is not a fixed phenomenon but is subject to change as technology advances. Concurrently, as technology develops, people's risk awareness has increased, which affects decisions about task delegation (Jin and Uchida, 2024). When applying AI tools, people's feelings about their work may change over time. Increased enthusiasm or a heightened need to stay informed about new technologies may be a consequence (Butler et al., 2024). In addition, AI usage has an impact on perceived self-efficacy. According to one study, people feel more competent when assisted by AI tools, which increases their confidence at work (Benhmama et al., 2025). Furthermore, using AI tools may enhance human creativity. Ivcevic and Grandinetti (2024) report that AI-generated art can improve creative performance by stimulating idea generation. This finding is supported by a field experiment conducted by Gindert and Müller (2025), who found that teams using AI tools generated higher-quality ideas in a shorter period of time. Intrinsic motivators have a strong influence on technological adoption, such as the willingness to learn something new, the stimulation of curiosity, and entertainment (Stahlbrost and Bergvall-Kareborn, 2011). According to Semujanga and Mikalef (2024), the use of AI may help employees acquire new skills rapidly. In particular, tools such as ChatGPT accelerate active learning due to their instant feedback and interactive communication (Lai et al., 2023). The entertainment factor has also been identified as a key motivator: playful desire was found to have a strong impact on the formation of AI tool acceptance (Kang et al., 2024).

Several models have been used in prior research on technology adoption, one of which is the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). The original model includes four variables that affect technology usage, namely performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, as well as four moderators: gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use. Over time, UTAUT has been extended with several additional attributes (e.g., personal innovativeness, cost of technology), making the model more generalizable and robust (Blut et al., 2022).

Although trust is not a core component of UTAUT, it must be considered when seeking to understand people's attitudes toward AI usage. Trust can be defined as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer et al., 1995). The successful integration of AI at work depends on workers' trust in AI technology, particularly with regard to human-AI relationships (Glikson and Woolley, 2020). A human-centric approach to AI aims to support humans by enhancing their wellbeing while respecting their dignity and autonomy. In this context, we refer to trustworthiness. Six major themes represent trustworthy AI: (1) human agency and oversight, (2) safety, (3) privacy, (4) transparency, (5) fairness, and (6) accountability (Kazim and Koshiyama, 2021). In past literature, a common misconception was that a high level of automation implies less human control, or vice versa. More recent literature supports a human-centric AI approach, which argues that automation and human control can-and should-coexist (Shneiderman, 2020). Human oversight of AI-based systems helps prevent errors and reduces the risk of inaccurate or unfair outputs (Langer et al., 2024). The safety dimension of trustworthy AI requires AI tools to provide reliable and accurate information and to avoid hallucinations (i.e., false outputs) and misinformation that may cause severe

consequences for users and others. According to Chen et al. (2025), "safe AI refers to the objective of an AI system to ensure its harmlessness to the entire AI ecosystem," including individuals, organizations, and society. Rapid advancements in AI have led to increased data privacy risks, resulting from the disclosure of sensitive information in training data (Liu et al., 2024). Transparency refers to understanding the decision-making processes of AI tools (OECD, 2024). In this context, existing AI research also uses terms such as explainability and understandability (Jobin et al., 2019). Fairness relates to justice and aims to mitigate bias and discrimination while embracing diversity, inclusion, and equality (Jobin et al., 2019). A lack of accountability means that it is not always clear which actor in the AI environment is responsible for harmful or incorrect AI decisions-whether the developer, the provider, or the employee using the tool (OECD, 2024). Human intention to use AI tools is positively correlated with perceptions of trust in these tools, indicating that trust has a significant impact on the acceptance of AI technologies (Choung et al., 2022).

Jiang et al. (2022) argue that smart technologies increase self-efficacy and improve learning performance, which in turn enhances employee wellbeing. According to Schunk and DiBenedetto (2021), "[s]elf-efficacy refers to perceived capabilities to learn or perform actions at designated levels." The literature shows a positive correlation between self-efficacy, and thus confidence, and the use of AI tools (Falebita and Kok, 2025).

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to examine employees' motivations to apply AI models, their perceptions of trustworthiness, and the correlation between confidence and AI usage. As AI becomes increasingly embedded in organizational workflows, understanding these factors requires an empirical approach that

captures employee attitudes and behavioral intentions.

Given the exploratory nature of the research questions and the need for efficient data collection, a quantitative cross-sectional survey was employed. The use of the internet has influenced the way research is conducted. Surveys are widely used in organizational research, and online surveys have therefore become a common method (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2022). Prior studies on task delegability (e.g., Lubars and Tan, 2019) and motivators for AI application (e.g., Kang et al., 2024) have successfully employed survey methods.

The survey was divided into four parts: a general section and one section for each research question. The general section asked respondents about their age, with the following ranges to choose from: (A) up to 29, (B) 30-49, and (C) above 50. Respondents were then asked about their frequency of AI usage, with the following answer options: (A) daily, (B) several times per week, (C) at least once per week, (D) at least once per month, and (E) less than once per month or never. The third general question asked respondents about their perceived competency level in using AI and provided the following answer options: (A) very advanced, (B) above average, (C) average, (D) very basic, and (E) no AI knowledge.

The second part asked, "To what extent do the following attributes increase your motivation to use AI tools at work?", followed by a list of attributes based on existing findings described in the literature review section. The attributes to be rated were as follows: (1) saving time, (2) reducing workload, (3) enhancing productivity at work, (4) delegating tasks I do not like, (5) delegating tasks I do not feel capable of doing, (6) improving the quality of my work results, (7) getting inspired by AI-generated creative outcomes, (8) feeling more confident at work, (9) fun or entertainment in using new tools, (10) AI-based social support (e.g., through interaction with a chatbot), (11) personal interest in using new tools, and (12) personal learning (using AI to learn or understand how to solve new or complex tasks). For each attribute, respondents were asked to

choose the most appropriate answer on a five-point Likert scale: (A) not at all, (B) a little, (C) moderately, (D) strongly, and (E) very strongly.

The third part asked, "How do you perceive AI in relation to trustworthy AI dimensions (human oversight, safety, privacy, transparency, fairness, accountability)? Please rate the following statements," followed by the phrases to be evaluated: (1) When I use AI tools at work, I feel that I still have control over the final results. (2) I believe that the AI tools I use at work are safe and do not cause harm to our organization, people, or third parties. (3) I trust that AI tools respect my and others' data privacy. (4) It is clear to me how the AI tools I use produce their results and arrive at their decisions. (5) I believe that the AI tools I use at work treat people fairly and without bias. (6) I know who is responsible for AI-based outcomes and decision-making. Respondents rated each statement on a five-point Likert scale with the following options: (A) strongly disagree, (B) disagree, (C) somewhat agree, (D) agree, and (E) strongly agree.

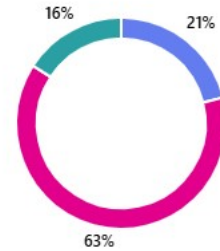
The next section asked, "To what extent does your confidence in using AI tools influence your motivation to use them? Please rate the following statements." The statements were: (1) I feel confident using AI. (2) The more confident I feel in using AI tools, the more willing I am to use them at work. (3) If I do not feel confident, I prefer not to use AI at work. (4) When I feel confident using AI, I am more motivated to apply it at work. Respondents rated each statement on a five-point Likert scale with the following options: (A) not at all, (B) a little, (C) moderately, (D) strongly, and (E) very strongly.

The online survey was conducted using Microsoft Forms and distributed via social media (LinkedIn). The results were reported as absolute numbers and as percentages of the total sample. Automated visualizations of responses supported the interpretation of the results. Furthermore, the data could be downloaded as an Excel report for further analysis.

For the analysis of correlations, IBM SPSS was used. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between perceived trustworthiness of AI, perceived human confidence, and AI usage. All variables were measured using Likert-type scales and treated as continuous. Correlations were calculated using a two-tailed significance test with an alpha level of .05.

Figure 1 » Age ranges of the sample

● up to 29	20
● 30-49	60
● above 50	15



Source: Author

The majority of respondents use AI tools very frequently, as shown in Figure 2. 41% indicated they used AI daily, 37% used it

4. Results

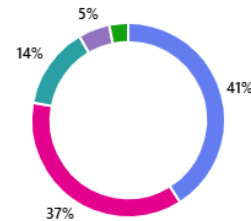
4.1 General questions

In total, 95 respondents (N = 95) completed the survey. Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the sample: 63% were aged 30 to 49, 21% were below 30, and 16% were 50 or older.

several times per week, and 14% used it at least once per week.

Figure 2 » Respondents' frequency of AI usage

● Daily	39
● Several times per week	35
● At least once per week	13
● At least once per month	5
● Less than once per month / never	3



Source: Author

Respondents were asked to indicate how they assessed their level of AI knowledge. Figure 3 shows the results. The majority (43%) stated that their knowledge was average. Twenty-eight

percent rated their level as above average, while 24% considered it basic. None of the respondents indicated having no knowledge, and 4% reported being very advanced.

Figure 3 » Respondents' AI knowledge



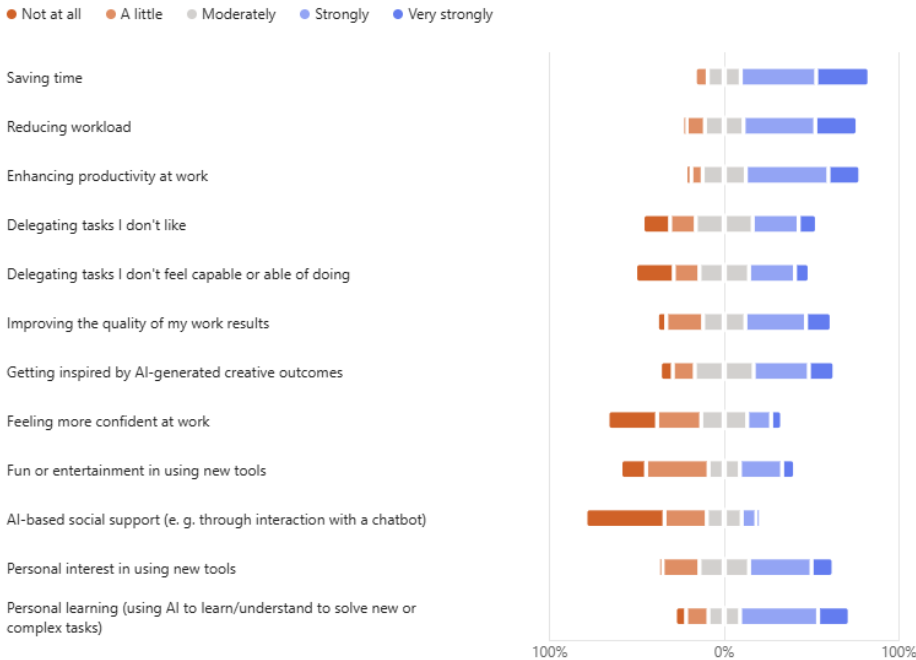
Source: Author

4.2 Motivation (RQ 1)

The responses to the question "To what extent do the following attributes increase your

motivation to use AI tools at work?" are depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4 » Motivators for AI usage



Source: Author

According to this study's respondents, some of the presented attributes increase motivation to use AI more than others. When the responses "very strongly" and "strongly" are combined, the following three attributes emerge as the strongest motivators: saving time (73.7%), enhancing productivity at work (65.6%), and reducing workload (65.3%).

The attributes perceived to increase motivation "not at all" or only "a little" were AI-based social support (69.5%), feeling more confident at work (53.6%), and fun or entertainment in using new tools (50.5%).

4.3 Trustworthiness (RQ 2)

Figure 5 shows the results for the question, "How do you perceive AI in relation to trustworthy AI dimensions (human oversight, safety, privacy, transparency, fairness, accountability)?"

The two AI trustworthiness indicators that received the most positive responses (sum of "strongly agree" and "agree") were human oversight (67.4%) and safety (46.3%). The lowest-scoring dimensions (sum of "strongly disagree" and "disagree") were privacy (51.6%), accountability (43.1%), and fairness (37.2%).

Figure 5 » Perception of AI trustworthiness dimensions



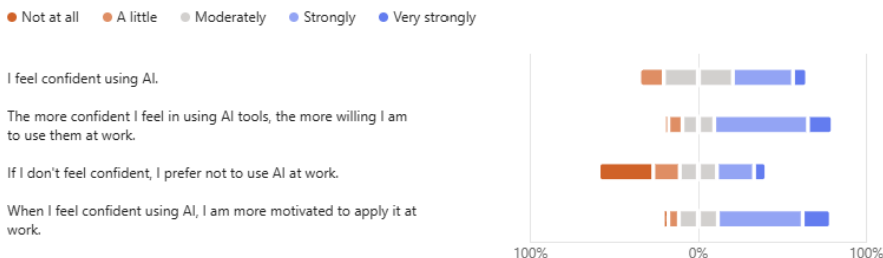
Source: Author

4.4 Confidence (RQ 3)

The majority of respondents (43.2%) felt strongly or very strongly confident using AI tools. In addition, 70.5% indicated that they would be more willing to use AI tools the more confident they feel in using them. Similarly, 67.3% reported being more motivated to apply

AI tools at work when they feel confident using AI. Surprisingly, the majority of respondents (48.4%) disagreed with the statement that, if they did not feel confident, they would prefer not to use AI at work. This response contradicts the other findings. Figure 6 shows the responses to survey part 3.

Figure 6 » Confidence perception



Source: Author

5. Discussion

5.1 Motivation (RQ 1)

All predefined attributes received positive responses, indicating that they increase respondents' motivation to use AI either "very strongly" or "strongly." Thus, the findings of previous literature can be confirmed. However, the impact of individual attributes on motivation to apply AI tools differs considerably. The top motivators—saving time, reducing workload, and enhancing productivity—all relate to the broader category of productivity, making it one of the most important factors for humans to use AI. Previous studies have reached similar conclusions: research conducted by Skjuve et al. (2024) and Brandtzaeg and Følstad (2017) identified productivity as the most important motivator for AI usage.

According to this survey's participants, AI-based social support has the least impact on their motivation, followed by increased confidence at work and fun or entertainment in using new tools. Other studies have reported different results. For example, Skjuve et al. (2024) found that 20% of their sample used AI for fun and amusement, and 9% for social interaction. The sample in the present study was very heterogeneous, and it can be assumed that differences in industries, backgrounds, or AI use cases influence the relative importance of each motivator.

5.2 Trustworthiness (RQ 2)

Respondents perceived only two of the six dimensions—human oversight and safety—as positive with regards to trustworthiness. In three dimensions (privacy, fairness, and accountability), responses were rather negative. These findings reflect the ongoing discussion about AI-related risks, particularly regarding social concerns and data handling.

The data privacy dimension received the lowest score compared to the other dimensions, indicating that perceptions of trustworthiness regarding privacy issues are relatively weak.

Nonetheless, a Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between perceived trustworthiness of AI in the data privacy dimension and AI use ($r = .26$, $p = .013$, $N = 95$).

Despite the statistical correlation, a cross-tabulation clearly shows that a substantial proportion of participants reported frequent AI use despite low perceived trustworthiness. This indicates that AI usage occurs largely independently of trust considerations and risk awareness.

Existing literature has shown a correlation between trust and technology usage. However, trust is not the only criterion that influences people's attitudes. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) comprises several factors, such as performance expectancy and social influence. In this study, despite trust-related concerns, respondents reported relatively frequent use of AI technologies. This raises the question of whether other user acceptance factors have a greater impact on technology usage than trust. This issue warrants further attention and may represent a relevant topic for future research.

The dimensions transparency, fairness, and accountability show a large dispersion of responses. For the transparency dimension, 9.5% of respondents strongly agreed, while 10.5% strongly disagreed. A similar pattern can be observed for the fairness dimension, where 7.4% strongly agreed that AI tools treat people fairly and without bias, while an equal proportion (7.4%) strongly disagreed. This relatively balanced distribution at both ends of the Likert scale makes it difficult for researchers to identify a clear trend or derive a generalized perception of AI trustworthiness.

5.3 Confidence (RQ 3)

Existing research has shown a positive correlation between perceived human confidence and AI usage. Based on the results of this survey, this finding can be confirmed: approximately two thirds of respondents stated that the more confident they felt in using AI tools, the more willing and motivated they were

to use them at work. This hypothesis can also be statistically confirmed. A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant and moderately strong positive relationship between perceived human confidence and AI use ($r = .38, p < .001, N = 95$).

The correlation between a lack of confidence and a lack of motivation and willingness to use AI could not be confirmed and may be subject to further research. The statement "If I don't feel confident, I prefer not to use AI at work" was rated negatively by the majority of respondents. This outcome contradicts the statement "The more confident I feel in using AI tools, the more willing I am to use them at work," which was rated mostly positively. In my opinion, there are two possible explanations for this result. First, despite feeling unconfident, respondents may use AI for reasons other than motivation (e.g., due to company instructions). Second, some respondents may have misread the statement and unintentionally selected a response that conflicted with the other items.

6. Limitations and future outlook

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was highly heterogeneous in terms of countries and industries, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the relatively small sample size ($N = 95$) reduces the statistical power of the results and calls for replication with larger populations. Another limitation concerns the rapidly evolving landscape of corporate AI tools, which may shape or shift users' perceptions in ways not captured by this study. Future research may focus on examining user motivations with regards to a specific tool, task, or employer IT regulations.

The study also relied solely on quantitative methods, without qualitative insights that could enrich or nuance the interpretation of the results. Future research would benefit from integrating interviews or case studies to identify additional motivators or trust-related factors.

Furthermore, the relationship between perceived AI trustworthiness and AI usage was only captured at a general level in this study and offers promising opportunities for further exploration.

7. Conclusion

This study examined key human factors influencing the adoption of AI tools at work, with a particular focus on motivation, trustworthiness perceptions, and confidence in interacting with AI. The findings demonstrate that employees' willingness to use AI is primarily shaped by motivational and competence-related factors rather than by trust perceptions alone.

Across the sample, productivity-related motivators, e.g. saving time, reducing workload, and enhancing work efficiency, emerged as the most influential drivers of AI use. This confirms the results of prior research about AI adoption in organizational contexts. While respondents expressed considerable concerns regarding AI's trustworthiness dimensions, especially data privacy, fairness, and accountability, their AI usage remained frequent. One can conclude that other factors may have a stronger impact on usage than trust perceptions.

In contrast, confidence in using AI tools showed a clear and consistent positive relationship with both motivation and willingness to use AI at work. This highlights human confidence as a central enabling factor in AI adoption and suggests that employees' perceived ability to interact effectively with AI may outweigh trust-related reservations in practice.

Overall, the findings underline that successful AI adoption in organizations depends on empowering users through competence development and confidence-building measures. By focusing on human motivation and confidence, organizations can better support effective human-AI collaboration, even in contexts where ethical concerns remain salient.

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Drivers of AI adoption at work: Employee motivation, trustworthiness perceptions, and confidence

ABSTRACT

The role of humans in AI adoption is critical, as employees' willingness to apply AI tools can either facilitate or impede the successful development and integration of AI in organizational contexts. Prior research suggests that several factors influence this willingness; however, empirical evidence on workplace AI use remains limited. This study examines how motivation, perceptions of AI trustworthiness, and confidence in interacting with AI tools shape employees' intention to use AI at work. Data were collected through a Likert-scale online survey targeting professionals across various industries. The results reveal three key findings. First, all predefined motivational factors positively influence user motivation, with productivity emerging as the strongest motivator. Second, although respondents expressed awareness of trust-related concerns, no meaningful correlation between trustworthiness perceptions and actual AI usage was identified. Third, confidence in interacting with AI tools shows a positive association with both motivation and willingness to use AI at work. These findings highlight the central role of human motivation and confidence in AI adoption.

KEYWORDS

Artificial Intelligence, AI Adoption, Motivation, AI Trustworthiness, Confidence

JEL CLASSIFICATION

D83; J24; L86; O33