



Determinants of artificial intelligence adoption in project management: a global analysis of knowledge, drivers and barriers

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Abstract: This research investigates the determinants of artificial intelligence (AI) adoption in project management, focusing on knowledge, organizational drivers, and perceived barriers. Drawing on a global survey of 345 project management professionals, the research examines three models: (1) the effect of AI knowledge on adoption likelihood, (2) the influence of organizational drivers such as operational efficiency, leadership vision, and competitive advantage, and (3) the impact of perceived barriers including uncertain ROI, data privacy concerns, high costs, and lack of expertise. Results indicate that higher AI knowledge significantly increases adoption propensity. Organizational drivers, particularly leadership vision and competitive advantage, are strong positive predictors, whereas uncertain ROI acts as a significant barrier. Interestingly, concerns about data privacy and knowledge gaps exhibit a positive association with adoption, suggesting complex interactions between perceived obstacles and adoption behavior.

Keywords: project management, competitive advantage, adoption drivers, artificial intelligence (AI), digital transformation

JEL classification: O22, F63, O33

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Dejavniki uvajanja umetne inteligence v projektne managementu: globalna analiza znanja, spodbujevalcev in ovir

Povzetek: Raziskava proučuje dejavnike uvajanja umetne inteligence (UI) v projektne managementu s poudarkom na znanju, organizacijskih spodbujevalcih in zaznanih ovirah. Na podlagi globalne ankete med 345 strokovnjaki s področja projektne managementa raziskava analizira tri modele: (1) vpliv znanja o UI na verjetnost uvedbe, (2) vpliv organizacijskih spodbujevalcev, kot so operativna učinkovitost, vizija vodstva in konkurenčna prednost, ter (3) vpliv zaznanih ovir, vključno z negotovo donosnostjo naložbe (ROI), skrbmi glede zasebnosti podatkov, visokimi stroški in pomanjkanjem strokovnega znanja.

Rezultati kažejo, da višja raven znanja o UI pomembno povečuje pripravljenost za njeno uvedbo. Organizacijski spodbujevalci, zlasti vizija vodstva in konkurenčna prednost, predstavljajo močne pozitivne napovednike uvedbe, medtem ko negotova donosnost naložbe deluje kot pomembna ovira. Zanimivo je, da skrb glede zasebnosti podatkov in pomanjkanje znanja kažeta pozitivno povezavo z uvajanjem, kar nakazuje na kompleksne interakcije med zaznanimi ovirami in vedenjem pri uvajanju tehnologije.

Ključne besede: projektne management, konkurenčna prednost, dejavniki uvajanja, umetna inteligenca (UI), digitalna transformacija

Klasifikacija JEL: O22, F63, O33

1 INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become a key element of organizational development over the past decade, with artificial intelligence (AI) emerging as one of the technologies with the strongest transformational potential. AI increasingly influences data analysis, operational efficiency, task automation, and managerial decision-making (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018; Akter et al., 2023; Csaszar et al., 2024; Murire, 2024). Organizations across various sectors seek to integrate AI to enhance productivity and improve information quality, which aligns with global research findings indicating the accelerated expansion of AI-based business solutions (Bughin et al., 2018; Brynjolfsson et al., 2025; Fernandez-Mateo, 2025).

Project management is one of the domains in which the application of artificial intelligence is developing faster than ever before (Sahadevan, 2023; Hashimzai & Mohammadi, 2024). AI is being introduced into predictive analytics, risk assessment, resource optimization, and planning automation, enabling greater accuracy and reducing operational errors (PMI, 2019; Kerzner, 2022; Nenni et al., 2025; Fridgeirsson et al., 2023). Despite its significant potential, substantial differences remain in how prepared organizations are to adopt AI technologies, and prior research highlights that adoption depends on a combination of individual, organizational, and technological factors (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Horani et al., 2023; Felemban, 2024; Maestro & Rana, 2024). However, despite the growing interest, there is still a limited number of studies that focus on how project management professionals perceive their own readiness, the benefits, and the barriers associated with AI, particularly within quantitative models that simultaneously examine knowledge, drivers, and obstacles. This lack of an integrated analytical perspective represents a research gap that the present study aims to address.

For this reason, the aim of this paper is to empirically examine the determinants of artificial intelligence adoption in project management. The analysis includes three models: (1) the impact of the level of knowledge on the propensity to adopt AI, (2) the influence of key drivers such as operational efficiency, strategic leadership vision, and competitive advantage, and (3) the effect of perceived barriers such as uncertain return on investment (ROI), data privacy concerns, and lack of competencies. The results provide a deeper understanding of project management professionals' behavior and offer a foundation for developing strategies to support the effective implementation of AI technologies

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Artificial intelligence today plays an increasingly significant role in the transformation of business systems, and its application spans advanced analytics, automation, and decision-support functions. Organizations that integrate AI into their processes often achieve higher efficiency, faster reaction cycles, and improved control over business risks (Ransbotham et al., 2021). Advances in computing power, the availability of large volumes of data, and the development of sophisticated algorithms have enabled the use of AI even in domains traditionally dominated by human expertise and experience (Tu et al., 2024; Kumar, 2024).

In the field of project management, artificial intelligence is increasingly used to optimize key aspects of project planning and execution. Research shows that AI contributes to more accurate risk prediction, better resource allocation, automation of operational activities, and a reduction of subjectivity in decision-making. Project management often involves making decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and machine learning algorithms provide project managers with the ability to identify patterns and detect anomalies at an early stage. In this way, AI becomes an important component of modern project management practices (Salimimoghadam et al., 2025; Al-Arafat et al., 2024; Koszykowski & Orzeszko, 2025).

Understanding the adoption of AI technologies within organizations is grounded in theoretical models of technology acceptance. Contemporary approaches expand on classical frameworks such as TAM and UTAUT by emphasizing that adoption is influenced not only by perceived usefulness and ease of use, but also by organizational culture, digital competencies, and leadership support. Research further indicates that an organization's readiness for digital transformation is strongly linked to the level of strategic vision and long-term objectives (Shrestha et al., 2019).

The literature highlights three main groups of determinants of AI adoption: drivers, barriers, and individual factors. Drivers include improvements in operational efficiency, the creation of competitive advantage, and strategic leadership orientation. These variables motivate organizations to invest in AI technologies to enhance the quality and speed of project execution. On the other hand, numerous barriers, such as lack of expertise, concerns regarding data privacy, regulatory requirements, and uncertain return on investment, can slow down or even prevent the implementation of artificial intelligence (Duan et al., 2019). Understanding these obstacles is essential for effectively managing organizational change during the digital transformation of project management.

At the individual level, the most important factor is the level of knowledge and digital competencies of professionals. A higher level of knowledge increases understanding of technological functionalities, reduces resistance, and enhances the willingness to use new technologies. In this way, knowledge becomes a prerequisite for the effective integration of artificial intelligence into project processes.

This structured theoretical framework enables a clearer positioning of the research models within the context of existing literature and provides a foundation for analyzing the determinants of AI adoption in project management.

3 METHODOLOGY

This research applies to a quantitative methodological approach aimed at examining the determinants of artificial intelligence (AI) adoption in project management. The methodological framework is grounded in contemporary literature on digital transformation and AI adoption, with recent studies emphasizing the importance of integrating knowledge, organizational factors, and perceived risks (Ransbotham et al., 2021; Kozhakhmetova et al., 2024). Accordingly, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1: A higher level of knowledge about artificial intelligence among project management professionals positively influences their propensity to adopt AI technologies in project processes.

H2: Organizational and perceptual factors (including operational efficiency, strategic leadership vision, competitive advantage, and perceived barriers such as uncertain return on investment, data privacy concerns, high costs, and lack of competencies) significantly affect the likelihood of adopting artificial intelligence in project management.

Data were collected through an online survey questionnaire developed specifically for this study and distributed in collaboration with the International Project Management Association (IPMA), one of the world's leading project management organizations. IPMA operates through a network of national member associations in approximately 70 countries worldwide, ensuring a diverse and internationally representative sample (IPMA, 2024).

The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions and statements measured on 5-point Likert scales (1-5), designed to assess the following dimensions: level of AI knowledge, perception of benefits and drivers, perceived barriers, and the propensity to adopt AI tools in project management processes. The design of the instrument follows recent recommendations for measuring digital readiness and AI technology acceptance (McKinsey, 2025; Weinberg, 2025).

A total of 345 valid respondents from various parts of the world participated in the study, including project managers, program managers, portfolio managers, project analysts, PMO professionals, consultants, digital transformation specialists, and project team leaders. This composition ensures strong professional representativeness, as participants are actively involved in project management and decision-making within complex organizational environments. The levels of AI knowledge among respondents varied considerably, with the highest concentration of responses between levels 2 and 4, providing sufficient variance for regression analysis.

The variables used in the analysis are described below.

Dependent variable:

AI_Adopt - self-reported likelihood of adopting AI in project management.

Independent variables:

AI Knowledge

AI_Knowledge - ordinal scale ranging from 1 to 5.

Adoption Drivers (dummy variables): operational efficiency, leadership vision/support, competitive advantage.

These drivers are grounded in established organizational adoption models (Shrestha et al., 2019; Lawal et al., 2024).

Adoption Barriers (dummy variables): uncertain ROI, data privacy concerns, high costs, lack of knowledge as a barrier.

These barriers align with findings from recent analyses of AI implementation in business systems (Duan et al., 2019; Kozhakhmetova et al., 2024).

Specification of Regression Models

To test the hypotheses, three OLS regression models were developed.

Model 1 - Effect of Knowledge on AI Adoption

$$AI_Adopt_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot AI_Knowledge_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Model 2 - Effect of Adoption Drivers

$$AI_Adopt_i = \beta_0 + \beta_2 \cdot Operational_Efficiency_i + \beta_3 \cdot Leadership_Vision_i + \beta_4 \cdot Competitive_Advantage_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Model 3 - Effect of Adoption Barriers

$$AI_Adopt_i = \beta_0 + \beta_5 \cdot Uncertain_ROI_i + \beta_6 \cdot Data_Privacy_i + \beta_7 \cdot High_Costs_i + \beta_8 \cdot Lack_of_Knowledge_Barrier_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The regression analysis was conducted using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method with a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$. To examine associations among categorical variables, a chi-square test (χ^2) was applied. The analytical procedure included descriptive statistics, multicollinearity diagnostics (VIF), data cleaning and removal of incomplete responses, dummy coding of categorical predictors, and evaluation of model fit through R^2 , standard errors, and confidence intervals.

Data analysis was performed in a Python environment using the pandas and statsmodels libraries, following established recommendations for processing large-scale research datasets (McKinsey, 2025).

4 RESULTS

The first part of the analysis examines the effect of knowledge about artificial intelligence on the propensity to adopt AI tools in project management. In line with the stated hypothesis, a linear regression model was developed in which the likelihood of adoption was treated as the dependent variable, while the level of AI knowledge served as the independent variable. The model is specified by the following equation:

$$AI_Adopt_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot AI_Knowledge_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The results of the simple linear regression indicate a statistically significant and positive relationship between the two variables. The coefficient for AI_Knowledge is approximately 0.35 with a p-value below 0.001, while the coefficient of determination shows that the model explains about 10% of the variance in the likelihood of adopting artificial intelligence. These findings confirm that higher levels of knowledge among respondents contribute to a greater inclination to implement AI in projects, thereby supporting the initial hypothesis regarding the relationship between knowledge and adoption.

Following the analysis of knowledge, the second regression model examined the influence of motivational drivers on the likelihood of adopting AI in project management. This model included indicators of operational efficiency, leadership vision, and perceived competitive advantage, all of which were treated as binary independent variables. The model is defined by the following equation:

$$AI_Adopt_i = \beta_0 + \beta_2 \cdot Operational_Efficiency_i + \beta_3 \cdot Leadership_Vision_i + \beta_4 \cdot Competitive_Advantage_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The results of the multiple linear regression show that all three drivers are statistically significant and positively associated with the likelihood of adoption. The estimated

coefficients range from approximately 0.40 to 0.47, with the strongest effects observed for the **Leadership_Vision** and **Competitive_Advantage** variables, both with p-values well below 0.001. Operational efficiency also demonstrates a significant positive influence ($\beta \approx 0.40$; $p < 0.01$). The model explains around 9% of the variance in the dependent variable, which is consistent with expectations for models analysing perceptual and organizational factors. These results confirm the hypothesis that operational, strategic, and competitive dimensions significantly promote the adoption of artificial intelligence in project environments.

The third regression model examined the effect of barriers on the propensity to adopt artificial intelligence. The model included four key obstacles: uncertain return on investment, concerns about data privacy, perceived high costs, and lack of knowledge as a limiting factor. The specification of the model is given by the following equation:

$$AI_Adopt_i = \beta_0 + \beta_5 \cdot Uncertain_ROI_i + \beta_6 \cdot Data_Privacy_i + \beta_7 \cdot High_Costs_i + \beta_8 \cdot Lack_of_Knowledge_as_Barrier_i + \varepsilon_i$$

The results reveal heterogeneous effects among the examined barriers. The variable **Uncertain_ROI** is the only one that has a negative and statistically significant impact on the likelihood of adoption ($\beta \approx -0.32$; $p \approx 0.021$), indicating that greater concern about return on investment systematically reduces the propensity to implement AI. In contrast, concerns about data privacy and lack of knowledge as a barrier show positive and statistically significant effects ($\beta \approx 0.36$; $p \approx 0.005$; $\beta \approx 0.28$; $p \approx 0.035$). These positive coefficients suggest that respondents who identify these barriers often belong to a group already interested in AI adoption and familiar with implementation challenges, rather than being discouraged from using the technology. High costs do not exhibit a statistically significant effect ($p > 0.40$), implying that respondents do not perceive them as a decisive factor in the decision to adopt artificial intelligence. This model explains approximately 5% of the variance in the likelihood of adoption.

In addition to the regression models, two chi-square analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between the current level of artificial intelligence usage and the perception of its potential applications and benefits. The first analysis identified a statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 18.48$; $p < 0.05$) between the level of AI experience and the application areas respondents consider most important. Participants with greater experience more frequently identified risk management, whereas those with less experience tended to highlight general capabilities or task automation. The second chi-square analysis also revealed a statistically significant association ($\chi^2 = 17.85$; $p < 0.01$) between current AI usage and perceived benefits. The most experienced users predominantly recognised benefits in efficiency and productivity, while respondents with lower levels of experience more often emphasised decision-making support and time management benefits. These findings further strengthen the regression models by demonstrating that actual exposure to AI shapes respondents' perceptions and expectations regarding its application and value in project management.

5 DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the adoption of artificial intelligence in project management is determined by a combination of individual and organizational factors, which is fully aligned with the proposed hypotheses H1 and H2. The first hypothesis (H1) assumed that a higher level of knowledge about artificial intelligence increases the likelihood of its adoption in project processes, and the empirical findings fully confirm

this. Model 1 demonstrated a strong and statistically significant positive effect of AI knowledge on the propensity to adopt AI, highlighting that familiarity with the technology is a fundamental prerequisite for the practical use of AI solutions. Participants with higher levels of knowledge not only understand the technical capabilities of AI but also more accurately assess how the technology can be applied in specific phases of the project life cycle. This is consistent with contemporary literature, which emphasizes the importance of digital competencies as a key factor enabling successful implementation of AI tools in organizational processes.

The second hypothesis (H2) posits that organizational and perceptual factors, including both drivers and barriers, significantly influence the adoption of artificial intelligence in project management. The results of Models 2 and 3 strongly support this hypothesis. On the one hand, the key drivers (perceived operational efficiency, strategic leadership vision, and expected competitive advantage) emerged as strong positive predictors of readiness to adopt AI technologies. These findings underline that the decision to adopt AI is not based solely on understanding the technology, but also on evaluating its strategic value for the organization. This is particularly evident in the variables related to leadership and competitive advantage, which show the highest coefficients, confirming that managerial vision and strategic positioning play a crucial role in the acceptance of new technologies.

On the other hand, the barriers to AI adoption demonstrated a more complex dynamic. Uncertain return on investment (ROI) was the only barrier that had a significantly negative effect on the likelihood of adoption, which aligns with expectations and with literature highlighting economic uncertainty as a key obstacle. However, the remaining barriers, including concerns about data privacy and lack of knowledge as an impediment, did not appear as inhibitors, suggesting that these issues are more frequently reported by respondents who are already exposed to AI tools or who show a heightened interest in them. This further supports H2 in a broader sense: organizational and perceptual factors operate jointly, and their combined influence is critical in shaping assessments of the acceptability of AI technologies.

Additional results from the chi-square tests provide further context and deeper insights into H2. They show that actual use of artificial intelligence shapes perceptions of both benefits and applications. More experienced users identify more concrete, advanced, and strategically relevant capabilities of AI, whereas less experienced respondents tend to emphasize more general benefits. This implies that perceptions of drivers and barriers are not formed in isolation but rather in interaction with personal experience.

Overall, the findings strongly support the two proposed hypotheses. Higher levels of knowledge (H1) function as a fundamental prerequisite for the use of AI, while organizational, strategic, and perceptual factors (H2) determine whether and to what extent AI will be accepted within project environments. The study therefore confirms that AI adoption in project management is a multifactorial process in which competencies, expected benefits, organizational context, and risk perceptions interact. These results highlight the need to strengthen professional knowledge, reinforce leadership and strategic orientation, and address economic and organizational uncertainties to facilitate broader and more effective adoption of artificial intelligence in project management practice.

6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to determine how the level of knowledge about artificial intelligence, together with organizational and perceptual factors, shapes the propensity to adopt AI technologies in project management. The findings provide a consistent and

coherent picture of the dynamics of AI adoption and confirm both proposed hypotheses. The first hypothesis, which states that a higher level of AI knowledge increases the likelihood of its use in project processes, is fully supported. The statistically significant positive relationship between knowledge and adoption indicates that understanding the capabilities and limitations of AI technologies represents a key prerequisite for their effective integration into everyday project work. Professionals with greater knowledge of artificial intelligence are better able to recognize its practical benefits and more capable of assessing how AI can enhance specific phases of the project life cycle.

The second hypothesis, which assumes that organizational and perceptual factors strongly influence the adoption of AI technologies, is also confirmed by the analysis. The findings show that motivational drivers such as the expected improvement in operational efficiency, the strategic vision of leadership, and the perception of competitive advantage significantly encourage the inclination to use artificial intelligence. These results demonstrate that the decision to implement AI solutions is not solely a technical matter but also a strategic one, and that the readiness of the organization and its leaders plays a crucial role in the digital transformation process. On the other hand, the perceived barriers exhibit a complex and multidirectional influence on adoption decisions. Although uncertain return on investment emerged as the only barrier that statistically significantly reduces the likelihood of adoption, other obstacles such as concerns about data privacy or lack of knowledge did not act as inhibitors. Instead, they were more frequently reported by respondents who already show interest in AI or have some prior experience with it, suggesting that awareness of risks increases alongside the development of competencies. The results of this study confirm that artificial intelligence can enhance operational efficiency and the accuracy of data analysis, but only when challenges such as complex technological infrastructure and ethical risk management are addressed simultaneously. This aligns with the findings of Hidayat et al. (2024), who emphasize that the key to successful application of AI in project management lies in balancing technological capabilities with organizational readiness.

Overall, the conducted research demonstrates that the adoption of artificial intelligence in project management results from the interplay of individual competencies, strategic organizational factors, and risk perceptions. Successful implementation of artificial intelligence requires simultaneous strengthening of digital skills, clear leadership committed to transformation, and the creation of conditions in which benefits and risks are understood and assessed in a balanced manner. The findings of this study provide a valuable contribution to understanding how project professionals adopt AI tools and highlight the need for further development of knowledge, strategic communication, and responsible risk management to enable broader, faster, and more effective use of artificial intelligence in projects. This research opens avenues for future studies that could focus on longitudinal monitoring of changes in user perceptions, deeper exploration of specific organizational conditions, and evaluation of the actual impact of AI technologies on project success.

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