



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

**Transformational Leadership in the Age of Organisational
Disruption: Balancing Human-Centric Values and
Technological Adaptation**

Module: Visions for the Future - Theoretical Perspectives on
Management (LCDB7008)

Module lead: Dr. Helen Lee

Student Name: Mahmuda Aktar Chowdhury

Student Id: 2511849

Abstract:

This dissertation explores the role of transformational leadership in facilitating digital transformation in UK banks and financial services and preserving the well-being of staff, ethical conduct, and organisational culture. A pragmatic and abductive approach that involved thematic analysis was used to analyse secondary evidence and find that there were consistent patterns in adoption, well-being, and governance literature. The results suggest that perceived value, ease of use, and enabling conditions are important to sustained technology use, whereas continuous change may enhance digital transformation stress and technostress. The indications also point towards the fact that the effectiveness of leadership involves motivational assistance as well as accountability, which is backed up by responsible governance practices of data-intensive and AI-enabled processes. A plan is suggested to implement these insights in a sequence of measurable actions.

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1. Introduction

Banking and financial services exist where the digital technologies are advancing at a rate that cannot be matched by many systems of managing it. Digital transformation is also associated with transformations in the way banks work and make decisions, such as the increased use of analytics and data-driven decision making (Kronke and Laulitz, 2022). This transformation is seen in mobile banking systems, online onboarding, self-service, and artificial intelligence in risk management and fraud detection. These changes can enhance efficiency and customer experience but they also accelerate change among employees and managers.

The digital transformation is not technical only. It also needs the organisational culture, skills, and leadership to change, which define how transformation results in value (Cao et al., 2025). This is important in banks as service quality and trust rests on regular operations, a well-defined accountability, and dependable risk management. Leaders also have to lead change and assist employees in coping with uncertainty and the learning requirements posed by new systems (Tsekouropoulos et al., 2025).

A major requirement of success is adoption. According to technology acceptance research, usefulness, ease of use, and supportive conditions like training and resources determine adoption (Chang, 2012). Where such conditions are poor, banks can invest in technology and get minimal productivity, quality, or customer results. The theoretical concept of leaders in the context of technology digital transformation of the banking industry is the transformational leadership framework by Bass and Riggio (2010), which is combined with the Technology Acceptance Model (Chang, 2012).

Digital change might also put pressure on employees during implementation. A study constructed and tested a digital transformation stress scale, and demonstrated that the transformation process can turn into a unique stressor in the workplace in cases when a project is extended and uncertainty remains in the air (Makowska Tlomak et al., 2023). Another term is technostress, which is the strain associated with the use of technology and the demands of technology-related work. There is evidence that digital leadership can lessen adverse effects by influencing the experience of the employees and the ability to manage technology-driven requirements (Farmanesh et al., 2025).

This is significant in banking since long-term strain may impair attention, learning and consistency of services.

Transformational leadership is applicable as it focuses on a common vision, motivation, new thinking, and personal support. A systematic review also associates transformational leadership with the performance of a firm and points at the ability building and innovation as possible directions (Agazu et al., 2025). It is also possible that transformational leadership facilitates flourishing at work, and this is important when employees need to be introduced to new systems and change the ways of working (Lin et al., 2020).

Digital disruption further complicates the situation since leaders need to be both fast and accountable. Ethical risks such as privacy, bias, poor transparency, and unclear accountability can be made through data intensive systems and emerging tools. Responsible generative AI guidance highlights the necessity of responsible governance and human oversight (World Economic Forum, 2023). Another way of leaders affecting the results of innovation is by providing strategic direction and facilitating cultures, which allow exploration and adoption (Wang et al., 2022). This dissertation thus concentrates on transformational leadership, technology adoption and responsible governance insights to create a practicable solution to the issue of digital transformation in banking and financial services.

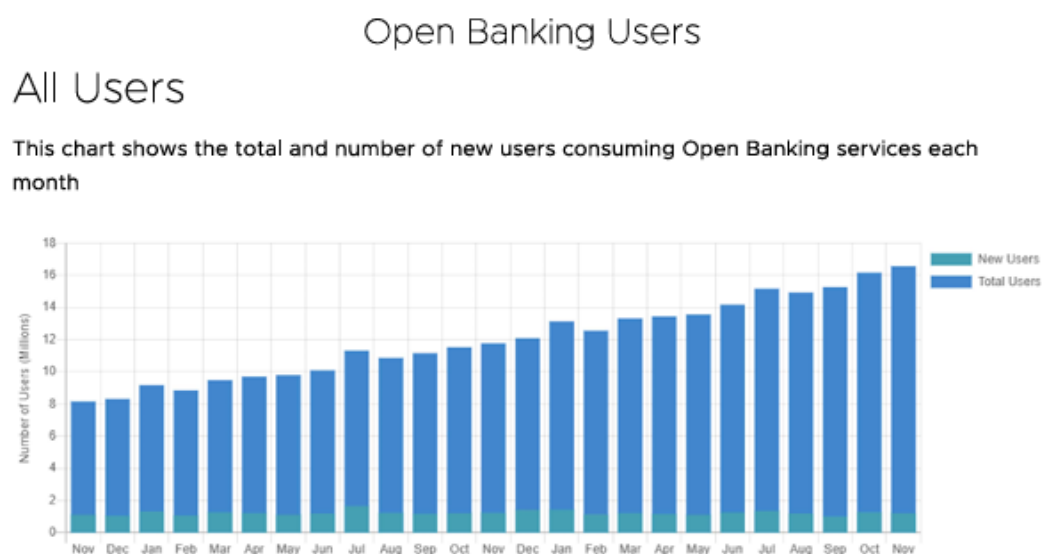


Figure 1.1: Open Banking user growth in the UK, monthly trend up to November 2025.

Source: Open Banking Limited (2025)

The total Open Banking users are projected to hit about 17 million by November 2025, which implies a fast-moving pace of ecosystem adoption. The trend reinforces the strategic argument of change in the banking industry and justifies the research interest in the behaviours of leaders that help maintain adoption without jeopardising the wellbeing of employees and organisational culture.

1.2 Problem statement

Numerous banking and financial services organisations invest in digital transformation yet fail to realize sustainable benefits as employees are under the strain, feel uncertain and lack trust in the implementation process. Stress related to digital transformation is associated with sudden digital change and the lack of certainty about results (Makowska Tlomak et al., 2023). The use of data driven and generative systems by banks without clear governance and accountability increases ethical risks (World Economic Forum, 2023). The main issue here lies then in an issue of leadership. Leaders should introduce technological change in a manner that facilitates adoption without compromising employee wellbeing, ethical practice and healthy organisational culture.

1.3 Aim

The study seeks to understand how transformational leadership can assist organisations to react to technological disruption and negotiate the well-being of employees, business ethics, and the existing organisational culture.

1.4 Objectives

- To examine the role of transformational leadership in facilitating organizational change under the conditions of disruption.
- To analyze how technological development affects organizational design and management practices.
- To evaluate the role of human-focused leadership principles in the integration of technologies.

- To suggest a leadership model that combines transformational leadership and technological adoption.

1.5 Research questions

1. How can transformational leadership assist in facilitating technological change and at the same time retain employee wellbeing, ethical practice, and organisational culture?
2. What determines employee acceptance and continued use of new digital systems in the transformation?
3. What are the leadership practices that can decrease technology-related stress and enhance trust throughout implementation?
4. What is the way to integrate these insights into a viable and measurable leadership solution to modern organisational change?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research will be valuable to the banking and financial services sector by providing an evidence based method of digital transformation in terms of employee wellbeing and adoption. It will assist leaders to connect the superficial behaviours of transformational leadership with realistic conditions of adoption such as training and support that are familiar in influencing the use of technology (Chang, 2012). The research will also reinforce responsible practice in line with the expectations of clear governance and human oversight in implementation (World Economic Forum, 2023). The main stakeholders are bank executives, transformation leaders, human resource teams, compliance and risk functions, frontline staff and customers who require reliable and fair services.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The research aims at digital transformation in banking and financial services with particular interest in retail banking, digital banking and fintech-based models of service provision. It explores transformational leadership, adoption of technology, stress and wellbeing of employees and responsible governance in implementation. This research is secondary based whereby it is conducted using scholarly literature and reputable industry sources found within the internet. This is the line that is needed to stay focused on the modern transformation and pertinent leadership

practice. It lacks primary data collection and statistical testing, which can justify an appropriate and viable research design.

1.8 Research Gap

Recent studies on transformational leadership, technology adoption, technostress, and ethical governance are frequently presented in distinct streams, which restricts its practical relevance to leaders of digital change in the banking industry and financial services. This research fills the gap by incorporating these areas as a single applied model that promotes adoption without compromising employee wellbeing and responsible practice.

1.9 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 2 provides literature investigation of transformational leadership, technology acceptance, digital transformation stress, technostress, digital leadership, and responsible governance.

Chapter 3 contains a description of the methodology applied to collect and analyse evidence, the way of selecting and analysing sources and design limitations.

Chapter 4 provides findings and discussion in which the research questions are revealed and results are related to existing debates.

Chapter 5 outlines an action plan that transforms the suggested solution into reality, backed by a well-designed change process to lead to organisational adoption (Kotter, 2024).

Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of key contributions, limitations, management practice and future research recommendations.

2. Literature review

2.1 Digital disruption and digital transformation in banking and financial services

The digital disruption in the banking sector is determined by changing customer demands, growing competition among fintech and big tech companies, and the fast development of data-intensive technologies in products and operations (Carbo Valverde et al., 2020). The firms have transformed onboarding, service delivery, payments, and customer engagement into digital channels, which alters not only the service model but also the operating model internally (Osei et al., 2023). One of the recent trends in banking literature is that digital transformation is not a single technology project. It is a long-term organisational renewal process and involves coordinated strategy, process, capabilities and culture changes (Naimi Sadigh et al., 2021).

Annual summary of payment statistics 2024									
Inter-Bank and Inter-Branch Transactions									
		Volume (000s)			Value (£millions)				
		2023	2024	Change 2024 on 2023	2023	2024	Change 2024 on 2023		
Bacs	Direct Credits	1,953,536	1,871,513	-82,023	-4.2%	4,200,635	4,352,507	151,872	3.6%
	Direct Debits	4,827,292	4,939,796	112,505	2.3%	1,432,942	1,485,946	53,004	3.7%
	Total	6,780,827	6,811,309	30,482	0.4%	5,633,577	5,838,453	204,876	3.6%
CHAPS ^(a)	Non-wholesale (pacs.008)	38,943	40,081	1,138	2.9%	24,429,103	23,571,266	-857,838	-3.5%
	Wholesale Financial (pacs.009)	12,200	12,652	452	3.7%	67,046,444	63,908,665	-3,137,780	-4.7%
	Total	51,144	52,733	1,589	3.1%	91,475,548	87,479,930	-3,995,617	-4.4%
FPS ^(b)	Forward Dated Payments	408,467	412,344	3,877	0.9%	1,017,210	1,148,422	131,212	12.9%
	Return Payments	4,696	5,421	725	15.4%	3,951	4,303	352	8.9%
	Single Immediate Payments	3,692,371	4,274,967	582,596	15.8%	2,594,959	2,965,085	370,126	14.3%
	Standing Order Payments	393,821	395,716	1,896	0.5%	127,144	124,570	-2,575	-2.0%
	Total	4,499,355	5,088,449	589,094	13.1%	3,743,264	4,242,380	499,116	13.3%
ICS ^(c)	Cheques (RTPs)	112,033	93,357	-18,675	-16.7%	165,127	130,025	-35,102	-21.3%
	Credits (ITPs)	3,426	2,636	-790	-23.1%	18,838	19,939	1,101	5.8%
	Total	115,459	95,994	-19,465	-16.9%	183,965	149,964	-34,000	-18.5%
Total		11,446,785	12,048,484	601,699	5.3%	101,036,353	97,710,727	-3,325,626	-3.3%

Figure 2.1: UK interbank and inter-branch payment volumes and values, 2023 to 2024

Source: Pay.UK (2024)

The total transaction volume grew to 11,446,785 to 12,048,484 (000s) in 2024, which shows that the payment activity has been growing. This helps the disruption context because it indicates an increasing operational demand that enhances the leadership need to balance the change in technology with consistent delivery and risk control.

It is also found that banks encounter recognizable obstacles in the process of transformation. Interviews with the heads of banks point to barriers associated with strategy and management, regulation, old systems, and the difficulty of involve employees and customers in change (Diener and Spacek, 2021). This is necessary since banking is an industry of trust where reliability, compliance and risk controls are as significant as speed and innovation. This usually creates tension between experimentation and stability needed by banks to operate safely. This is one of the reasons why transformation initiatives provide uneven results in business units and groups of employees (Garg and Kumar, 2024).

The other important aspect is that disruption is not technology only. It is institutional and behavioural as well. Governance needs and supervisory expectations define banking and affect the choice of digital tools, their adoption, and their management (Crisanto et al., 2024). This background helps in arguing that leadership is core since leaders determine priorities, allocate resources, communicate acceptable risk and influence what employees think the organisation cares about in change.

2.2 Technology adoption and sustained use in digital banking transformation

One thing that is constant throughout technology adoption studies is that the success of the implementation will be determined by the perception of the user of the system, confidence in its use and real organisational support (Chang, 2012). The Technology Acceptance Model theory elucidates that actual usage behaviour relies on intention to use a system that is formed by the concept of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. It applies to banking transformation since leadership is able to control these perceptions based on system design choices, training and observable support that facilitates less effort and more perception of value (Chang, 2012).

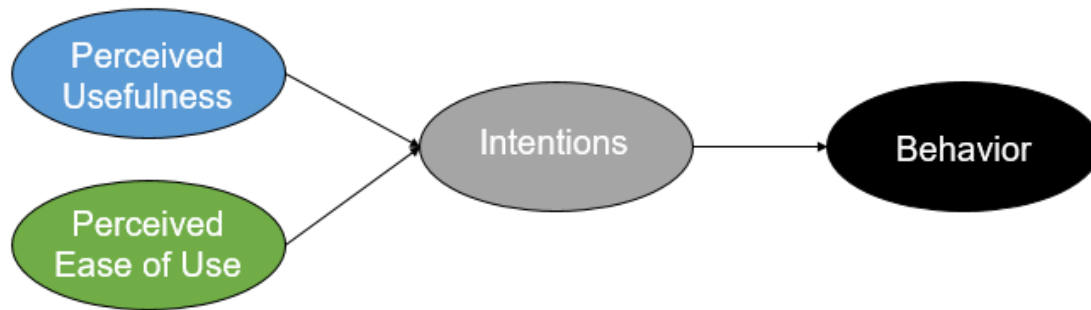


Figure 2.2: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) the path between beliefs and technology use

Source: Chang (2012)

This is made more difficult in the banking sector, as employees are supposed to achieve performance targets and at the same time learn new systems, adapt to new workflows and observe compliance standards. When digital tools make the job more complex or perceived lesser control, adoption may be superficial where the employees only use the systems to the least level demanded.

Digital banking research indicates that adoption is not a staff problem alone as the customer behaviour influences internal pressure. To illustrate, there is evidence on customer digitalisation indicating that awareness of user groups and digital maturity is critical in channel strategy planning and avoidable friction in the shift to digital services (Carbo Valverde et al., 2020). This relates to organisational adoption since frontline personnel usually deal with customer rage, security issues and service extraordinary on rollouts, in the process of straining and lowering change confidence.

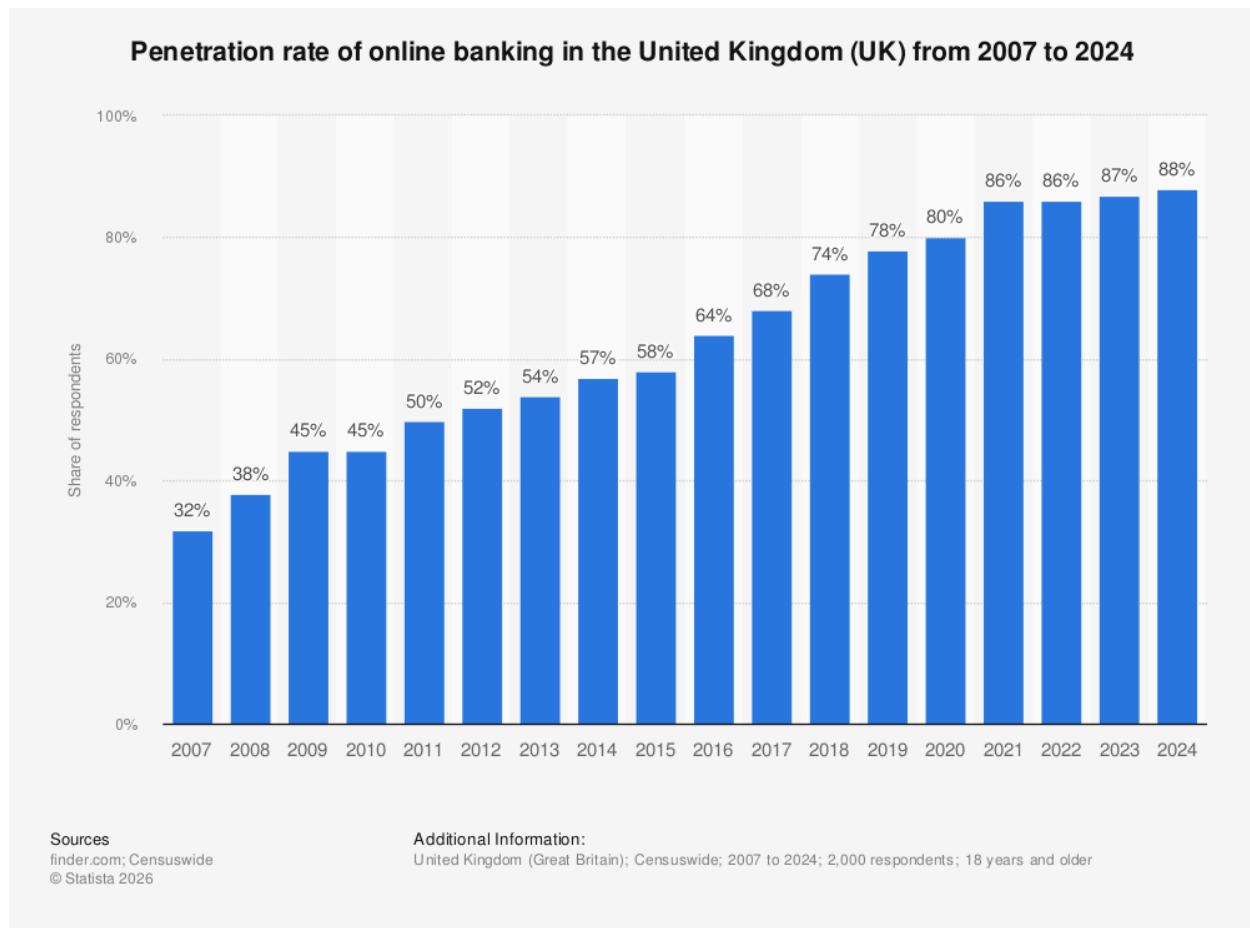


Figure 2.3: Online banking adoption in UK, 2007-2024.

Source: Finder (2025), *Digital banking statistics 2025*

Long term consumer banking adoption of digital means online banking penetrates between 32 (2007) and 88 (2024). This justifies technological adjustment and strengthens the leadership issue of perpetual change and managing to retain trust, well-being, and ethical practice.

The importance of trust, security, and risk perception in digital finance usage is also another study's highlight. Mobile banking work findings demonstrate that the adoption intentions and actual use are impacted by security beliefs and institutional trust, which has implications on the way banks communicate and support new services (Apau et al., 2025). Practically, this implies that transformation is not merely a matter of usability. It is also based on the consistency with which

the bank can prove responsible data management and credible service delivery (Alalwan et al., 2017).

One weakness of the banking adoption literature is that the intention models are frequently proposed, and the conditions of organisational sustainability of use are not adequately analysed. Banking changes are not usually a one-time introduction. They include constant upgrades, process redesign and transformation of controls. This implies the necessity of linking adoption models to leadership and organisational design choices that affect employee capacity, time pressure and support.

2.3 Employee wellbeing: technostress and digital transformation stress

Experience among employees is a major vulnerability in most transformation initiatives. Digital transformation stress has been theorised and quantified as a distinct stressor at work that is associated with the continuous change, uncertainty, and cycles of technology implementations (Makowska Tlomak et al., 2023). This applies particularly in the banking sector where change is usually done simultaneously in channels, products and systems of compliance. Stress is a result of continuously changing without being clear and supported and it may lead to poor learning, attention and consistency of service delivery.

A related lens is given in technostress. It is the stress due to technology demands like overload, complexity, invasion of personal time, and insecurity regarding skills or job security. Banking employees indicate that techno stressors lower wellbeing, and that wellbeing damage may be precluded by presence of technostress inhibitors like training support and involvement (Hang et al., 2021). This can lead to a pragmatic conclusion that the experience of employees ought to be a design concern and not an afterthought of banks.

Nevertheless, there are still critical holes. In other studies of technostress, the outcome used is wellbeing or performance, but they do not provide much information to how leaders can redesign work to enable digital tools to relieve workload instead of add to it. The focus on stress as an individual coping problem, as opposed to a leadership and governance problem is also present. This is dangerous in banking since employees under stress are likely to make mistakes in high risk processes like onboarding checks, fraud monitoring, and complaint handling. A stronger solution

connects stress management with leadership judgments regarding pacing, the ability to build, and open communication.

2.4 Transformational leadership and leadership in digital contexts

The concept of transformational leadership is much debated as an approach in leadership that promotes change based on the support of vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised support. Broad organisational research indicates that transformational leadership is linked to better performance of firms via dynamic capability and innovation (Agazu et al., 2025). Transformational leadership is associated with flourishing at work at employee level, in part due



to the ability to define how employees make sense of demands and whether they perceive work as a challenge or a threat (Lin et al., 2020).

Figure 2.4: Transformational Leadership Theory and the Four components

Source: Agazu et al. (2025)

The four elements give a systematic prism through which the leadership behaviours influence employee motivation, learning, and adaptation in digital transformation in UK banking. This

directly contributes to the dissertation subject of the issue of balancing human-centric values and technological adaptation in the time of disruption.

In the case of banking transformation, its applicability is practical. Digital implementations demand that the employees learn, experiment, and adapt, which is based on psychological safety and purposeful support. This can be assisted through transformational leadership by helping to make sense, learn, and reward effort in transition. It can also be associated with the concept that digital change demands not just system change but also culture change (Diener and Spacek, 2021). The fact that digital leadership is used to influence digital orientation and digital culture is also supported by digital leadership research (Wang et al., 2022).

The most important issue is that in some cases, transformational leadership is offered as a universal solution. In banking, control, discipline, and compliance must also be maintained by the leadership. This poses a danger in case the leaders overemphasize inspiration and deemphasize governance, workload management, and role accountability. Traditional organisational literature implies that leaders could fall into foreseeable traps that include driving change without considering defensive routines and underlying contradictions in the organisation (Argyris, 2010). This supports the importance of considering transformational leadership as a necessity and not a sufficient. It has to be integrated with operational and ethical protections that are appropriate in the banking setting.

2.5 Ethical risk and responsible governance in AI-enabled banking

Advanced analytics, machine learning, and generative AI are areas of digital transformation in banking. These tools can enhance detection of fraud, customer service, and performance, whilst creating ethical and governance risks like privacy breaches, bias, poor explainability and accountable ambiguity (Crisanto et al., 2024). According to the Presidio recommendations, responsible development, human control, and collaboration between cross stakeholders in generative AI governance is underlined (World Economic Forum, 2023). The NIST AI Risk Management Framework of risk is also based on the importance of risk identification, risk measurement, and risk control, which are organized throughout the AI lifecycle (NIST, 2023).

Governance is not a choice in banking. It is a concern of regulators how current model risk and operational risk frameworks relate to AI and machine learning, particularly in credit and risk models (EBA, 2022). This demonstrates the importance of leadership. Ethical practice is not a policy statement only. It is made real by everyday choices on access of data, surveillance, escalation, and the opinion of employees as to whether they are safe to report issues. Culture is also relevant. Literature on national and organisational culture cautions that values are what inform the interpretation of risk, uncertainty and power thereby impacting ethical behaviour in practice (Hofstede et al., 2010).

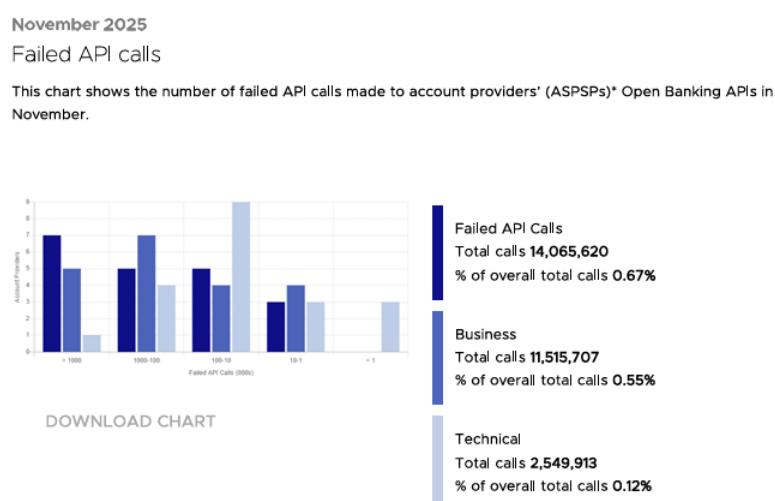


Figure 2.5: The breakdown of failed Open Banking API calls and the type of failure, November 2025

Source: Open Banking Limited (2025)

November 2025 recorded 14,065,620 failed API calls, which is 0.67 percent of the total calls and 0.55 percent business failures, and 0.12 percent technical failures. This helps emphasize attention on trust and governance since reliability and failure management are included in responsible transformation, and business failures are not necessarily a technology failure, but a quality issue in a process or data.

One of the limitations in some parts of the responsible AI literature is that it focuses on principles without balancing how leaders turn principles into workable routines. The leaders in banking require practical structures such as role clarity, monitoring, escalation, and training that both promote conformity and learning. Complexity based organisational thinking states that a leader must anticipate nonlinear impacts and unintended impacts on complex systems particularly where both technology and human behaviour interplay (Stacey, 2011). This reinforces the argument of a leadership model that incorporates adoption, wellbeing, and governance instead of considering them in isolation.

2.6 Synthesis and critical implications for this dissertation

Three lessons run across the literature. To begin with, digital transformation in the banking sector is limited by both a technical and social aspect, and staff is one of the central mechanisms that help realise value (Diener and Spacek, 2021). Second, adoption is conditional on perceived value and support, which the leaders can affect by means of the resources, communication and work design (Chang, 2012). Third, they are not side effects of stress and ethical risk. They can be predicted in case of rapid transformation and weak governance (Makowska Tlomak et al., 2023).

Fragmentation is the major limitation of current research. Perception and intention are common to adoption models, research tends to emphasize the outcomes without redesigns, and research tends to remain on a principle level in ethical governance. This dissertation counters this by combining these streams into a viable leadership solution to banking and financial services with transformational leadership being the driving force of behaviour and responsible governance being the boundary condition that safeguards trust and fairness.

Literature stream	Key insight	Leadership implication
Digital transformation in banking	Transformation is a change of working model influenced by non-technological impediments (Diener and Špaček, 2021).	An emphasis on alignment of processes, roles and control activities with new digital ways of working, instead of viewing change as an installation of a system
Technology adoption	The Uptake is based on the perceived usefulness and ease of use, together with enabled conditions (Chang, 2012).	Provide training, time, and practice to make use of the routine.
Transformation stress and technostress	The change that is continuous can lead to stress and a decrease in learning and consistency (Makowska Tłomak et al., 2023).	A planned strategy to control speed and difficulty, and enhance employee assistance.
Transformational leadership	Vision and personal support may enhance adaptation and building of capacity (Agazu et al., 2025).	A balance between encouraging direction and role expectations based on learning and equitable performance management
Responsible AI governance	The application of AI needs to be regulated and monitored by humans to minimize harm and gain trust (NIST, 2023).	Clarity of governance that allows levels of oversight, monitoring and resulting in implementation.

Table 2.1: Summary table of key literature streams and implications for banking

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research philosophy and approach

The research is placed in a pragmatic research philosophy, since the aim is to create a practical solution to the leadership problem to a real banking transformation issue instead of empirically testing one causal theory. Pragmatism embraces the use of research that integrates theory and practice to yield useful results to organizations (Gulliver et al., 2020). It takes an abductive approach, alternating between the known theory and evidence in the sector to clarify explanations and create a workable framework (Tavakoli et al., 2017).

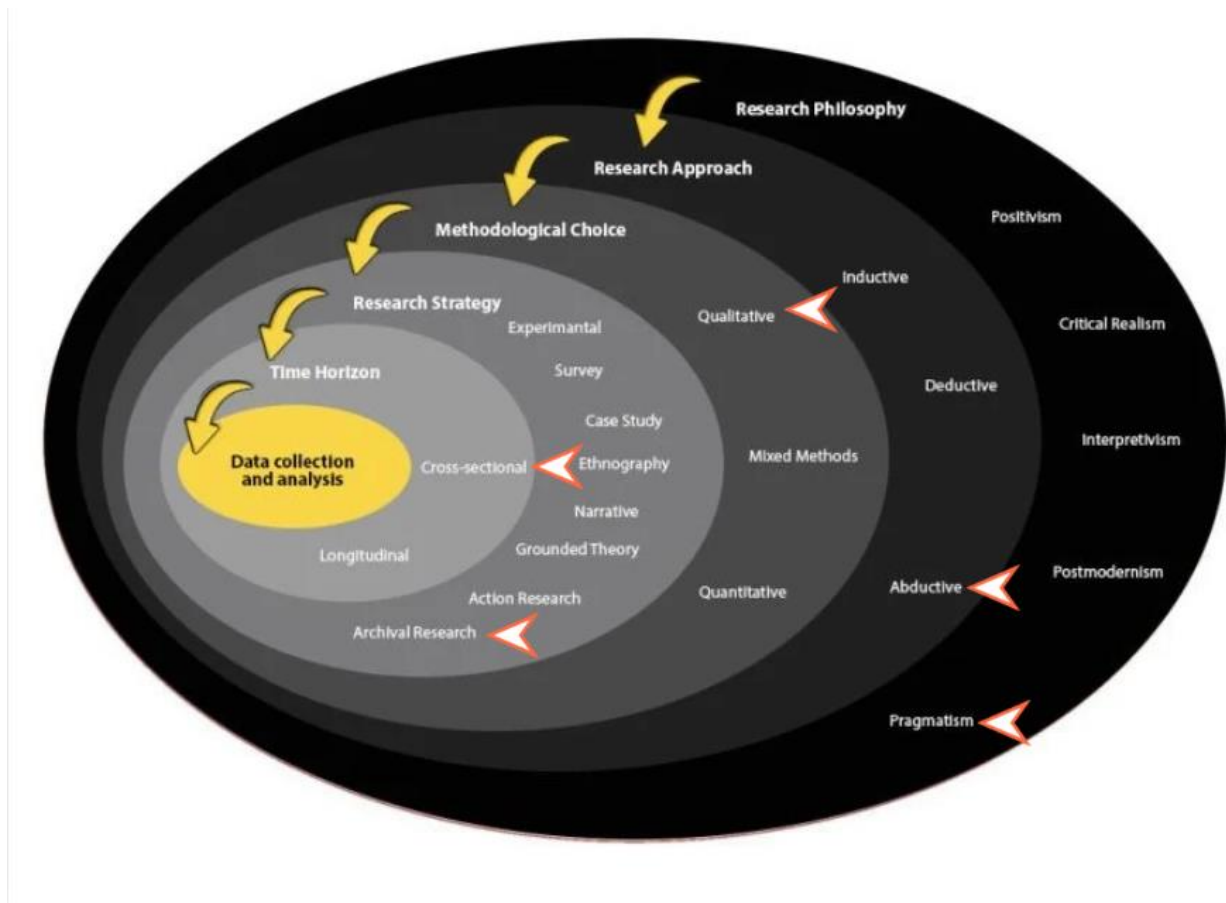


Figure 3.1 The research onion

Source:(Saunders et al; 2019)

3.2 Research design

The framework is an integrative literature research and a focused document analysis as a structured secondary research study. This is suitable when the aim of DBA work is evidence-based problem solving and model development with no primary data collection. The review addresses banking and financial services in the United Kingdom, where industry reporting and policy, publicly available sources of governance demands and pressures on digital adoption are evident.

3.3 Data sources and selection criteria

As a discovery tool, Google Scholar was employed to find peer-reviewed sources. The search of academic sources was mainly via Google Scholar by combining the terms transformational leadership, digital transformation, banking, technology adoption, technostress, employee wellbeing, and responsible AI governance. The selection criteria were: recent years of publication, relevance to banking and financial services, and direct connection with at least one of the main constructs in the dissertation scheme. Other policy and industry-related documents were consulted where they offer authoritative advice on governance and operational risk in digital banking, like PRISMA style reporting guidance to review transparency and public sector ethics guidance to use secondary data. (Page et al., 2021)

3.4 Data analysis approach

PRISMA 2020 principles were followed in the screening and reporting in order to ensure transparency in the identification, inclusion, and summarisation of evidence. The sources included were analysed through a thematic analysis method, where the coding was based on the frequent explanations of adoption success, leadership behaviours, stress drivers, and governance controls (Page et al., 2021). Thematic analysis has been considered trustworthy through explicit documentation of coding choices and the development of themes. (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.5 Development of the conceptual leadership framework

The conceptual leadership framework was constructed on a synthesis of 4 streams of evidence. To begin with, the leadership behaviours related to vision, motivation, learning support, and individual consideration were structured using transformational leadership theory. Second, the theory of technology adoption informed the factors that determine continued use of the system as usefulness, ease of use, and organisational support. Third, predictable strain points amidst the continuous change were identified using evidence of technostress and digital transformation stress (Chang, 2012). Fourth, practical controls were defined using responsible governance sources to determine accountability, monitoring and escalation in data-intensive systems. The results were then converted to actionable leadership activities and implementation factors applicable to the UK banking settings (NIST, 2023).

3.6 Validity, credibility, and trustworthiness

The triangulation of peer-reviewed research and high-quality institutional sources, such as government and recognised standards bodies enhanced credibility. Reliability was implemented with auditing of search terms, decisions of inclusion and coding process. Credibility was also enhanced through the application of set rules of vigorous thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.7 Ethical considerations

The paper is based on secondary sources that are published and does not include human subjects or data gathering. Ethical practice is ensured by proper citation, proper use of copyrighted materials, and consideration of the terms that go along with any secondary dataset or figures. This strategy was informed by university advice on secondary data ethics (University of St Andrews, 2024).

3.8 Limitations of the methodology

The key weakness is the lack of primary data, which limits the possibility of direct testing of relationships within a particular bank. Results also depend on the UK banking setting and might have to be adapted to other regulatory settings.

3.9 Chapter summary

The approach is based on a pragmatic, abductive, secondary research design in order to synthesise the evidence and create a banking-relevant conceptual leadership framework. The results, discussion and plan of implementation are credibly based on transparent review procedures and thematic analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter contains the results of secondary evidences and how the evidences could point to leadership practice in the UK banking and financial services. It is analysed through the methodology of Chapter 3, with thematic analysis of peer-reviewed articles and reliable sources on the UK sector, to establish patterns associated with the research questions, and especially adoption, wellbeing, ethical practice, and organisational culture. (Nowell et al., 2017)

4.2 Digital disruption and digital transformation in banking and financial services

The data always demonstrates that UK banking disruption is motivated by channel shift, ecosystem reliance, and the increase in expectations of reliability. Digital transformation is thus not a project but a continuous operating model transformation that impacts processes, roles and controls (Diener and Spacek, 2021). This fact is supported by the UK payment statistics that indicate that the payment activity is still growing, which puts more pressure on operations without transformation work yet (Pay.UK, 2024). This pressure is only worsened by Open Banking adoption which increases customer and third-party reliance on bank systems and data-sharing arrangements (Open Banking Limited, 2025)

These pressures have leadership implications that are not about technology delivery. One key finding is that banking transformation has an impact on the pillars of trust, such as uniformity of services, accountability, transparency, and fairness perceptions (Rodrigues, Oliveira, and Rodrigues, 2023). Here, the leadership has to strike a balance between the rate of adaptation and stability, as instability can rapidly become customer harm and conduct risk (Feyen et al., 2021).

Indicator	UK evidence	Leadership relevance for digital transformation
Retail payment system demand	The amount of the interbank and inter-branch payment volumes grew between 11,446,785 to 12,048,484 (000s) between the 2023 and 2024.	The demand also creates a necessity of stable processes and clarity of operations accountability in the event of transformation.
Open Banking ecosystem adoption	The total number of open bank users reached 17 million by November 2025.	The expansion of adoption makes the customer more dependent upon it and enhances the organisational need to be reliable in delivery and consistent in internal capability.
Digital service reliability pressure	In November 2025, 14,065,620 failed API calls, which is 0.67% of the total calls	Patterns of failure buttress the argument of leadership focus on monitoring, escalation culture and ownership of the operational risk.
Long-term online banking adoption	In Great Britain, the use of internet banking went up by 30% (2007) to 76% (2020)	Extensive adoption creates demands on digital convenience and introduces a level of pressure on change at both frontline and back-office jobs.

Table 4.1: UK sector indicators supporting the disruption context and leadership relevance

Sources: Pay.UK (2024); Open Banking Limited (2025); ONS (2020).

4.3 Technology adoption and sustained use in digital banking transformation

One such issue is that the success of adoption is related to the perceived value, perceived ease, and the enabling conditions like time, training, and support. Nevertheless, the data also indicates that banking changes tend to be partially adopted, whereby tools are utilized on the entry-level level of utilization whilst the experienced staff continues to use workarounds, as the latter is more comfortable and quicker (Chang, 2012). This is typical where change is making things more

complex or cutting perceived control particularly in parallel change in more than one system (Diener and Spacek, 2021).

The theme of trust keeps being cited as a requirement to continue using digital finance. We are not only influenced in adoption by the usability but also by the confidence in security, reliability and responsible usage of customer information. It is very applicable to UK banking as the customer journeys mostly include identity checks, consent management, and data sharing across third parties (Apau et al., 2025). The evidence suggests that leadership influences adoption in terms of work design and priorities, especially the space to learn and unnecessary friction in new workflows (Chang, 2012).

One critical aspect is that not all the literature on adoption has yet moved past intention models, whilst long term usage in banking requires anticipation of long-term operation conditions, including workload, exception handling and the permanence of supporting processes. This confirms the point that adoption needs to be discussed as a leadership and operating model issue, not a system implementation issue (Feyen et al., 2021).

4.4 Employee wellbeing: technostress and digital transformation stress

The evidence suggests that the stress during the transformation is not an accident, but it may even become a characteristic feature of the ongoing change. The stress of digital transformation is associated with uncertainty, persistent project load, and continuous breakage of routine. Simultaneously, technological stress studies indicate that technology-based pressures may decrease well-being, especially in cases when workers feel overworked, complicated, and less in control (Makowska Tlomak et al., 2023) (Hang et al., 2022).

This is important in banking since wellbeing is related to attention, learning and consistency of service. Prolonged strain may hence be a working risk not merely a people problem. It has also been shown that through the support conditions such as clarity, resources, and practical coping mechanisms, leadership can mitigate the negative outcomes. Empowerment and literacy support as examples of technostress inhibitors may lessen the pernicious impacts and enhance well-being, indicating that leadership decisions in training design and participation processes are focal (Hang et al., 2022).

4.5 Transformational leadership and leadership in digital contexts

Throughout the evidence, transformational leadership behaviours are again and again linked to greater readiness to change and more positive employee experiences, especially when change necessitates learning and adaptation (Agazu et al., 2025). The value of vision clarity and motivation is supported in the literature, but it is also noted that individualised support and learning orientation is especially important when employees are exposed to new systems and changes in the role expectations (Lin et al., 2020).

One of the key findings is that transformational leadership is not often enough in the banking transformation. Banking organisations need motivation and regulation since accountability, compliance and risk discipline are structural provisions of the industry. The evidence indicates that the effectiveness of leadership in the state of disruption is conditional upon the motivating direction and role expectations synthesis, constant escalation paths, and equitable performance control adjusted to learning curves (Agazu et al., 2025). This allows supporting Research Question 1 by stating that human-centric leadership is not independent of performance and control, but a prerequisite of sustainable adoption.

Besides the transformational leadership behaviours, the evidence also concurs with the structured change leadership styles that facilitate the implementation in disruption. Kotter's 8-Step Change Model offers a working conceptual framework in comprehending how the transformational intent can be converted into long-term organisational activity. The reliance on urgency, guiding coalition development, and change sequencing promotes the effectiveness of leadership in technological complexity, regulatory constraint environments (Kotter, 2014).

The model especially applies to the digital transformation of banking where the systematic implementation of new technologies should be harmonized with staff preparedness, learning ability and trust. The results imply that in case leaders focus on coalition building, clarity in communication and reinforcement mechanisms, technological change may be more inclined to stay on track with human-centred values and stability of operations. In this respect, the Kotter model is an extension of transformational leadership as it provides discipline in implementation and does not override relational or motivational leadership behaviours.

4.6 Ethical risk and responsible governance in AI-enabled banking

Data intensive systems and growing use of AI increase ethical risks and governance risks in the banking transformation, such as privacy risks, bias, limited transparency, and unclear accountability (Crisanto et al., 2024). Governance guidance focuses on oversight, monitoring, and specified responsibility of AI-enabled decision-making processes, which are in line with banking auditability and outcome defensibility requirements (NIST, 2023).

Evidence also indicates that leadership behaviour makes governance practical (Lim, 2024). The culture of escalation, role clarity and discipline in monitoring governance controls are either working or not (Batoool, Zowghi and Bano, 2025). Accountable generative AI oversight emphasizes the multi-stakeholder responsibility and control by humans, which boosts the argument of leadership concern on decision rights and control ownership as opposed to focusing on technical merit alone (World Economic Forum, 2023). This has supported Research Question 4 by suggesting that an effective leadership solution must entail ethical safeguards to be incorporated into implementation schedules.

4.7 Cross-section synthesis and integrated interpretation

Three of the combined findings are the most consistent across five streams of evidence. To begin with, workload, perceived control and learning support are connected to adoption and well-being. In a work environment where change load is high and there is a lack of support, plurality of adoption is superficial and leads to tension (Makowska Tlomak et al., 2023). Second, trust relies on service reliability as well as ethical governance. Accountability is strengthened by reliability and weakened by weak accountability, even though tools can be used to achieve the goals (Open Banking Limited, 2025). Third, transformational leadership facilitates motivation and flexibility, although it has to be supplemented by operating model clarity and governance discipline in banking (Agazu et al., 2025).

These results also indicate trade-offs that must be conscious leadership decisions especially speed vs. stability, innovation vs. control, and automation vs. accountability. The data indicates that more successful results are achieved when change is slow and careful of learning ability and when the

governance is a subset of change leadership instead of a distinct compliance action (Crisanto et al., 2024).

4.8 Implications for the conceptual leadership framework

The results determine the design needs of the conceptual leadership framework. The support of adoption needs to have transparent usefulness stories, training, and support pathways at rollout (Chang, 2012). Protection of well-being entails dealing with the ongoing load of change and growing perceived control by engaging in and role clarity (Hang et al., 2022). Governance requirements entail the specified accountability, tracking habits, and data and AI utilization escalation (NIST, 2023). Learning orientation and personal support are necessary in culture and capability building, which is consistent with transformational leadership behaviours that facilitate long-term adaptation (Lin et al., 2020).

Framework element	Design requirement derived from findings	Supporting source
Adoption support mechanisms	Effective enabling conditions such as training, allocation of time, and visible support to entrench long term use.	Chang (2012)
Wellbeing protections	Minimization of overload and ambiguity by role clarity, participation and coping support.	Hang et al. (2022)
Governance and ethical safeguards	Clear Accountability, monitoring, and escalation of AI and data-intensive processes.	NIST (2023)
Culture and capability building	Adaptation and trust Learning orientation and individualized support to strengthen adaptation and trust.	Lin et al. (2020)
Banking operating model alignment	Change leadership combined with expectations of risk control and stability of the service.	Diener and Špaček (2021)

Table 4.2: Design requirements for the conceptual leadership framework derived from the findings

4.9 Chapter summary

The evidence shows that the UK banking disruption is guided by the growing digital use, ecosystem reliance, and reliability demands. Adoption is determined by perceived value and enabling conditions, whereas continued use is determined by trust and manageable routines of operation. Employees are at risk, such as digital transformation stress and technostress, which affect performance and adoption and need leadership consideration in terms of pace, support, and perceived control. Transformational leadership facilitates motivation and learning but in the banking context it should be coupled with accountability and governance discipline (Rodrigues, Oliveira and Rodrigues, 2023). The following chapter translates these findings into an implementation plan and a working leadership framework with actions, roles, measures and review points.

Chapter 5: Implementation Plan

5.1 Purpose and implementation logic

The transforming conceptual framework of leadership into practice in UK banking and financial services needs to be developed into a practical implementation plan. It is still managerial and organisational, and the decision on implementation has three evidence-based requirements. The first need involves long-term adoption, the perceived value, perceived ease, and enabling conditions influence the implementation of digital tools into the daily working life (Chang, 2012). The second need is related to the capacity of the employees as a long-term change may cause stress that inhibits learning and stability (Makowska Tlomak et al., 2023). Third is the issue of accountable governance as the information-intensive and AI-enabled processes establish accountability and risk expectations in financial services (Crisanto et al., 2024)

5.2 Change model and programme governance

Kotter eight-step change process is a structured change sequence that reinforces urgency, coalition building, communication discipline and reinforcing complex change programmes. There has been evidence of practical value in the application of Kotter process by viewing the steps as a guide framework and not a checklist. A guiding coalition enhances the programme governance by having a representation of business operation, frontline management, transformation leadership, risk and compliance, human resource, and data and technology functions. (Pollack and Pollack, 2014) Cross-functional representation is important in banking as the terms of adoption, customer experience, and control expectations are placed between these groups. (Diener and Spacek, 2021).

5.3 Phased implementation activities

The first stage deals with a sense of urgency and strategic framing. The rationale to support a credible case of change is based on customer channel shift, ecosystem dependency, and operational demand, and the sector indicators like UK payment activity are used to tie the narrative in banking realities. There is a second step, which relates to the formation of a coalition and role clarity, where

decision rights and lines of escalation are established early to maintain the operating model stability in the rollout phase (Pay.UK, 2024). The third step is related to vision and communication, in which the transformation story establishes the connection of technology change to reliable services, customer trust, and ethical data treatment.

The fourth stage deals with the reduction of barriers by adoption support. Protected learning time, specific task training, available help channels, and local champions should be enabled conditions, as they influence the use of a system over time and minimise the use of workarounds. The presence of a wellbeing lens is needed here as transformation stress may be increased by constant cycles of delivery and uncertainty. Some further protection is facilitated by technostress inhibitors, including supportive supervision, clear expectations, and participation in change decisions, which have a positive correlation with wellbeing in demand-driven by technology (Hang et al., 2022).

A fifth stage is short-term wins, which indicate progress without controls being weakened. Banking-appropriate measures encompass rework reduction, exception rate reduction, better turnaround time on target processes, and adoption depth indicators such as core functionality use instead of partial use. A sixth step is related to consolidation via iterative rollout, standardisation of working practices, and capture of learning between releases. The last step relates to anchoring into culture using formal routines, performance expectations in line with learning curves, and accountability of responsible practice.

5.4 Monitoring and evaluation indicators

Assessment must indicate adoption, wellbeing and governance results. Adoption indicators may consist of consistency of use, fewer manual workarounds, and fewer errors in the transformed process. Indicators of well-being may also comprise pulse measures that are associated with change load and perceived control, alongside support requests trend and over time in rollout periods. Governance indicators may also encompass reported responsibility of high impact AI enabled uses cases, evidence tracking, and archives of escalation of concerns associated with fairness, privacy, transparency, or reliability. The NIST AI Risk Management Framework is an effective guideline that can be used to structure monitoring and control throughout the system lifecycle (NIST, 2023).

5.5 Chapter summary

A governance conscious and sequenced implementation plan aids the transfer of transformational leadership to long-term practice in UK banking transformation. Enabling adoption, protecting wellbeing, and proper governance offer the fundamental implementation needs that position the leadership structure to operational testing and inspection.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Purpose

This chapter brings a conclusion of the dissertation by summarising how the evidence answers the aim, objectives, and research questions as well as elucidating the practical contribution to the leadership of UK banking and financial services.

6.2 Conclusion

The first inference is that digital disruption in UK banking is sustained operating model pressure and not a technology event. The evidence suggests that the dependency of the ecosystem, customer digital demands, and reliability demands raise the leadership imperative of maintaining the balance between the speed of adaptation and service stability, accountability, and trust. It demonstrates that leadership is at the centre of preservation of organisational culture and discipline in control in the face of disruption (Diener and Spacek, 2021).

A second conclusion is related to long-term adoption. According to acceptance research, perceived usefulness, perceived ease, and enabling conditions influence the embedded systems in routine work. As per (Chang (2012), the circumstances of banking transformation indicate that the poor enabling conditions cause shallow adoption and workarounds, thereby compromising productivity and operational risk. The conditions of adoption are manageable by leadership decisions in work design, training and support.

The third conclusion is on wellbeing as a performance and risk issue. During current change programmes, digital transformation stress may emerge as a clear and lasting stressor at work. There is evidence on technostress that supports and involvement lessen adverse impacts on wellbeing

(Makowska Tlomak et al., 2023). It implies that well-being protection enhances learning, consistency, and service quality in banking (Hang et al., 2022). So, in doing so it reinforces the human-centric focus in the title.

The fourth conclusion is on ethical practice and governance. Guidance in the banking industry shows that the use of AI enhances risks, including model risk, data governance risk and gaps in accountability, which intensifies oversight and control as to be documented. Pragmatic governance frameworks also pay attention to lifecycle tracking and definite responsibility of risk management (Crisanto et al., 2024). It demonstrates that an effective leadership solution would need governance safeguards included in the implementation, not considered as an independent compliance activity (NIST, 2023).

6.3 Overall contribution and link to implementation

An applied contribution is drawn using an integrated position bridging transformational leadership behaviours with adoption support, well-being protections, and governance discipline in UK banking transformation. A disciplined change process offers implementation rigour and assists the practice of leadership will into ordered organisational action (Pollack and Pollack, 2014). Implementation plan is thus a pragmatic foundation of assessment in the form of measurable indicators, role clarity, and monitoring routines in line with the banking expectations.

6.4 Limitations of the study

This paper relies on secondary evidence, and it lacks primary evidence of a particular banking organisation. This means that the results lack an element of causal relationships and assessing the suitability of the leadership model in practice. The concentration on banking and sources in the UK can also restrict the transferability to other regulatory settings. However, the restrictions are also in line with the applied, exploratory goals of DBA research and offer a base of further empirical analysis.

6.5 Recommendations for practice and future research

Practically, bank leaders must approach digital transformation as a continuous operating model challenge, not a time-bound programme (Diener and Špaček, 2021). Adoption support, workload management, and institutionalised governance routines should be given priority in the leadership attention at the same level as technology delivery (Chang, 2012). The suggested framework also provides some organized ground on which change actions are sequenced, well-being and risk indicators are tracked, and accountability is upheld throughout the implementation process.

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