

Organizational Transformation in IT Companies: Behavioral Implications of Artificial Intelligence Adoption and Remote Work

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Abstract: Digital transformation projects in the IT industry in Bulgaria are increasingly driven by artificial intelligence (AI) integration and the expansion of remote and hybrid work models. While both trends have been analyzed independently, their combined impact on employee behavior remains insufficiently explored. This study proposes an integrative behavioral model for organizations evaluating how trust in AI, perceived AI-related uncertainty, work engagement, and adaptability influence transformation outcomes. The research planned to be conducted is based on a mixed-methods design, centered on the Bulgarian IT sector as a rapidly growing technology ecosystem facing global and domestic challenges. One of the goals is to demonstrate that AI not only redefines operational processes but also demands new behavioral capabilities to ensure sustainable organizational change. The latter demands new management approaches to foster employee acceptance and motivation and increase the efficiency of the organization and secure new competitive advantages. Ultimately, this approach towards analyzing current trends should reveal that technology may initiate transformation, but human behavior determines its success.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence; Organizational transformation; Remote work; Behavioral aspects; Bulgarian IT companies

JEL: L2, M5, O3, J2, C2

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation represents a profound shift in how organizations operate, innovate, and compete. In the IT sector, this process is accelerated due to the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI), constant innovations in this area, advancements in cloud and automation technologies (Holmström & Carroll, 2024; Korzyński et al., 2024) and globalization of activities and projects. With high technological volatility, organizational structures become more agile, work processes increasingly virtual, and employees' roles continuously redefined, and hence so are management processes.

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AI can support and optimize a wide range of operational and management processes and assignments such as automation of complex tasks, assistance in decision making, reduction of errors, economies of resources, big data analyses, information security (Dombashov, 2025).

While AI provides competitive benefits such as increased efficiency, productivity and overall performance, enhanced knowledge management, and new decision-support systems, it simultaneously introduces uncertainty regarding job security, significant changes in roles and work processes, and cognitive overload (Yuan et al., 2025). The latter emphasizes the importance of transformational leadership. Employee perceptions of AI-driven change, particularly trust in algorithmic recommendations and fairness, strongly influence adoption outcomes and the potential for human-AI synergies that require a design of effective and innovative processes to moderate the reliance on AI systems (Vaccaro et al., 2024). The role of the leadership in AI-driven organizations is to investigate the benefits, analyze potential challenges and resistance and development recommendations for management of the cultural transformation within the organization (Murire, 2024).

The continuous growth of remote and hybrid work intensifies these dynamics. Distributed work enhances autonomy and flexibility but also increases digital fatigue, weakens informal learning, and challenges social integration. Hence the factors influencing the performance of remote workers need to be considered and effectively managed. (Vizcaíno et al., 2025), together with the variables influencing the employee resources, motivation/engagement and well-being (Chuang et al., 2025). There is a high potential for enhancement of productivity through integration of AI in various industries and business areas, each of them with its specifics and challenges (Al Naqbi et al., 2024).

The Bulgarian IT sector provides a relevant context due to its strategic national priority for AI integration (Ministerstvo na transporta i suobshteniyata, 2020), its rapid expansion and international competitiveness (BASSCOM, 2024), widespread early adoption of remote/hybrid work (NSI, 2024), and increasing state, potential and business investment in intelligent automation (AI Chamber, 2025). IT companies are facing domestic (competition for talents and experts, lack of structuring competencies, increasing salary level) and external (international competition, more complex tasks, tighter delivery timelines and restricted budgets, projects in different industries) challenges that need to be met by the management to ensure sustainability.

Although previous research acknowledges the technological necessity of digital transformation, the behavioral component remains understudied despite becoming increasingly important in view of the increased competition for talents in the emerging yet rapidly advancing IT sector in Bulgaria.

The integrated model is designed to address this critical gap and answer the question of how AI adoption and remote work jointly influence employee behavior, and how could organizations sustain engagement, adaptability and consistently increase performance throughout transformation by applying change management, contributing to a more comprehensive and human-centered approach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational transformation in the IT sector in Bulgaria can be defined as a strategically driven process of structural and cultural change occurring under the influence of rapid technological development, market pressure and evolving work expectations (Holmström & Carroll, 2024). In IT it is being accelerated due to its unique characteristics – high innovation intensity and agility in projects, the need to stay ahead of technological advancements, remote work in international projects across multiple industries – and demands a strategic alignment of the AI adoption with the existing cultural values of the organization (Murire, 2004).

Even though the need for transformation is recognized and well understood by IT companies, its success is not predetermined and depends on a variety of social-economic factors. Research highlights that technology-driven change often fails when employee engagement, communication, and sense-making are neglected (Chuang et al., 2025). In that sense the transformation driven by the adoption of AI must be understood as a socio-technical phenomenon with human flexibility and organizational learning determining the outcome.

In Bulgaria, IT companies face additional pressures due to significant domestic competition for talent, global competition for clients and intense export orientation of services or products. Industry analyses reveal rising demand for adaptive structures, innovative HR practices, and investment in digital competences resp. widespread usage of AI – above 95% (BASSCOM, 2024). Thus, the Bulgarian IT context is a relevant empirical setting for investigating behavioral dimensions of transformation. This process is characterized by short innovation and project completion cycles, continuous capability renewal and high workforce interdependence and demands an ongoing identification, collection, screening and analysis of practices transforming the work processes, roles and professional relationships for the purpose of job crafting (Law & Varanasi, 2025). The success of the strategic change increasingly depends on human-technology alignment rather than unilateral technological upgrades with the efficiencies brought by the AI serving as job resources enhancing employee's engagement and work and life outcomes as a next step (Chuang et al., 2025). In Bulgaria, digital-intensive industries strengthen national competitiveness, but talent shortages and turnover risk remain significant barriers demanding innovative practices in employee branding, recruitment, performance evaluation and feedback, onboarding (incl. digital), training and development, data analysis, well-being and social responsibility (Peycheva, 2024).

In view of the above, employee behavior plays a central role in mediating the success of organizational change and must be purposefully shaped by transformational leaders. According to behavioral change theories, strategic initiatives lead to positive outcomes only in cases where people demonstrate synergies in collaboration with AI which, however, rely on specific task designs, quality constraints, incentives, process setups and well-defined performance evaluation metrics (Vaccaro et al., 2024).

Three behavioral dimensions are particularly relevant under technological disruption:

- Trust in change agents and technologies – affecting acceptance and adoption (Korzyński et al., 2024)

- Employee engagement – sustaining motivation during uncertainty (Vizcaíno et al., 2025)
- Experience influencing adaptability and learning orientation – enabling adjustment to new roles and processes (Peng et al., 2023)

Negative emotional reactions like fear of replacement by AI, perceived loss of competence, increased technostress, exhaustion or work-family conflicts can undermine the process if not actively managed. (Chuang et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding behavioral dynamics is critical for ensuring sustainability of transformational efforts.

Employees experience AI-driven changes emotionally and socially, not only rationally, and are results of subjective interpretations. For the purpose of the research, the following pathways can be highlighted:

Tab. 1. Behavioral Factors and Pathways

Factor	Positive Pathway	Risk Pathway
Trust in AI	Acceptance and empowerment	Algorithm aversion
Uncertainty about AI	Skill development and motivation	Resistance and stress
Engagement	Proactivity and creativity	Withdrawal
Adaptability	Learning agility	Burnout risk

AI transforms work design by automating tasks, augmenting decision-making and shifting skill requirements. It may accelerate productivity and creativity in business areas suitable for automation but has also the potential to amplify the uncertainty about the future professional identity. Recent research focuses on behavioral aspects and effects of the adoption of AI, with the following being amongst the key ones:

- Increased technostress when AI alters roles abruptly
- Trust dependencies requiring transparency and explainability
- Opportunities for enhanced innovation capacity through human-AI collaboration

The latter established AI both in the function as enabler and as a stressor, demanding new behavioral competencies and new leadership approaches to guide employees through the inevitable, strictly necessary and highly urgent transformation processes to retain competitive advantage.

There is evidence for shifting attitudes from negative to positive for people with rather closed than open mindset as they gained more information on the benefits associated with AI usage. The same holds true for employees with instrumental resp. questioning attitudes demanding rational proof and data on performance and reliability to be convinced in the value added and increase usage (Daly et al., 2025).

Digital leaders must consider the interdependency between technology (decision improvement and support, algorithmic transparency), organization (trust culture) and people (skills, motivation and training) to effectively leverage their business following a systematic approach for integration of AI in their structures, processes and tools (Tursunbayeva et al., 2024).

Transformation requires changes in skills and proper addressing of challenges and hurdles with obtaining those within a specified industry to close the gaps resp. balance the skillset of employees for a successful adoption of AI in their daily tasks. They can be divided into two main categories of equal importance (Babashahi et al., 2024):

- Technical (data analytics and visualization, language processing, programming skills, process automation, machine learning, data verification and security, scientific and technological proficiency, engineering and mathematical skills, statistics, IT management, chatbot development and prompting)
- Soft Skills (lifelong learning and growth mindset, adaptability, creativity, communication and interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, decision-making, critical thinking, leadership and cognitive, e.g. structuring, skills, social and emotional, physical and sensory skills)

There are widespread definitions and measures for workplace integration of AI in the literature ranging from organizational AI adoption (integration, utilization, demonstration of acceptance and support by leaders) and management (effectiveness, decision support, information gathering and analyses) to employee usage (interaction frequency, integration in daily routines, dependence on machines for operations, AI collaboration and assistance, AI crafting and engagement), perception (awareness, perceived insecurity, autonomy and potential ethical perceptions) and abilities (knowledge, literacy, self-efficacy and identity). Research can be supported by series of theories from different perspectives, with the main being (Jia et al., 2025):

- Resource perspective: conservation of resources theory, job demand-resource model, resource-based view model, cognitive approach to creativity, social support theory
- Stress perspective: transactional theory of stress, stressor-emotion model
- Cognitive perspective: attribution theory, social cognitive (career) theory, cognitive appraisal theory (of emotions), emotions as social information model, cognitive loa and rumination theories, theories of moral relativism, stereotype content model, social exchange theory, regulatory focus and self-regulation theories, role (identity) and self-efficacy theories, person-environment fit and ethical climate theories
- Motivational perspective: self-determination, self-affirmation and self-regulatory focus theories, proactive motivation model, approach-avoidance framework, social affiliation model, ability-motivation-opportunity theory

All above-mentioned can be used individually or combined to explain results of surveys and draw conclusions about dependencies and potential implications of certain behavior. For the purpose of the model outlined at the end of this section, theories may be grouped based on the variables (dependent and independent) and mediators used in the research to interpret or validate the results.

Remote work has become an integral part of IT organizational design, deeply influencing communication, connectedness and well-being and having both benefits and challenges regarding team collaboration (de Andrade et al., 2024) and therefore also

impacting and being impacted by the adoption of AI. This trend is extremely relevant for Bulgarian IT organizations that demonstrate some of the highest rates of remote and hybrid work adoption (NSI, 2024) and therefore included as a factor in future research.

Amongst the main advantages or benefits of remote or hybrid work are (based on Yordanova, 2020):

- Flexibility, autonomy and in many cases efficiency, e.g. ability to perform a larger amount of work for a shorter period (resp. in the most productive period for the individual)
- Better alignment with personal appointments and perceived better work-life balance
- New employment forms and potentially higher salaries resp. broader access to global labor markets

However, it also presents some risks (based on Yordanova, 2020 and Peycheva, 2020):

- Weakened informal communication and social identity and therefore less chances for knowledge transfer and learning from more experienced colleagues or guidance from the management or leadership team
- Increased coordination complexity
- Possible work-life boundary blurring and risk of overworking or unpaid extra work resp. lack of remuneration transparency
- Potential data security (shared with AI) and virtual identity issues
- Lack of employee self-discipline or skills to work in digital environments
- Need for additional investments in prequalification

At the same time, it acts as a prerequisite for some innovations (Peycheva, 2020):

- Changes in work styles, rules and processes (introduction of online platforms)
- Stress management and psychological well-being (sharing of personal information in remote meetings)
- Recruitment and selection (virtual job fairs, CV pre-screening and retention forecasting)

When combined with AI, remote work may shape management styles by amplifying both benefits and risks of digitalization and therefore needs to be accounted for as a factor when analyzing employee behavior (Nurski, 2025).

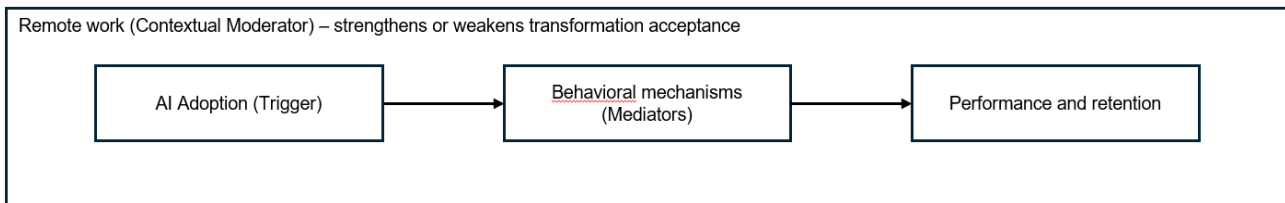
Based on the above considerations, an integrative framework is proposed for the research in which:

- AI adoption fundamentally changes the content and processes of work
- Remote work changes its context
- Behavioral and leadership responses mediate the organizational consequences

Remote work may moderate the effects of AI by strengthening or weakening employee attitudes towards teamwork and success, depending on perceived support and connectivity which are challenging to establish when team members work remotely (Vizcaíno et al., 2025).

The model is intended to highlight the behavioral mechanisms through which IT organizations in Bulgaria can successfully navigate digital transformation and adoption of AI and proposes the following design:

Fig. 1. Sample model design for research



The holistic view positions employees as active interpreters of change and not as passive recipients.

3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study will be to examine how AI adoption and remote work jointly influence behavioral outcomes of employees in the IT sector in Bulgaria. Potential focus areas will be trust in AI and its potential to increase performance and productivity, AI-related uncertainties (technological, organizational, and social), impacts on work engagement and employee adaptability as core mechanisms of digital transformation.

Sample research questions to be addressed (derived based on Yuan et al., 2025, Babashahi et al. but tailored to the objective of this study and the design of the above model), may be subject to further changes or enhancements:

- How do individual or group perceptions of AI affect behavioral outcomes among IT employees in Bulgaria?
- What is the relationship between remote work conditions and employee engagement and adaptability?
- How does remote work moderate the interdependence between AI-driven change and behavioral responses?
- How can transformational leaders respond to the specifics arising from both changes on an organizational, individual or group level to ensure efficiency and secure competitive advantage?

In order to examine the combined behavioral impact of AI adoption and remote work, on employees in Bulgarian IT companies, a mixed-methods research design is proposed, integrating quantitative analysis to test hypotheses statistically and qualitative methods like structured or semi-structured interviews to capture subjective experiences of transformation, and reveal any potential trends or specifics not derived from statistical approaches.

Tab. 2. Phases of the mixed-methods research

Phase	Method	Purpose	Output
Quantitative	Online survey	Testing theoretical relationships	Statistical evidence
Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	Exploring meanings and experiences	Contextual insights

The following hypotheses can be proposed (derived based on Filipelli et al., 2026, Korzyński et al., 2024, Vizcaíno et al., 2025, Chuang. 2025 but tailored to the objective of this study and the design of the above model), may be subject to further changes or enhancements:

- Trust in AI positively influences employee engagement and performance.
- AI-related uncertainty negatively influences employee engagement.
- Employee adaptability mediates the effect of AI perceptions on transformation outcomes.
- Remote work intensity moderates AI-behavior relationships such that positive effects become weaker and negative effects - stronger under predominantly remote work conditions.

In this model sample input resp. independent variables may be the perceived trust and uncertainties with the adoption of AI, output or dependent variables – the employee engagement, exhaustion, adaptability, motivation and performance/productivity, satisfaction, with the remote work levels/conditions (fully remote, fully in-office, hybrid resp. part remote, part in-office) acting as moderating variable in accordance with the previously outlined model (Vizcaíno et al., 2025). Age, gender, education (Korzyński et al., 2024), job tenure / experience, position / role (technical, operational, leadership), marital and children status, AI adoption duration, type of industry of an IT project (Chuang et al., 2025), the focus of IT (services or product company), organizational size, (lack of) management support / training, type of tasks (Vaccaro et al., 2024) represent potential control variables.

For all variables validated scales must be defined to support meaningful and statistically significant conclusions and computation of descriptive statistics. Sample scales depending on the types of variables and questionnaires designed based on those can be found in Chuang et al., 2025, Fillipelli et al, 2026, Korzyński et al., 2024. A widespread measure for statistical validity in the above-mentioned studies is Cronbach's alpha, supported by composite reliability and average variance.

Quantitative analyses can be performed using statistical software like SPSS or Orange, applying a correlation analysis for dependencies between variables or multiple linear regression for testing of hypotheses. Based on the results, clustering may be possible to determine the impact of AI adoption or remote work on specific groups, with some potential samples listed below:

- Experts using AI to gather, synthesize or analyze information who may or may not be willing to share experience, preferring to work individually or not (depending on remote work conditions?)
- Employees relying on AI technologies to save effort or perform tasks quicker disrespectful of the quality of results
- Employees trying to adapt to new technologies to increase their value
- Colleagues with lack of trust in AI capable of sabotaging or opposing change
- People scared of or overwhelmed by innovations and incapable of operating those whose expertise may be threatened by the adoption of AI and who may perceive job insecurity

- Young professionals with limited experience using the new technologies for any kind of tasks exposing them to risks of errors or overloading with unstructured information
- Types of leadership behavior: expecting quick results or promoting the usage of AI based on a well-defined strategy and analyses of the value added

The sample for the survey would consist of IT professionals in Bulgaria engaged in software development, integration of new technologies or provision of digital services or products who satisfy the following criteria: working in organizations registered and operating in Bulgaria, having at least six months' experience on the IT field, using AI (or AI-based instruments) for at least a part of their work activities and tasks, working remotely or hybrid at the time of the survey.

For the quantitative analysis, a sample of at least 400-500 respondents working in different companies and heterogeneous with respect to the variables being examined is targeted.

For the qualitative analysis (structured or semi-structured interviews) a sample of at least 15-20 professionals in different positions and with different work experience will be recommended to validate the quantitative findings, reveal new (subjective) behavioral aspects or trends.

For collection of quantitative data surveys (like the one used by the International Labour Organization, 2025) with closed questions will be compiled and distributed through internet or industry channels with participants providing informed consent. No personal identifiers will be collected to comply with GDPR regulations. The interview protocol is expected to include questions on emotional reactions to AI, collaboration and communication during remote work, perceived organizational support, identity and professional development. The interviews must be recorded or transcribed with permission of the participants. Full confidentiality and secure data storage will be ensured, together with an ethical handling of AI-related concerns (e.g. job insecurity).

4. DISCUSSION

The IT companies' landscape in Bulgaria is shaped by the rapid evolution of AI technology with wide applications and growing computational power with yet ambiguous future (Lazarova, 2024).

The focus of this paper is the examination of behavioral aspects of organizational transformation driven by AI adoption and remote work in the IT industry in Bulgaria. Findings from the literature indicate that the outcomes of the changes are shaped not only by the availability of advanced technologies and technical resources but primarily by employees' interpretations of what they mean for their daily work, autonomy and potential for future growth.

AI adoption provides opportunities for learning, collaboration, creativity and increase in efficiency of daily operations, yet its benefits can be fully realized only if employees trust AI supported decision making, are well informed about its advantages and potential risks, constantly validate its usefulness and feel prepared for the evolving role expectations. In

cases where transparency or training is insufficient or AI introduction happens without structured and conscious efforts of leadership, organizations and people, negative emotions such as uncertainty, anxiety, and loss of control may be triggered, undermining individuals' willingness to engage in new workflows.

Remote work plays a significant contextual role in shaping these behavioral mechanisms. Distributed collaboration improves flexibility and productivity for many IT professionals, yet it may also have negative impacts such as weakening of social belonging, introduces obstacles for informal learning and knowledge sharing which relies on easy access to peer support. These dynamics amplify the psychological effects of AI-driven change: positive interpretations may lead to innovation and motivation, while negative ones may prompt disengagement and weakened attachment to the organization.

An important question is whether the human-AI interactions and the perceived benefits and efficiency gains from it can compensate for the limited interpersonal relations and sharing of knowledge and experience amongst members of the same or different organizations. Overall, technology can act as a catalyst, but behavior is the medium of transformation and change management. Organizational success depends on sustaining engagement and adaptability, while minimizing uncertainty and resistance associated with automation and virtual work structures.

In terms of practical implications, organizations undertaking AI-enabled transformations should communicate clearly how AI changes tasks and decision making and authority, ensure participation of all members in the implementation process, provide continuous digital skill development, learning opportunities and feedback channels, strengthen psychological safety and recognition of effort, maintain high-quality communication and collaboration even in remote working environments, support leadership capabilities tailored to distributed teams.

Despite the intensive studying efforts on the field of AI and remote work, there is a wide range of potential future research directions such as AI's differential impacts across cultural and industrial contexts, spillover effects on employee non-work domains such as personal and family life, transformation of social dynamics and interpersonal relationships on the workplace, long-term dynamic impacts of AI on employees, on their careers and development (Jia et al., 2025).

5. CONCLUSION

AI may currently accelerate digital transformation, but the workforce ultimately determines whether it succeeds or fails. Hence organizations must not interpret behavioral support as an additional resource, but as a strategic prerequisite for resilient, innovative, and future-ready transformation of both management and employees.

Digital transformation in the IT sector is increasingly shaped by the interplay between the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and the rise of remote and hybrid work models. This study aims to provide empirical evidence that these developments are not merely technological adjustments, but profound cultural and behavioral shifts that reshape how people work, collaborate, and perceive the meaning of their professional roles.

The proposed integrative model must identify behavioral mechanisms that positively or negatively influence the success of transformation, offering leaders powerful insights and tools to shape the future of their organizations by preserving existing and identifying new competitive advantages and limiting the disadvantages. By examining trust in AI, AI-related uncertainty, employee engagement and adaptability, the model highlights how psychological responses mediate the impact of change. Moreover, the moderating role of remote work underlines the importance of organizational support, communication, and social connectivity in digitally distributed environments.

The Bulgarian IT sector, characterized by rapid growth and intense international competition for talent, offers a compelling context in which these dynamics can be observed. Organizations in this setting increasingly rely on technological innovation and flexible work structures to remain competitive, yet sustainable transformation ultimately depends on aligning technological change with human capabilities.

The main conclusion of this study is that technology may initiate transformation, but human behavior determines its success. Managers and policy makers must therefore approach digitalization not only as a technical upgrade or advancement, but as a behavioral and cultural evolution that requires continuous learning, trust-building, and support mechanisms tailored to employees' and organizational needs.

Future empirical investigation based on the proposed model is expected to provide evidence that can further refine theory and help derive short- and long-term strategies that secure engagement, adaptability and resilience in an AI-driven and remote-enabled future.

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