

Independent Project

LCBB6014

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Project Proposal Structure

Research Title

From Automation to Strategic Intelligence: Exploring the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Developing Project Management Capabilities

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Artificial intelligence (AI) supports project planning, forecasting, risk assessment and decision-making (Bainey, 2024). However, adoption alone does not create sustained organisational capability; value depends on human judgement, governance and organisational learning (Kanabar and Wong, 2023). This study defines strategic intelligence as the capacity to convert AI-supported information into informed decisions, reusable knowledge and adaptive action. This distinction matters because organisations may invest in AI tools without developing the governance and learning routines needed to transfer benefits across projects.

1.1 Research Aim

To critically examine AI's contribution to project management capabilities, from operational automation towards strategic intelligence.

1.2 Research Objectives

- To examine the development of AI's role from automation to strategic decision support.
- To evaluate its contribution to decision-making, organisational learning and adaptive capability.
- To identify conditions enabling or constraining AI-supported capability development.
- To distinguish operational improvement from sustained strategic value.

1.3 Research Questions

- How has AI's role developed beyond project automation, and to what extent does this support strategic intelligence?
- How may AI support decision-making, organisational learning and adaptive capability?
- Which conditions enable or constrain AI-supported capability development?
- To what extent does existing evidence demonstrate sustained strategic value rather than operational improvement?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

AI use is expanding, but evidence of sustained strategic capability remains limited (Ritala et al., 2024).

2.1 From Operational Automation to Strategic Intelligence

AI has expanded from routine administration to forecasting and decision support (Bah Esseme et al., 2025), but creates strategic value only when aligned with organisational strategy (Hofmann et al., 2020).

2.2 AI and Project Management Capability Development

AI may support decisions and learning through pattern recognition and the reuse of project knowledge (Bainey, 2024). However, isolated gains cannot demonstrate persistent capability, cross-project transfer or adaptation (Ritala et al., 2024). This distinction is important because repeated organisational learning, rather than a single improvement, indicates whether AI-supported knowledge becomes transferable capability across projects over time.

2.3 Organisational, Technological and Human Conditions

Data quality, governance, leadership, expertise and process integration shape outcomes (Nieto-Rodríguez and Vargas, 2023). Human judgement remains necessary under ambiguity, challenging technology-centred explanations of value (Highsmith, 2026).

2.4 Operational Improvement versus Strategic Value

Evidence prioritises productivity, forecasting and administrative efficiency. However, much of this evidence relies on self-reported benefits from active adopters, so associations between AI use and performance should not be interpreted as causal (Project Management Institute, 2024a, 2024b). These outcomes indicate immediate usefulness, not sustained organisational change. Varying definitions of capability and strategic value restrict comparison and obscure whether benefits arise from AI, organisational readiness or project context. The literature therefore does not explain when operational improvements become sustained project management capabilities, establishing the central research gap.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The study combines the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, avoiding assumptions that AI adoption alone creates strategic value.

3.1 Resource-Based View

Applied here, RBV treats AI as a resource whose value depends on complementary knowledge, skills, governance and processes (Bainey, 2024).

3.2 Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Dynamic Capabilities Theory explains how resource integration, organisational learning and adaptation develop AI capability (Ritala et al., 2024).

3.3 Proposed Conceptual Framework

The framework proposes that AI resources may contribute to strategic intelligence when organisational, technological and human enablers embed AI insights in recurring decisions, learning and adaptation.

4. Research Methodology

This qualitative secondary study will examine AI-supported project management capability development.

4.1 Research Philosophy

Pragmatism supports evaluating the problem through evidence relevant to theory and organisational practice.

4.2 Research Approach

An abductive approach will combine theory-guided analysis with evidence-led themes without predetermining conclusions.

4.3 Research Design

A structured integrative review will compare conceptual, empirical and professional evidence, using a documented protocol for consistent searching, screening, appraisal and synthesis. This design is appropriate because it can integrate heterogeneous evidence while preserving differences in context, method and source quality that would be lost through statistical aggregation.

4.4 Population and Sampling

The evidence base will include English-language academic publications, professional reports and organisational cases on AI-supported project management capabilities. Criterion-based purposive sampling will prioritise relevant 2019–2026 evidence while retaining foundational theory.

4.5 Data Collection

Academic databases, repositories and professional publications will be searched using terms covering AI, project management, strategic intelligence, organisational learning and dynamic capabilities. Selection will assess relevance, credibility, methodological transparency and evidential value. Commercial claims will be compared with independent evidence.

4.6 Data Analysis

Framework analysis will organise evidence by AI resources, enabling conditions and capability outcomes. Comparative synthesis will identify patterns, contradictions and differences between operational and strategic value, prioritising methodologically robust evidence.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

No participants or confidential data are involved. Academic integrity requires accurate attribution, faithful interpretation, transparent selection and balanced reporting.

5. Expected Contribution

5.1 Theoretical Contribution

The study may clarify how AI resources contribute to dynamic project management capabilities and strategic intelligence.

5.2 Practical Contribution

Findings may identify the governance, knowledge, skills and processes supporting sustained project value.

5.3 Policy Contribution

The study may inform organisational AI governance, human oversight and accountability policies.

6. Limitations

Secondary evidence may introduce publication, sector and author bias. Rapid technological change, inconsistent definitions and varied measures may limit relevance, comparability and causal conclusions. Transparent appraisal and cross-source comparison will mitigate, not eliminate, these limitations.

7. Proposed Timeframe

The research will follow a structured 12-week schedule, allowing sufficient time for evidence collection, analysis, writing, review and final submission.

Research activity	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12
Refine research scope and framework	●	●										
Finalise review protocol		●	●									
Search and screen literature			●	●	●							
Extract and appraise evidence				●	●	●						
Conduct framework analysis						●	●	●				
Synthesise findings							●	●	●			
Write findings and discussion								●	●	●		
Revise introduction and write conclusion										●	●	
Review, proofread and submit											●	●

8. Conclusion

This secondary study integrates RBV and Dynamic Capabilities Theory to examine whether AI enables sustained strategic intelligence or mainly operational improvements, while recognising organisational conditions and limitations.

9. References

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