

**University of Wales Trinity Saint
David
School of Business and Management**

**Research Proposal Report:
Evaluating the Impact of Generative AI on
Productivity and Decision-Making in
Professional Services Firms
(A Mixed Methods Study)**

Module Name: **Business Research (BMMB7028D)**

Module Code: **(BMMB7028D)**

Date submitted: 28/6/2026

Student Name: **Richmond Galahardt**

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Evaluating the Impact of Generative AI on Productivity and Decision-Making in Professional Services Firms

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, fundamentally changing how organisations operate, compete, and create value. Recent advances in Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI), particularly large language models such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Gemini, Claude and other AI-powered productivity tools, have accelerated the adoption of AI within business environments. Unlike traditional automation technologies, Generative AI possesses the capability to generate human-like content, analyse complex datasets, support decision-making processes, automate knowledge-intensive tasks and facilitate organisational learning (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Professional services firms are among the sectors experiencing the most significant impact from Generative AI adoption. These organisations rely heavily on knowledge workers whose primary activities involve information processing, report preparation, analytical reasoning, problem-solving and client advisory services. Generative AI technologies are increasingly being deployed to support these activities (Brynjolfsson et al., 2023).

Industry reports suggest that AI adoption is accelerating rapidly across professional services organisations. According to McKinsey (2024), over 70% of organisations have now implemented some form of AI solution, while Generative AI adoption continues to expand across knowledge-intensive industries. Deloitte (2024) similarly reports that professional services firms are investing heavily in AI-enabled transformation initiatives aimed at improving productivity, reducing operational costs and enhancing service delivery.

Despite these developments, significant uncertainty remains regarding the actual organisational impact of Generative AI. While proponents argue that AI can significantly improve productivity, efficiency and decision quality, critics raise concerns regarding algorithmic bias, data privacy, transparency, workforce displacement and the erosion of professional judgement (Floridi and Cowsls, 2019). Furthermore, empirical research investigating the relationship between Generative AI adoption, employee productivity and decision-making remains relatively limited, particularly within professional services environments.

The rapid adoption of Generative AI highlights the need to understand both its organisational impact and employee experiences. This study evaluates the effect of Generative AI on productivity and decision-making within professional services firms using a mixed methods approach. The findings aim to provide evidence-based insights into AI adoption, governance and implementation, contributing to both academic research and business practice.

2. Background and Rationale

The emergence of Generative AI represents a significant development in digital transformation, enabling organisations to improve efficiency, innovation and competitiveness through advanced technologies (Vial, 2019). Unlike earlier technologies, Generative AI can create content, simulate human communication and support complex cognitive tasks. The release of ChatGPT in 2022 accelerated organisational adoption, prompting firms to explore new applications across knowledge-intensive functions.

Professional services firms are particularly affected because their operations depend heavily on intellectual capital and knowledge work. Activities such as financial analysis, auditing, legal drafting and consulting are increasingly supported by AI technologies capable of producing outputs traditionally requiring human expertise (Davenport and Kirby, 2016).

Research indicates that Generative AI can improve productivity and performance. Noy and Zhang (2023) found that AI-assisted employees completed writing tasks faster while maintaining or improving quality. Similarly, Brynjolfsson et al. (2023) reported higher efficiency and performance among AI users. However, concerns remain regarding overreliance on AI, reduced critical thinking and the accuracy of AI-generated outputs, particularly in regulated environments (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Professional services provide a valuable context for studying AI adoption because professionals are expected to exercise judgement, ethical reasoning and accountability. While AI may enhance efficiency, uncertainty remains regarding its impact on decision quality and professional judgement. Additionally, regulatory developments such as the European Union AI Act have increased emphasis on transparency, accountability and responsible AI governance.

This study addresses these issues by examining the relationship between Generative AI adoption, employee productivity and decision-making within professional services firms. Using a mixed methods approach, it seeks to generate evidence-based insights that support both academic understanding and practical implementation of responsible AI.

3. Research Aim and Objectives

3.1 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on employee productivity and decision-making within professional services firms and to explore the organisational factors influencing successful AI adoption.

3.2 Research Objectives

To achieve this aim, the study will pursue the following objectives:

1. To examine the extent to which Generative AI technologies are being adopted within professional services firms.
2. To evaluate the relationship between Generative AI usage and employee productivity.

3. To assess the impact of Generative AI on operational and managerial decision-making processes.
4. To investigate employee perceptions regarding the usefulness, trustworthiness and effectiveness of Generative AI tools.
5. To identify governance, ethical and organisational challenges associated with Generative AI implementation.
6. To develop recommendations for responsible and effective Generative AI adoption within professional services organisations.

4. Research Questions

Main Research Question

How does Generative Artificial Intelligence influence employee productivity and decision-making within professional services firms?

Sub-Research Questions

RQ1: What Generative AI technologies are currently being adopted within professional services firms?

RQ2: What relationship exists between Generative AI usage and employee productivity?

RQ3: How does Generative AI influence managerial and operational decision-making processes?

RQ4: How do employees perceive the usefulness, trustworthiness and effectiveness of Generative AI technologies?

RQ5: What governance, ethical and organisational challenges arise from Generative AI implementation?

RQ6: What strategies can organisations adopt to maximise the benefits of Generative AI while minimising associated risks?

5. Literature Review

5.1 Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) has emerged as a transformative technology with significant implications for organisational productivity, decision-making and performance (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Unlike traditional automation technologies, Generative AI can create content, analyse information and generate recommendations through advanced machine learning models. Professional services firms provide a particularly relevant context for studying these developments due to their reliance on knowledge-intensive activities. This literature review examines key themes relating to Generative AI adoption, digital transformation, productivity, decision-making, technology acceptance and AI governance, establishing the theoretical foundation for the study.

5.2 Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transformation

Digital transformation has become a dominant theme within contemporary business research. Vial (2019) defines digital transformation as a process through which organisations leverage digital technologies to improve operational performance, customer experiences and business models. Artificial Intelligence has increasingly been recognised as a central enabler of digital transformation because of its ability to automate processes, generate insights and support decision-making.

According to Davenport and Ronanki (2018), organisations primarily adopt AI technologies for three purposes: process automation, cognitive insight generation and customer engagement enhancement. These applications have expanded significantly with the emergence of Generative AI, which offers capabilities extending beyond traditional rule-based automation. Unlike previous technologies, Generative AI can create content, summarise information, support strategic analysis and generate recommendations in real time.

McAfee and Brynjolfsson (2017) argue that AI technologies represent a fundamental shift in organisational capability because they enable firms to process information more efficiently and make evidence-based decisions at unprecedented speed. Similarly, Bughin et al. (2018) suggest that AI adoption is becoming a strategic necessity for organisations seeking to maintain competitive advantage in increasingly dynamic markets. Recent research suggests that Generative AI is accelerating digital transformation initiatives by enabling knowledge automation and augmenting organisational decision-making capabilities (Cao, 2024; McKinsey & Company, 2024).

However, digital transformation initiatives frequently encounter organisational challenges. Kane et al. (2019) found that technological capability alone does not guarantee successful transformation. Organisational culture, leadership support, employee readiness and governance structures often determine whether digital transformation initiatives achieve intended outcomes.

Professional services firms face unique transformation challenges because their services rely heavily on human expertise, professional judgement and client relationships. Consequently, while

AI may improve efficiency, organisations must ensure that technological innovation does not undermine the quality and trust associated with professional services.

The literature therefore suggests that AI functions not merely as a technological tool but as a catalyst for broader organisational transformation. However, the extent to which these transformations enhance productivity and decision-making remains contested.

5.3 Generative AI and Employee Productivity

Productivity is a key determinant of organisational performance and competitive advantage, particularly within knowledge-intensive organisations where it is measured through the quality and efficiency of intellectual work (Drucker, 1999). Recent studies suggest that Generative AI can significantly enhance productivity. Noy and Zhang (2023) found that employees using ChatGPT completed writing tasks faster while maintaining or improving quality. Similarly, Brynjolfsson et al. (2023) reported higher productivity among AI-assisted employees, while emerging evidence indicates that these benefits are particularly evident in analytical and communication-based roles (PwC, 2024; Agarwal et al., 2024).

Generative AI improves productivity by automating repetitive cognitive tasks, accelerating information retrieval and supporting problem-solving and decision-making. Within professional services firms, AI is increasingly used for audit documentation, financial analysis, risk assessment, legal drafting, research and client communications, reducing administrative workloads and improving efficiency.

However, concerns remain regarding the long-term sustainability of these gains. Acemoglu and Restrepo (2019) argue that automation may limit opportunities for skill development and innovation, while Kasneci et al. (2023) suggest that excessive reliance on AI could weaken critical thinking and analytical capabilities. Consequently, although evidence supports productivity improvements through AI adoption, questions remain regarding its long-term impact on professional expertise and creativity.

5.4 Generative AI and Organisational Decision-Making

Decision-making is a critical organisational activity that influences strategy, performance and competitive advantage (Simon, 1977). AI increasingly supports decision-making by analysing large datasets, identifying patterns and generating recommendations, potentially improving decision quality through enhanced information processing (Shrestha et al., 2019).

Jarrahi (2018) argues that AI should augment rather than replace human judgement, enabling decision-makers to combine analytical capabilities with contextual understanding and professional expertise. However, concerns remain regarding the transparency and explainability of AI-assisted decisions. Many AI systems operate as “black boxes”, making it difficult for users to understand how outputs are generated and raising accountability concerns, particularly in regulated industries.

Research suggests that employees often struggle to determine when AI recommendations should be accepted or challenged (Bansal et al., 2021). This may result in automation bias, where users place excessive trust in AI-generated outputs. Consequently, while AI has the potential to improve decision quality, effective governance, human oversight and accountability mechanisms remain essential (World Economic Forum, 2024).

5.5 Technology Acceptance and AI Adoption

Understanding employee acceptance of technology is critical for successful AI implementation. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), remains one of the most widely used frameworks for explaining technology adoption behaviour.

According to TAM, user acceptance is influenced primarily by two factors:

1. Perceived usefulness.
2. Perceived ease of use.

When employees believe that a technology improves performance and is easy to use, they are more likely to adopt it.

Numerous studies have applied TAM within AI and information systems research (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000; Marangunić and Granić, 2015). Research consistently demonstrates that perceptions of usefulness strongly influence behavioural intentions to adopt emerging technologies.

While TAM provides valuable insights, critics argue that it oversimplifies technology adoption by focusing primarily on individual perceptions. Consequently, Venkatesh et al. (2003) developed the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which incorporates additional variables including social influence, facilitating conditions and organisational support.

UTAUT is particularly relevant within professional services environments where organisational culture, leadership support and peer influence often affect technology adoption decisions.

Both TAM and UTAUT suggest that successful AI implementation requires more than technological capability. Employee attitudes, trust and organisational support play critical roles in determining adoption outcomes.

5.6 Ethical and Governance Challenges of Generative AI

The rapid growth of Generative AI has generated significant ethical and governance concerns. Floridi and Cowls (2019) argue that responsible AI implementation should be guided by principles including transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy and human oversight.

One major concern involves algorithmic bias. AI systems are trained on historical data that may contain biases reflecting existing societal inequalities. Consequently, AI-generated outputs may unintentionally perpetuate discrimination or produce unfair outcomes.

Another challenge relates to data privacy and confidentiality. Professional services firms frequently handle sensitive client information, making data protection a critical consideration. The use of AI technologies raises concerns regarding how data is collected, processed and stored.

Intellectual property issues have also emerged as a growing concern. Questions remain regarding ownership of AI-generated content and the potential misuse of copyrighted materials during model training processes.

Regulatory developments such as the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act highlight increasing efforts to establish governance frameworks for AI deployment. These regulations emphasise risk management, transparency and accountability requirements for organisations adopting AI technologies.

Within professional services firms, governance challenges are particularly significant because professionals are expected to exercise independent judgement while maintaining ethical and regulatory compliance. Consequently, organisations must balance innovation with risk management and responsible AI practices.

Recent regulatory developments such as the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act seek to establish governance frameworks that promote transparency, accountability and risk-based AI implementation (European Commission, 2024).

5.7 Research Gap

Although the literature demonstrates growing interest in AI adoption, several important gaps remain.

First, much existing research focuses broadly on Artificial Intelligence and automation rather than specifically examining Generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot and Gemini.

Second, many studies concentrate on technological capabilities rather than organisational and behavioural outcomes. There remains limited understanding of how employees experience Generative AI adoption within professional services environments.

Third, existing studies frequently focus on either productivity or decision-making rather than examining both constructs simultaneously.

Fourth, much of the available evidence originates from technology firms or experimental environments rather than professional services organisations operating within regulated contexts.

Finally, relatively few studies utilise mixed methods approaches capable of capturing both measurable relationships and employee experiences.

This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the relationship between Generative AI adoption, employee productivity and decision-making within professional services firms using a mixed methods research design.

5.8 Conceptual Framework

Drawing upon TAM (Davis, 1989), UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003) and contemporary AI adoption literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which Generative AI adoption influences employee productivity and decision-making effectiveness.

The independent variables include:

- Frequency of AI use.
- Perceived usefulness.
- Perceived ease of use.
- Organisational support.

The mediating variables include:

- Employee trust in AI.
- AI competency.
- Governance controls.

The dependent variables include:

- Employee productivity.
- Decision-making effectiveness.

This framework provides the theoretical basis for the quantitative and qualitative components of the study and supports investigation of both behavioural and organisational factors influencing AI adoption outcomes.

6. Research Philosophy and Methodology

6.1 Introduction

The selection of an appropriate research philosophy and methodology is critical to ensuring that the research design aligns with the study's objectives and research questions. Research philosophy refers to the assumptions and beliefs concerning the nature of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and how knowledge can be acquired (Saunders et al., 2019). The chosen philosophical position influences methodological decisions, research strategies, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

This study seeks to evaluate both measurable outcomes associated with Generative AI adoption and the perceptions and experiences of professionals working within professional services firms. Consequently, a mixed methods approach is considered the most appropriate methodology because it allows the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

6.2 Research Philosophy

Pragmatism

This study will adopt a pragmatic research philosophy.

Pragmatism has become increasingly popular within business and management research because it focuses on practical solutions to real-world problems rather than strict adherence to a single philosophical perspective (Saunders et al., 2019). Pragmatists argue that the research question should determine the research methods rather than philosophical preferences.

Unlike positivism, which emphasises objective measurement and quantitative analysis, or interpretivism, which focuses on subjective meanings and qualitative understanding, pragmatism allows researchers to combine both approaches where appropriate.

The choice of pragmatism is justified for several reasons.

First, the study seeks to investigate measurable relationships between Generative AI usage and employee productivity. These relationships can be examined quantitatively using survey data and statistical analysis.

Second, the study also aims to understand employee perceptions, experiences, concerns and attitudes regarding AI adoption. Such insights require qualitative exploration through interviews.

Third, the topic of Generative AI adoption represents a complex organisational phenomenon involving both objective outcomes and subjective experiences. A pragmatic approach enables the researcher to draw upon multiple sources of evidence to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Finally, pragmatism aligns strongly with MBA research because it prioritises practical business implications and actionable recommendations for organisations.

6.3 Research Approach

Abductive Reasoning

This study will adopt an abductive research approach.

Traditionally, research approaches are categorised as either deductive or inductive. Deductive approaches involve testing existing theories, while inductive approaches focus on developing theory from observed data (Bryman, 2016).

However, contemporary mixed methods research increasingly adopts an abductive approach, which combines elements of both deduction and induction (Saunders et al., 2019).

The quantitative phase of this study will draw upon existing theories, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), to examine relationships between AI adoption and organisational outcomes.

The qualitative phase will then explore participant experiences and perceptions to provide deeper insights and explanations for the quantitative findings.

The abductive approach is therefore appropriate because it enables the researcher to move iteratively between theory and empirical evidence.

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Mixed Methods Research Design

The study will utilise a mixed methods research design.

Mixed methods research involves the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study to achieve a more complete understanding of a research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

The rationale for selecting mixed methods is based on several factors.

Firstly, Generative AI adoption involves both measurable organisational outcomes and subjective employee experiences.

Secondly, quantitative methods alone may identify relationships between variables but may not explain why those relationships exist.

Thirdly, qualitative methods alone may provide rich insights but may lack the ability to identify broader patterns and relationships across larger populations.

By combining both approaches, the researcher can benefit from the strengths of each methodology while mitigating their individual limitations.

7.2 Sequential Explanatory Design

The study will employ a Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design.

This design consists of two distinct phases:

Phase One – Quantitative Research

The first phase will involve collecting quantitative data through an online survey questionnaire.

The purpose of this phase is to:

- Measure Generative AI adoption levels.
- Examine productivity outcomes.
- Assess decision-making effectiveness.
- Identify relationships between key variables.

Phase Two – Qualitative Research

The second phase will involve semi-structured interviews.

The purpose of this phase is to:

- Explain survey findings.
- Explore employee experiences.
- Investigate organisational challenges.
- Examine governance and ethical concerns.

This design is considered particularly suitable because it enables quantitative findings to be explored and contextualised through qualitative investigation.

8. Research Design

8.1 Quantitative Research Design

The quantitative phase will adopt a cross-sectional survey design.

Cross-sectional surveys are widely used within business research because they enable researchers to collect data from large populations at a single point in time (Bryman and Cramer, 2011).

The survey will focus on measuring:

- AI adoption levels.
- Frequency of AI usage.
- Perceived usefulness.
- Perceived ease of use.
- Employee productivity.
- Decision-making effectiveness.
- Trust in AI.

The survey design is appropriate because it facilitates the collection of standardised data that can be analysed statistically.

8.2 Qualitative Research Design

The qualitative phase will utilise semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable for exploring attitudes, perceptions, experiences and behaviours because they allow participants to provide detailed responses while ensuring consistency across interviews (Leavy, 2020).

The interviews will explore:

- Experiences using Generative AI.
- Perceived benefits.
- Organisational challenges.
- Ethical concerns.
- Governance practices.
- Future expectations.

The flexibility of semi-structured interviews will allow participants to discuss issues that may not emerge through survey responses alone.

9. Population and Sampling Strategy

9.1 Target Population

The target population consists of professionals employed within professional services firms that have adopted or are currently using Generative AI technologies.

These organisations include:

- Consulting firms.
- Audit firms.
- Accounting firms.
- Risk advisory firms.
- Financial services consultancies.
- Technology consulting organisations.

Potential examples include Deloitte, PwC, EY, KPMG, Accenture, BDO and other specialist professional services organisations.

The population is appropriate because these organisations represent sectors where Generative AI is increasingly integrated into knowledge-intensive activities.

9.2 Sampling Strategy

The study will utilise a combination of purposive and convenience sampling.

Purposive sampling is appropriate because participants must possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding Generative AI technologies.

Convenience sampling will also be used because participants will be recruited through professional networks, LinkedIn, industry associations and organisational contacts.

This combined approach is frequently adopted within MBA-level business research due to practical access constraints.

9.3 Sample Size

Quantitative Phase

The proposed survey sample size is approximately 120–150 respondents.

According to Saunders et al. (2019), sample sizes within this range are generally sufficient for exploratory correlational analysis within postgraduate business research.

The sample size also aligns with online sample calculators using a 95% confidence level and acceptable margin of error.

Qualitative Phase

The qualitative phase will involve approximately 10–12 interview participants. This sample size is considered appropriate because qualitative research prioritises depth of understanding rather than statistical representativeness (Leavy, 2020).

10. Data Collection Methods

10.1 Primary Data Collection

Survey Questionnaire

The primary quantitative instrument will be an online questionnaire administered through Microsoft Forms or Qualtrics.

The questionnaire will contain:

Nominal Variables

Examples include:

- Industry sector.
- Job role.
- AI tool used.

Ordinal Variables

Likert-scale questions measuring:

- Perceived usefulness.
- Ease of use.
- Trust in AI.
- Productivity impact.

Ratio Variables

Examples include:

- Hours saved per week.
- Frequency of AI use.

The use of different measurement scales supports a wider range of statistical analysis techniques.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The second phase will involve virtual interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams.

Potential interview questions include:

- How has Generative AI affected your daily work activities?
- Has AI changed how decisions are made within your organisation?
- What benefits have emerged from AI adoption?
- What risks or concerns do you associate with Generative AI?
- What governance controls exist regarding AI usage?

Each interview is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes

10.2 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data will support triangulation and contextual understanding.

Sources may include:

- Academic journals.
- Industry reports.
- Professional publications.
- Regulatory guidance.
- Organisational AI policies.
- Government reports.

Examples include publications from:

- Deloitte.
- McKinsey.
- PwC.
- World Economic Forum.
- OECD & European Commission.

11. Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

Ensuring research quality is essential.

Quantitative Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement.

Standardised survey questions and established measurement scales derived from TAM and UTAUT will support reliability.

Cronbach's Alpha may be used to assess internal consistency.

Quantitative Validity

Validity refers to whether the instrument measures what it intends to measure.

Content validity will be enhanced through the use of previously validated constructs from established literature.

Qualitative Trustworthiness

The qualitative component will adopt Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria:

- Credibility.
- Transferability.
- Dependability.
- Confirmability.

These measures will strengthen the overall rigour of the study.

12. Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative Analysis

Survey data will be analysed using SPSS.

The following techniques will be utilised:

Descriptive Statistics

Used to summarise:

- Demographics.
- AI adoption patterns.
- Usage frequency.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation will be used to examine relationships between:

- AI usage and productivity.
- AI trust and decision-making effectiveness.
- Organisational support and adoption levels.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Regression analysis will be used to identify factors that most strongly influence productivity outcomes.

This aligns with the module emphasis on relational and inferential statistical analysis.

Qualitative Analysis

Interview data will be analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006).

The process will involve:

1. Data familiarisation.
2. Coding.
3. Theme identification.
4. Theme refinement.
5. Theme interpretation.

Potential themes include:

- Productivity enhancement.
- Human-AI collaboration.
- Trust and transparency.
- Governance challenges.
- Ethical concerns.
- Skills transformation.

Thematic analysis is appropriate because it enables systematic interpretation of participant experiences and perceptions.

13. Ethical Considerations

13.1 Introduction

Ethical considerations represent a fundamental component of business research involving human participants. Ethical research practice seeks to protect participant rights, ensure research integrity and maintain public trust in the research process (Saunders et al., 2019). Given that this study involves both survey respondents and interview participants, ethical approval will be obtained from the University Ethics Committee before any primary data collection commences.

The study will comply with the University's Research Ethics Policy, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and relevant professional research standards.

13.2 Informed Consent

Participation in both the survey and interview phases will be entirely voluntary.

All participants will receive a Participant Information Sheet outlining:

- The purpose of the study.
- The research objectives.
- Expected participation requirements.
- Potential risks and benefits.
- Data handling procedures & Withdrawal rights.

Participants will be required to provide informed consent before participating in the research.

For the survey phase, consent will be obtained electronically through the survey platform.

For interviews, participants will sign a digital consent form prior to participation.

13.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The study will ensure strict confidentiality and anonymity.

No participant names or organisational identities will be disclosed within the dissertation.

Instead, pseudonyms will be used throughout the reporting process.

Examples may include:

- Participant A
- Participant B
- Organisation X
- Organisation Y

Any identifying information will be removed from transcripts and datasets prior to analysis.

13.4 Data Protection and GDPR Compliance

The study will comply fully with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

Research data will be:

- Stored securely on password-protected devices.
- Encrypted where appropriate.

- Accessible only to the researcher.
- Retained in accordance with university policies.

Participants will be informed regarding:

- What data is being collected.
- Why the data is required.
- How long the data will be retained.
- Their rights concerning personal information.

All personal data will be destroyed following completion of the research and university retention requirements.

13.5 Avoidance of Harm

The study is considered low risk.

However, there remains potential for participants to experience discomfort when discussing organisational AI adoption practices, governance concerns or workplace experiences.

To minimise risk:

- Participation will remain voluntary.
- Participants may refuse to answer questions.
- Participants may withdraw at any stage.
- Interview questions will avoid unnecessarily sensitive topics.

The researcher will remain mindful of potential professional sensitivities throughout the data collection process.

13.6 Ethical Considerations Relating to Artificial Intelligence

Given the nature of the research topic, additional ethical considerations arise regarding AI technologies themselves.

The study will critically consider issues such as:

- Algorithmic bias.
- Data privacy.
- Transparency.
- Explainability.

- Accountability.
- Responsible AI implementation.

The research will not seek access to confidential organisational AI systems or proprietary data.

Instead, the focus will remain on participant experiences and perceptions of Generative AI adoption

14. Research Limitations

All research contains limitations that may influence findings and interpretation.

Recognising these limitations enhances transparency and research credibility.

14.1 Sampling Limitations

The study utilises purposive and convenience sampling, which may limit generalisability.

Participants will primarily be recruited through professional networks, LinkedIn and industry contacts.

Consequently, the sample may not fully represent all professional services organisations.

However, the purpose of the study is exploratory and explanatory rather than achieving statistical representation of an entire industry.

14.2 Self-Reported Data

The study relies heavily on participant self-reporting.

Participants may:

- Overestimate productivity improvements.
- Underreport challenges.
- Provide socially desirable responses.

To mitigate this limitation, data triangulation will be achieved through combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

14.3 Rapid Technological Change

Generative AI technologies continue to evolve rapidly.

New tools, capabilities and regulatory requirements emerge frequently.

Consequently, findings may become partially outdated as technology develops.

However, this limitation is common within technology-focused research and highlights the need for ongoing investigation.

14.4 Access Constraints

Professional services firms often operate within highly regulated and confidential environments.

Obtaining access to participants may therefore prove challenging.

The study addresses this limitation through broader recruitment strategies across multiple organisations rather than relying upon a single case organisation.

14.5 Researcher Bias

Qualitative research may be influenced by researcher interpretation.

To minimise bias:

- Interview protocols will be standardised.
- Coding procedures will be documented.
- Reflexive notes will be maintained.
- Findings will be supported by participant quotations where appropriate.

These measures will enhance transparency and trustworthiness.

15. Resource Implications

The proposed study is expected to require relatively modest financial resources.

Most resources required are readily accessible through the university and professional networks.

15.1 Research Resources

Resources required include:

Academic Resources

- Access to academic databases.
- Journal subscriptions.
- Electronic books.
- Industry reports.

Technology Resources

- Microsoft Teams.
- Qualtrics or Microsoft Forms.
- SPSS software.
- Microsoft Excel.
- NVivo (if available).

Data Storage Resources

- Secure cloud storage.
- University-approved storage systems.

15.2 Financial Resources

Expected costs include:

Item	Estimated Cost
Survey Platform	£0–£50
Interview Recording Software	£0
Transcription Software	£50–£100
Printing and Administration	£20
Miscellaneous Costs	£50
Total Estimated Cost	£120–£220

15.3 Time Resources

The most significant resource requirement from me will be time.

Particular attention will be required for:

- Literature review development.
- Survey distribution.
- Interview scheduling.
- Data analysis.
- Dissertation writing.

Effective project planning will be essential for my dissertation.

16. Proposed Research Timeline

The study is expected to be completed over a twelve-month period.

Activity	Months
Topic Refinement and Proposal Development	Month 1
Literature Review Development	Months 1–3
Research Design Finalisation	Months 2–3
Ethical Approval Submission	Month 3
Survey Development and Pilot Testing	Month 4
Survey Distribution	Months 4–5
Survey Analysis	Month 6
Interview Participant Recruitment	Month 6
Semi-Structured Interviews	Months 6–7
Interview Transcription and Coding	Month 8
Thematic Analysis	Months 8–9
Findings and Discussion Chapters	Months 9–10
Dissertation Drafting	Months 10–11
Final Review and Submission	Month 12

The timeline provides me sufficient flexibility to accommodate unforeseen delays while ensuring completion within the dissertation period.

17. Conclusion

Generative Artificial Intelligence has emerged as one of the most significant technological developments shaping contemporary business environments. Professional services firms are increasingly adopting AI-powered tools to improve efficiency, enhance decision-making and strengthen competitive advantage. However, despite widespread adoption, important questions remain regarding the actual organisational impact of Generative AI, particularly in relation to employee productivity, professional judgement and governance.

The literature reviewed within this proposal demonstrates that while Generative AI offers considerable opportunities for productivity enhancement and decision support, significant challenges remain concerning trust, transparency, ethical use and organisational implementation. Existing research has largely focused on technological capabilities and experimental settings, creating a need for further empirical investigation within real-world professional services environments.

This study seeks to address these gaps through a mixed methods research design grounded in a pragmatic philosophy. By combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interview insights, the research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Generative AI adoption, employee productivity and decision-making effectiveness.

The proposed study is expected to contribute to both academic literature and business practice by providing evidence-based insights into how professional services firms can effectively and responsibly implement Generative AI technologies. The findings may assist organisational leaders in balancing innovation with governance while supporting the development of sustainable AI adoption strategies.

Ultimately, the research aims to contribute to the growing discourse surrounding AI-enabled business transformation and provide practical recommendations for organisations seeking to maximise the benefits of Generative AI while mitigating associated risks.

18. Reference List

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