

Overcoming Leadership Barriers in AI Adoption: A Socio-Technical Ambidextrous Approach

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Abstract: Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents significant opportunities for organizational innovation but consistently faces substantial adoption barriers, primarily rooted in complex socio-technical challenges. This research explicitly investigates these barriers through the integrative lens of ambidextrous leadership, emphasizing leaders' dual responsibilities in navigating technological innovation and organizational adaptive dynamics simultaneously. Employing a rigorous Narrative Literature Review (NLR) methodology, this study systematically synthesizes contemporary scholarly insights. The review explicitly identifies critical barriers to AI adoption, notably leadership inadequacies. Findings explicitly highlight ambidextrous leadership as uniquely suited to addressing these challenges, operationalizing the joint optimization imperative of socio-technical theory by harmonizing technological innovation with authentic stakeholder engagement, adaptive organizational learning, and ethical leadership practices. Additionally, explicitly drew, which reinforces the necessity for ethically grounded, adaptively oriented "real leadership," in contrast to traditional coercive or "counterfeit" approaches. Consequently, this study offers substantial theoretical advancements and practical frameworks specifically designed to help organizations effectively navigate the complex adaptive and technical dimensions of AI integration. By explicitly addressing previously identified gaps, this research makes a significant contribution to the scholarly discourse and provides strategic guidance for leadership practice, thereby enhancing sustainable and effective AI adoption processes.

Keywords: Leadership, Artificial Intelligence (AI), AI Adoption, AI Adoption Framework, Barriers to AI Adoption, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), T.O.E. Framework, Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Ambidextrous Leadership, Joint Optimization Framework, Authentic leadership, Counterfeit Leadership

JEL Codes: M12, M15, O33, O35

Article Type: Review Paper

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption has become a strategic imperative for organizations seeking to enhance efficiency, drive innovation, and gain a competitive advantage. Yet, research indicates a troubling 90% failure rate in AI and digital transformation initiatives, largely due to inadequate organizational readiness, misaligned leadership strategies, and overlooked socio-technical factors (Marcel, Gaol, Supangkat, & Ranti, 2024). This significant rate of failure reflects a fundamental misalignment between technological capabilities and the complex social and organizational realities, highlighting that successful AI adoption hinges more on organizational and leadership dynamics than purely technological factors. Thus, understanding and addressing these socio-technical barriers at the leadership level is paramount to reducing implementation failures.

Key socio-technical barriers identified in recent literature include persistent employee resistance, insufficient leadership competencies, inadequate skills development, and organizational cultures incompatible with technological innovations. Bughin et al. (2018) report that approximately 70% of technology transformation initiatives fail to deliver expected outcomes, primarily due to poor organizational preparedness and employee engagement, which reinforces the significant role of human and social factors in adoption success. Similarly, Gartner (2022) highlights that only about 20% of leaders express confidence in their teams' ability to manage AI-driven change effectively, indicating significant gaps in leadership readiness and skill. Collectively, these statistics reveal a

pervasive pattern of leadership inadequacies and social barriers, reinforcing the argument that effective AI integration demands comprehensive socio-technical preparedness. Therefore, leadership capable of concurrently addressing technological and organizational dynamics emerges as essential for navigating these complex barriers.

The concept of ambidextrous leadership, characterized by leaders' ability to simultaneously exploit current resources and explore innovative technological avenues, offers a promising approach to overcoming these socio-technical challenges. Jansen, Tempelaar, Van den Bosch, and Volberda (2021) argue that ambidextrous leaders effectively mitigate resistance by aligning technical advancements with human factors, thereby ensuring a balanced focus on both organizational and technological readiness. Additionally, Duan et al. (2019) emphasize that ambidextrous leadership uniquely addresses digital transformation complexities by integrating effective technological strategies with workforce engagement, promoting a more holistic adoption process. However, existing adoption frameworks, such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) framework, and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), predominantly address individual user acceptance and technological attributes, neglecting comprehensive leadership imperatives necessary for successful organizational AI adoption (Venkatesh & Bala, 2020). Recognizing this gap underscores the urgency of examining how ambidextrous leadership specifically can facilitate effective AI integration.

Given these identified gaps, this research critically investigates barriers to AI adoption through the socio-technical theory, specifically utilizing the framework of ambidextrous leadership as a strategic approach to bridge technological and organizational factors. By synthesizing contemporary scholarly literature, including recent insights from Marcel et al. (2024) on widespread transformation failures, and Williams (2010) on the leadership imperative to frame the principal challenge and get people to do adaptive work, this study aims to elucidate practical strategies and theoretical frameworks that enable effective leadership practices capable of addressing complex socio-technical barriers. Exploring ambidextrous leadership within the context of socio-technical theory promises significant insights into aligning organizational readiness with technological advancements, thereby directly addressing existing inadequacies identified in current research. Ultimately, this paper offers critical theoretical and practical guidance, making a unique contribution to the leadership literature by addressing both technical and human factors necessary for successful AI adoption.

Problem Statement

The central research problem addressed in this study is the pervasive failure of organizational AI initiatives, primarily driven by insufficient socio-technical alignment and inadequate leadership practices in managing the complexity of technological adoption. Recent empirical research consistently highlights a critical and ongoing discrepancy between investments in AI technologies and their practical organizational outcomes. According to Marcel, Gaol, Supangkat, and Ranti (2024), approximately 90% of AI and digital transformation projects fail to deliver the anticipated strategic results, predominantly due to ineffective leadership engagement, poor cultural alignment, and the oversight of human factors in technological integration. Similarly, a global study by the Boston Consulting Group (2021) found that over 70% of organizations face substantial barriers to digital transformation, including cultural resistance, skill gaps, and inadequate leadership competencies, thereby validating this pressing issue across multiple industries.

The current literature extensively acknowledges employee resistance, insufficient digital readiness, and leadership inadequacies as fundamental socio-technical barriers that hinder the successful adoption of AI technologies (Fountaine, McCarthy, & Saleh, 2019; Duan et al., 2019). For instance, Gartner's (2022) extensive survey revealed that fewer than 20% of senior leaders believe their organizations possess adequate leadership and technical capabilities

required for effectively managing AI-driven changes, highlighting severe deficits in contemporary leadership strategies and capacities. These findings clearly illustrate a significant and ongoing misalignment in leadership practices necessary to address the socio-technical complexities of AI adoption, underscoring a substantial gap between theoretical frameworks and real-world applications.

Socio-technical theory, particularly through the principle of joint optimization, proposes that the effectiveness of technological innovations depends significantly on their integration with social and organizational factors, a perspective often inadequately addressed by traditional leadership approaches (Williams, 2010; Leonardi, 2020). Although frameworks such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) have extensively analyzed individual acceptance behaviors, these models frequently neglect critical leadership strategies essential for simultaneously managing both technological complexity and social acceptance (Venkatesh & Bala, 2020). Consequently, existing theoretical frameworks fall short of addressing the broader organizational leadership imperatives critical for effective AI adoption.

The problem gains further urgency as organizations increasingly rely on AI not merely for competitive advantage but also for survival amid rapid technological and economic disruptions (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Yet, despite this growing urgency, scholarly consensus emphasizes that research explicitly integrating ambidextrous leadership practices with socio-technical theory to address AI adoption barriers comprehensively remains substantially underexplored (Jansen et al., 2021; Leonardi, 2020). Therefore, addressing this critical gap has significant implications for organizational performance, technological advancement, and leadership practice, underscoring the need for this research to provide actionable, strategic guidance to organizational leaders.

Thus, this research seeks to comprehensively explore how ambidextrous leadership, grounded in socio-technical theory and operationalized through a Narrative Literature Review (NLR), can effectively mitigate prevalent barriers to AI adoption. This study aligns closely with contemporary scholarly calls to bridge theoretical gaps through targeted, integrative leadership approaches (Marcel et al., 2024), providing novel insights into how socio-technical alignment, facilitated by ambidextrous leadership, can enhance the success of AI implementation. Moreover, this research explicitly addresses identified gaps in the existing literature, providing foundational insights that are critical for guiding future research on effective AI adoption strategies, leadership training initiatives, and organizational policy development.

Research Question

How can a socio-technical ambidextrous leadership approach effectively mitigate barriers to AI adoption within organizations?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this analysis is to critically explore and clearly articulate how ambidextrous leadership, framed within socio-technical theory, can effectively address persistent socio-technical barriers hindering AI adoption in organizational contexts. Utilizing a Narrative Literature Review (NLR) methodology, this research synthesizes scholarly insights from contemporary theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and industry reports to elucidate practical strategies for aligning technological innovation with organizational culture, readiness, and leadership practices. By addressing the identified research gaps, this study explicitly investigates the capacity of ambidextrous leadership to simultaneously manage technological complexity and human-social dynamics, providing comprehensive solutions to enhance successful AI implementation. Ultimately, this research aims not only to advance theoretical knowledge on leadership in technology adoption but also to provide actionable frameworks beneficial to organizational

leaders, policymakers, and practitioners seeking sustainable strategies for effectively integrating AI technologies.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its unique and comprehensive exploration of ambidextrous leadership as a critical factor in overcoming socio-technical barriers to the adoption of AI. The research makes a distinct contribution to scholarly discourse by explicitly integrating socio-technical theory with ambidextrous leadership practices, addressing critical gaps left by conventional adoption frameworks that primarily focus on individual technological acceptance rather than holistic organizational considerations (Jansen et al., 2021; Leonardi, 2020; Marcel et al., 2024). This scholarly integration presents vital theoretical advancements and offers practical insights beneficial for organizational leaders and decision-makers confronting persistent adoption challenges, thereby enhancing their ability to navigate complex technological transformations successfully. Furthermore, the findings bear significant policy implications, emphasizing leadership development, joint optimization strategies, and organizational readiness as key priorities in policy formulation and strategic planning related to AI and digital transformation initiatives.

Originality and Value

The originality of this study stems from its explicit integration of socio-technical theory and ambidextrous leadership frameworks to address the pervasive barriers to AI adoption in a uniquely comprehensive manner. Unlike previous research that primarily emphasizes technological acceptance models or fragmented leadership strategies, this paper holistically considers socio-technical complexities, clearly articulating the necessity of joint optimization practices for successful AI implementation (Williams, 2010; Marcel et al., 2024; Venkatesh & Bala, 2020). The research further distinguishes itself by providing clear, actionable guidelines and frameworks for organizational leaders, ensuring tangible applicability and significant value in practical contexts where successful AI integration remains elusive. Consequently, the study makes a substantial contribution to theoretical innovation and practical relevance, effectively bridging existing scholarly gaps and offering critical insights that foster more robust, sustainable, and successful AI adoption practices across diverse organizational settings.

Design, Methodology & Approach

This study employs a Narrative Literature Review (NLR) methodology, chosen explicitly for its flexibility, interpretive depth, and suitability for addressing complex socio-technical issues associated with AI adoption barriers and ambidextrous leadership. The NLR methodology systematically integrates recent empirical and theoretical literature from databases such as JSTOR, Emerald, ProQuest, and Google Scholar, using search terms including "Ambidextrous Leadership," "Socio-technical theory," "AI Adoption," "Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)," "Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)," and "Joint Optimization Framework." Inclusion criteria encompassed peer-reviewed articles published within the last five years that explicitly addressed socio-technical barriers, leadership imperatives, and organizational aspects of AI implementation. Studies older than five years or irrelevant to leadership and socio-technical integration were excluded to maintain relevance and contemporary accuracy.

Data analysis employed thematic synthesis, systematically coding and categorizing content from selected literature to identify recurring themes, consistencies, and disparities among authors' arguments. Content validity and scholarly rigor were ensured through methodological triangulation, comparing findings across multiple studies and theoretical perspectives to derive credible, reliable, and transferable conclusions. This methodological approach aligns explicitly with the research question, facilitating comprehensive insights into how ambidextrous leadership practices operationalized through socio-technical theory can

effectively mitigate barriers to AI adoption. Ultimately, this approach enables the research to maintain scholarly robustness while delivering clearly articulated insights and actionable strategies that are beneficial for organizational leaders seeking to improve AI adoption outcomes.

Keyword Definitions

1. **Leadership.** Refers to the process by which individuals influence, motivate, and guide others toward achieving organizational goals, emphasizing the importance of clear vision-setting, effective communication, and collaboration (Northouse, 2021).
2. **Artificial Intelligence (AI).** Encompasses advanced computational systems capable of performing tasks traditionally requiring human intelligence, including learning, decision-making, and problem-solving (Russell & Norvig, 2020).
3. **AI Adoption.** Involves the deliberate integration and utilization of artificial intelligence technologies within organizations, requiring strategic adjustments in technological infrastructure, organizational culture, and leadership practices (Marcel, Gaol, Supangkat, & Ranti, 2024).
4. **AI Adoption Framework.** An AI adoption framework provides a systematic approach that guides organizations through the effective implementation of AI technologies, addressing the technological, organizational, and environmental factors critical for successful integration (Agrawal, Gans, & Goldfarb, 2023; Venkatesh & Bala, 2020).
5. **Barriers to AI Adoption:** Barriers to AI adoption are obstacles preventing successful AI integration, including technological complexity, employee resistance, ethical concerns, regulatory constraints, and insufficient leadership competencies (Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Lee et al., 2023).
6. **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).** Explains user acceptance and adoption of technology, primarily based on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which significantly influence user behavioral intentions (Venkatesh & Bala, 2020).
7. **T.O.E. Framework.** It is a theoretical model analyzing technology adoption through technological capabilities, organizational readiness, and external environmental factors influencing strategic technology integration (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990).
8. **Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT).** Integrates multiple technology adoption theories to explain user intentions and behaviors through constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003).
9. **Ambidextrous Leadership.** Leadership that simultaneously balances organizational exploration (innovation and adaptability) and exploitation (stability and efficiency), enabling sustained effectiveness and responsiveness to change (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Jansen, Tempelaar, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2021).
10. **Joint Optimization Framework.** The Joint Optimization Framework, foundational to socio-technical theory, emphasizes simultaneous enhancement of technical and social organizational systems, aiming to optimize alignment between technology, human behavior, and leadership practices (Trist & Bamforth, 1951; Leonardi, 2020).
11. **Authentic Leadership.** It is characterized by ethical integrity, transparency, self-awareness, and genuine stakeholder engagement, fostering trust and adaptive organizational cultures (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008).
12. **Counterfeit Leadership.** Counterfeit leadership explicitly contrasts with authentic leadership, characterized by coercive control, superficial charisma, short-term compliance tactics, and dominance-driven strategies, which often undermine sustainable organizational effectiveness (Williams, 2010).

Literature Review

Overview and Relevance of the Problem

Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption is a crucial strategy for organizations seeking to achieve innovation, operational efficiency, and a sustainable competitive advantage. Despite its strategic value, empirical studies consistently document significant failure rates, with Marcel et al. (2024) reporting approximately 90% failure due to leadership inadequacies, insufficient organizational preparedness, and misalignment of technological capabilities with socio-cultural dynamics. Recent literature highlights that effective AI implementation requires explicit attention not merely to technological dimensions but also to complex socio-organizational factors, including ethical considerations, regulatory compliance, organizational culture, and employee engagement (Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Lee et al., 2023; Agrawal et al., 2023).

To address these complexities comprehensively, leadership frameworks that can simultaneously manage both adaptive (social) and technical challenges are essential. Ambidextrous leadership explicitly operationalizes this balance by concurrently promoting innovation (exploration) and leveraging existing organizational resources and capabilities (exploitation), thereby effectively addressing socio-technical barriers (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Leonardi, 2020). Kleinberg et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of cognitive alignment and managing organizational resistance, highlighting the role of ambidextrous leadership in overcoming mental and behavioral obstacles. Uren and Edwards (2023) emphasize the crucial importance of leaders' strategic preparedness and adaptive capacity in navigating complex technological transformations, explicitly advocating for ambidextrous leadership as a mechanism to bridge strategic intent and practical execution.

Further emphasizing these points, Tarhini et al. (2023) explicitly identify cultural and digital literacy barriers, underscoring the necessity of ambidextrous leadership in fostering organizational agility and cultural adaptability during technology integration processes. Raftopoulos and Hamari (2023) contribute explicitly by highlighting the inadequacies of generalized leadership frameworks and recommending an ambidextrous leadership approach that is context-sensitive and dual-focused as essential for effective socio-technical integration. Bianchini et al. (2023) explicitly address structural inertia and rigidity within organizations, suggesting ambidextrous leadership as a key strategy for enhancing organizational flexibility and adaptive responsiveness.

Additionally, Frangos (2022) explicitly emphasizes the significance of continuous organizational learning and ethical leadership dimensions within socio-technical transformations, aligning closely with the adaptive and ethically driven competencies of ambidextrous leadership. Finally, Frimpong (2024) explicitly underscores industry-specific adoption challenges, advocating tailored leadership approaches such as ambidextrous leadership, which can simultaneously address the unique adaptive and technical demands inherent in diverse industry contexts. Collectively, these recent scholarly contributions underscore the explicit need for integrative, adaptive, and context-specific leadership approaches, such as ambidextrous leadership, which effectively bridge theoretical frameworks with practical leadership strategies in managing the complexities of AI adoption.

Barriers to AI Adoption

AI adoption barriers are comprehensively documented in contemporary literature, revealing multifaceted and context-specific challenges across industries. Ethical and regulatory barriers significantly impede the integration of AI, notably concerns surrounding algorithmic transparency, explainability, data privacy, and compliance with sector-specific regulations (Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Lee et al., 2023). Technological challenges further compound adoption difficulties, including cybersecurity threats, interoperability with legacy systems, and complex data management requirements (Lee et al., 2023; Kleinberg et al., 2023). Organizational

resistance remains a pervasive barrier, underpinned by cognitive misunderstandings of AI capabilities, cultural inertia, and fears associated with job displacement and technological change (Tarhini et al., 2023; Agrawal et al., 2023). Leadership inadequacies exacerbate these challenges, notably through insufficient strategic vision, inadequate preparedness, and ineffective change management strategies (Uren & Edwards, 2023; Bianchini et al., 2023). Furthermore, structural inertia and rigid organizational processes significantly hinder adaptive responsiveness, undermining effective technological integration and socio-technical alignment (Raftopoulos & Hamari, 2023; Frangos, 2022).

Other key recent scholarly contributions, including Frimpong (2024), explicitly highlight industry-specific adoption challenges such as unique regulatory constraints within healthcare, specialized competency gaps in manufacturing, and varying degrees of technological maturity across sectors. Collectively, these diverse scholarly perspectives illustrate that AI adoption barriers differ significantly by organizational size, industry context, leadership readiness, and organizational culture (Kleinberg et al., 2023; Frimpong, 2024; Raftopoulos & Hamari, 2023). Given these explicit barriers, effective management requires context-specific, integrative leadership approaches that can simultaneously address both adaptive (organizational culture, ethics, leadership preparedness) and technical (technological complexity, cybersecurity, interoperability) dimensions. Ambidextrous leadership explicitly addresses these multi-dimensional barriers, significantly enhancing socio-technical alignment and adoption effectiveness (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Leonardi, 2020).

Theoretical Foundation: Socio-technical Theory as Ambidextrous Leadership Imperative

Socio-technical theory, initially proposed by Trist and Bamforth (1951), explicitly advocates for the joint optimization of technical and social subsystems as essential for organizational effectiveness. Recent scholarship explicitly reaffirms the continued applicability of this approach, particularly in digital transformation contexts. Leonardi (2020) explicitly applies socio-technical principles to current technological adoption contexts, emphasizing the need for explicit leadership practices that can align technical innovation with organizational culture. Other key recent scholarly contributions, such as Schmiegelow and Melo (2023), Frangos (2022), Raftopoulos and Hamari (2023), and Frimpong (2024), further demonstrate the practical relevance of socio-technical theory, explicitly applying it to diverse sectors and complex socio-technical integration scenarios. However, Williams (2010) explicitly highlights practical implementation challenges, notably leadership deficiencies in managing adaptive and technical demands concurrently. Ambidextrous leadership explicitly addresses these limitations, operationalizing socio-technical theory through adaptive competencies, continuous organizational learning, and ethical engagement practices (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Leonardi, 2020). Thus, integrating ambidextrous leadership explicitly strengthens the practical implementation of socio-technical theory, enhancing both theoretical robustness and organizational adaptability.

Explicit Alignment and Optimization through Ambidextrous Leadership and Williams (2010)

Integrating Williams' (2010) insights and ambidextrous leadership principles explicitly enhances the socio-technical theory's Joint Optimization Framework by effectively addressing specific leadership and socio-technical challenges. These identified challenges include accurately diagnosing and managing adaptive challenges, such as shifting deeply embedded organizational values, beliefs, and behaviors, as opposed to maintenance challenges that require only routine management within existing structures (Williams, 2010). Additionally, leadership challenges explicitly highlighted by Williams include reliance on coercive, dominance-driven "counterfeit" leadership styles, ineffective stakeholder engagement, inadequate ethical transparency, and insufficient continuous organizational learning. Other recent scholarly contributions further substantiate these identified leadership deficiencies. Uren and Edwards (2023) explicitly highlight

gaps in leaders' preparedness and strategic alignment necessary for navigating complex adaptive changes. Agrawal et al. (2023) emphasize that traditional leadership approaches often fail to adequately address organizational culture, ethical considerations, and human-centric barriers. Schmiegelow and Melo (2023) emphasize the importance of ethical transparency and explainability as critical leadership dimensions that are often neglected in technology integration efforts, which significantly contribute to adoption failures. Similarly, Frangos (2022) and Frimpong (2024) explicitly highlight leaders' frequent inadequacies in fostering authentic stakeholder collaboration and building sustained organizational learning environments, which are essential for managing socio-technical transformations.

Thus, ambidextrous leadership explicitly optimizes the socio-technical theory's Joint Optimization Framework by directly addressing these explicitly identified practical leadership deficiencies. It does so through promoting authentic, adaptive "real" leadership practices, ethical transparency, effective stakeholder engagement, accurate diagnosis of adaptive challenges and fostering continuous organizational learning environments, competencies called explicitly for by Williams (2010) and extensively supported by recent research (Uren & Edwards, 2023; Agrawal et al., 2023; Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Frangos, 2022; Frimpong, 2024).

Critiques of Technology Adoption, Integration, and Optimization Frameworks

Frameworks such as the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) face significant critiques regarding their adequacy in managing the socio-technical complexities associated with AI adoption. Scholarly criticism explicitly targets TOE's limited focus on internal leadership strategies and socio-cultural dynamics, emphasizing its insufficient attention to complex internal organizational conditions (Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Agrawal et al., 2023). Additionally, TOE's overly broad generalizations and inadequate industry specificity limit its effectiveness for practical guidance and adaptive responsiveness in varied organizational contexts (Tarhini et al., 2023; Raftopoulos & Hamari, 2023) (E).

Other key recent scholarly contributions explicitly underscore the practical limitations of existing leadership frameworks. Specifically, Uren and Edwards (2023) emphasize that current leadership approaches frequently lack the strategic depth and adaptive preparedness necessary to guide organizations effectively through complex technological transformations. They highlight the need for leaders to possess capabilities beyond mere technical understanding, advocating explicitly for strategies that integrate adaptive capacity-building, comprehensive stakeholder alignment, and strategic agility. Similarly, Frangos (2022) explicitly identifies significant gaps in frameworks concerning ethical leadership and continuous organizational learning, noting that successful AI adoption necessitates the explicit integration of ethical decision-making processes, organizational transparency, and the promotion of a culture of constant learning. Bianchini et al. (2023) further reinforce these critiques by explicitly addressing structural rigidity within organizations, arguing that traditional leadership frameworks inadequately address entrenched resistance and organizational inertia. They advocate explicitly for leadership strategies that foster organizational flexibility, adaptability, and openness to ongoing change, thereby enhancing effective socio-technical integration. Ambidextrous leadership explicitly addresses these critiques by providing clear strategies for simultaneously pursuing technological innovation (exploration) and organizational adaptation (exploitation), thereby operationalizing the joint optimization principles of socio-technical theory and filling identified theoretical gaps (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Leonardi, 2020).

Research Gap and Areas for Future Research

Contemporary literature identifies numerous research gaps that require further scholarly investigation. Schmiegelow and Melo (2023) explicitly advocate for additional empirical studies on the impacts of explainable AI and ethical transparency on organizational adoption. Raisch and Krakowski (2021) specifically emphasize the importance of examining the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership in diverse organizational and cultural contexts. Other key recent scholarly contributions, including works by Lee et al. (2023), Frimpong (2024), Uren and Edwards (2023), and Kleinberg et al. (2023), further explicitly emphasize research gaps, advocating for industry-specific AI adoption frameworks, explicit studies into leadership preparedness and strategic alignment, and deeper investigations into cognitive and cultural barriers to AI adoption. These explicit recommendations underscore the critical need for comprehensive, integrative frameworks that explicitly combine socio-technical theory and ambidextrous leadership practices, effectively bridging theoretical knowledge and practical organizational strategies. Addressing these explicit research opportunities significantly advances theoretical understanding and practical management strategies essential for effective AI adoption across diverse sectors.

The explicit research gap identified through this study pertains to the inadequacy of current leadership approaches in effectively navigating the complex socio-technical challenges of AI adoption, as extensively documented by Marcel et al. (2024), Schmiegelow and Melo (2023), and Agrawal et al. (2023). Existing leadership frameworks often fail to align technical capabilities with social and organizational dynamics explicitly. Williams (2010) directly addresses this identified gap by clearly distinguishing between "real" leadership, characterized by adaptive, ethically grounded approaches, and "counterfeit" leadership, which emphasizes control, dominance, and short-term compliance. Williams explicitly advocates authentic adaptive leadership responses to complex socio-technical issues, underscoring that successful interventions must integrate ongoing organizational learning, authentic stakeholder engagement, and ethical stewardship, each integral to socio-technical optimization.

Ambidextrous leadership, informed explicitly by Williams' adaptive leadership framework, bridges this critical gap by operationalizing socio-technical theory through simultaneous exploration (innovation, experimentation, and technological advancement) and exploitation (leveraging current organizational capabilities and resources). It explicitly equips leaders with actionable strategies for managing technological integration alongside necessary cultural, ethical, and social adaptations, thus effectively addressing identified leadership shortcomings. Ambidextrous leadership explicitly fosters these essential socio-technical conditions by prioritizing adaptive organizational capacities, ethical decision-making, and genuine collective engagement, enabling organizations to navigate complex adaptive changes sustainably.

The explicit alignment among Williams' (2010) adaptive leadership insights, socio-technical theory, and ambidextrous leadership principles creates a robust and sustainable leadership model that comprehensively addresses organizational readiness, adaptive capacity, and technical integration. By explicitly integrating adaptive leadership competencies identified by Williams with the joint optimization objectives inherent in socio-technical theory, ambidextrous leadership provides a cohesive, actionable framework capable of sustainably resolving the socio-technical barriers associated with AI adoption, thus directly and effectively filling the identified research gap.

Conclusion of Literature Review

This comprehensive and rigorously structured literature review explicitly integrates extensive contemporary scholarship, including Schmiegelow and Melo (2023), Agrawal et al. (2023), Raisch and Krakowski (2021), Kleinberg et al. (2023), Lee et al. (2023), Uren and Edwards

(2023), Tarhini et al. (2023), Raftopoulos and Hamari (2023), Bianchini et al. (2023), Frangos (2022), Frimpong (2024), Williams (2010), and other key recent scholarly contributions. The review explicitly identifies critical theoretical and practical gaps in current frameworks, leadership practices, and socio-technical integration strategies essential for successful AI adoption. By explicitly synthesizing contemporary insights, explicitly integrating ambidextrous leadership within socio-technical theory, and explicitly operationalizing adaptive leadership principles highlighted by Williams (2010), this review uniquely advances theoretical frameworks and practical leadership strategies necessary for addressing prevalent AI adoption challenges. Thus, this explicit integration substantially contributes to scholarly discourse and provides critical strategic insights essential for successful organizational adoption of AI technologies.

Findings

The comprehensive narrative literature review (NLR) provides significant insights into how socio-technical ambidextrous leadership can effectively address and mitigate prevalent barriers to AI adoption.

1. Adaptive Nature of AI Adoption

- a. AI adoption constitutes primarily an adaptive challenge, requiring significant shifts in organizational values, behaviors, and mindsets beyond mere technical integration (Williams, 2010).
- b. Successful leadership must clearly distinguish between adaptive challenges and maintenance and other types of challenges, emphasizing collective adaptive work and collaborative problem-solving rather than superficial technical fixes (Williams, 2010; Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

2. Critiques of Existing Frameworks

- a. Frameworks such as the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) model face explicit critiques due to their inadequacies in addressing socio-technical integration and internal leadership dynamics (Agrawal et al., 2023; Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Lee et al., 2023).

3. Ambidextrous Leadership as an Explicit Solution:

- a. Ambidextrous leadership explicitly counters limitations of traditional frameworks and counterfeit leadership by embodying principles of "real leadership," prioritizing authentic stakeholder engagement, ethical transparency, and adaptive capacity building (Williams, 2010; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023).
- b. Ambidextrous leadership effectively manages dual dimensions of technological innovation (exploration) and organizational stability (exploitation), directly addressing socio-technical and leadership challenges identified in existing research (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Leonardi, 2020).

4. Addressing Joint Optimization Framework Limitations:

- a. Despite theoretical robustness, the Joint Optimization Framework faces practical implementation challenges, specifically related to inadequate leadership preparedness, ethical stewardship, and stakeholder trust-building capacities (Williams, 2010; Frangos, 2022).
- b. Ambidextrous leadership explicitly addresses these limitations, providing leaders with the competencies to simultaneously navigate both adaptive and technical dimensions, thereby significantly enhancing organizational readiness and the sustainable integration of AI technologies.

5. Key Conceptual Contribution:

- a. The explicit operationalization of socio-technical theory through ambidextrous leadership practices addresses practical leadership deficiencies, fosters continuous

- organizational learning, promotes authentic stakeholder engagement, and ensures sustainable success in the adoption of AI.
 - b. Ambidextrous leadership explicitly bridges theoretical knowledge and practical leadership strategies, offering a comprehensive framework for effectively navigating complex socio-technical challenges in contemporary organizational transformations.
6. **Key Conceptual Contribution:**
- a. The key conceptual contribution identified through this research is the explicit operationalization of socio-technical theory through ambidextrous leadership practices, creating novel strategic pathways to ensure the success of sustainable AI adoption.

Discussion

The research findings explicitly address the identified gap in existing literature concerning the inadequacies of current leadership approaches to managing the socio-technical complexities of AI adoption effectively. Previous scholarly work highlighted deficiencies in leadership strategies, noting their frequent inability to simultaneously navigate adaptive organizational dynamics and technical innovation, leaving significant gaps in practical guidance for successful AI integration (Marcel et al., 2024; Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Agrawal et al., 2023). The findings explicitly illustrate that ambidextrous leadership effectively fills this theoretical and practical gap, operationalizing the Joint Optimization Framework of socio-technical theory by emphasizing ethical leadership, continuous organizational learning, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive capacity building.

The findings align explicitly with the study's stated purpose: to critically evaluate how ambidextrous leadership principles within socio-technical theory can address complex socio-technical barriers hindering successful AI adoption. Through detailed synthesis, the findings explicitly demonstrate that ambidextrous leadership enables leaders to effectively manage both technological exploration and organizational adaptation concurrently. This directly fulfills the study's intent to identify and elucidate actionable leadership practices and theoretical insights that can navigate and resolve complex adaptive challenges in AI adoption scenarios.

Furthermore, the research findings directly address the explicitly stated research problem concerning pervasive organizational failures in AI adoption, which result from leadership inadequacies, cultural misalignments, insufficient adaptive capacity, and socio-technical integration challenges. The findings offer explicit solutions, emphasizing the need for adaptive, ethical, and authentic leadership practices that facilitate significant shifts in organizational values, behaviors, and stakeholder engagement. Ambidextrous leadership practices explicitly counter traditional, coercive ("counterfeit") leadership strategies highlighted by Williams (2010), thereby enhancing organizational readiness and promoting sustainable adoption outcomes.

Explicitly addressing the central research question, how socio-technical ambidextrous leadership approaches mitigate barriers to AI adoption, the findings offer precise answers, explicitly demonstrating that ambidextrous leadership operationalizes socio-technical theory by simultaneously bridging the adaptive and technical dimensions. This comprehensive approach provides explicit, actionable strategies that address organizational resistance, leadership preparedness deficiencies, ethical considerations, and practical implementation challenges inherent in AI integration efforts.

Finally, the findings explicitly align with the chosen Narrative Literature Review (NLR) methodology. The insights derived from this approach are expressly grounded in the systematic synthesis and integration of contemporary scholarly contributions, including those of Williams (2010), Schmiegelow and Melo (2023), Raisch and Krakowski (2021), Agrawal

et al. (2023), Frangos (2022), and Leonardi (2020). This rigorous methodological synthesis explicitly facilitated the identification and elaboration of ambidextrous leadership competencies, practical leadership strategies, and theoretical advancements necessary for effectively managing socio-technical complexities, thereby validating the scholarly rigor and applicability of the research findings.

Conclusions

This research conclusively demonstrates the critical need to explicitly integrate ambidextrous leadership principles into socio-technical theory to address complex and pervasive barriers to AI adoption effectively. Contemporary scholarly literature consistently underscores severe leadership deficiencies and socio-technical misalignments as primary contributors to high failure rates in AI implementation initiatives (Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Leonardi, 2020). Drawing explicitly from Williams (2010), this research emphasizes that successful AI adoption inherently involves complex adaptive processes, transcending routine maintenance or purely technical challenges. Leaders who are overly reliant on authoritative or "counterfeit" approaches, focused predominantly on technical solutions, charisma-driven influence, or coercive compliance, are insufficiently prepared to manage the nuanced and adaptive complexities sustainably.

Ambidextrous leadership explicitly emerges as uniquely suited to address these adaptive challenges effectively. Reflecting Williams' (2010) concept of "real leadership," ambidextrous leadership prioritizes collective adaptive learning, ethical stewardship, genuine stakeholder engagement, and authentic organizational interactions. This explicit alignment directly addresses the existing socio-technical barriers extensively identified in contemporary literature, significantly enhancing organizational readiness, adaptive capacity, and stakeholder trust necessary for successful AI integration (Schmiegelow & Melo, 2023; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Leonardi, 2020). Moreover, this research makes a unique contribution by explicitly refining and practically enhancing the Joint Optimization Framework. Ambidextrous leadership competencies directly address practical leadership deficiencies identified explicitly by Williams (2010), including inadequate adaptive capability, insufficient ethical engagement, and ineffective stakeholder collaboration. This explicit integration substantially enhances the practical applicability of socio-technical theory, fostering continuous organizational learning and ethically driven adaptive leadership practices that are essential for sustainable AI adoption.

Therefore, explicitly cultivating ambidextrous and adaptive leadership competencies within organizations becomes a critical strategic imperative. This study offers significant theoretical innovation and practical relevance by systematically addressing identified gaps, effectively aligning socio-technical theory with adaptive, ethically grounded leadership practices. Consequently, ambidextrous leadership explicitly positions itself as a crucial strategic framework for ensuring sustainable organizational innovation and long-term success in AI adoption.

Research Limitations

While this narrative literature review (NLR) offers comprehensive theoretical and practical insights, several limitations must be acknowledged explicitly. First, although the study systematically integrated extensive contemporary scholarly literature, it did not include empirical validation through primary data collection methods such as organizational case studies, surveys, or quantitative analyses. Consequently, the direct empirical verification of the study's findings remains limited, potentially constraining the immediate applicability and generalizability of its conclusions.

Second, despite rigorous efforts to incorporate contemporary, relevant, and diverse scholarly perspectives, the narrative literature review methodology inherently involves

interpretative subjectivity. This interpretative nature could introduce potential researcher biases, affecting the study's replicability and generalizability. Furthermore, the explicit focus on leadership competencies and socio-technical frameworks may have inadvertently excluded other influential dimensions, such as specific technological configurations, industry-specific regulatory environments, or external environmental contingencies significantly influencing AI adoption outcomes.

To ensure credibility and scholarly rigor, triangulation strategies were explicitly employed by comparing insights across multiple contemporary studies, theoretical frameworks, and academic perspectives. Transferability was explicitly maintained through systematic categorization and synthesis of diverse, modern literature. Nonetheless, future empirical research explicitly validating ambidextrous leadership practices in varied organizational contexts is recommended. Such research would further strengthen these findings, confirm their applicability, and provide deeper insights into the robustness and effectiveness of the explicitly proposed integrative framework.

Recommendations for Future Research

Building explicitly upon this study's theoretical insights and directly addressing identified research limitations, future scholarly inquiry should consider several focused and strategic directions:

- 1. Empirical Validation of Ambidextrous Leadership**

Explicit empirical investigations are recommended, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, to systematically validate the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership across diverse organizational contexts. Such empirical validation would offer concrete evidence of practical applicability, strengthening the theoretical claims proposed in this research.

- 2. Industry-Specific AI Adoption Analyses**

Future research should explicitly develop and assess industry-tailored frameworks that address unique AI adoption challenges inherent in specialized sectors such as healthcare, finance, manufacturing, and other regulated or technologically complex industries. Industry-specific research will provide nuanced insights essential for context-sensitive leadership strategies.

- 3. Comparative Studies of Leadership Models**

Explicit comparative research evaluating ambidextrous leadership alongside other contemporary leadership approaches, such as transformational, adaptive, servant, or ethical leadership, is encouraged. Such comparative analyses would clarify the relative effectiveness, strengths, and limitations of various leadership models in managing complex socio-technical adoption barriers.

- 4. Longitudinal Research on Leadership Interventions**

Conducting explicit longitudinal studies is recommended to track and evaluate the sustained impacts of ambidextrous leadership interventions over extended periods. Longitudinal designs would provide robust insights into the long-term sustainability, adaptability, and effectiveness of these leadership strategies, informing future practice and theory.

- 5. Cultural Dimensions Influencing AI Adoption**

Future research should explicitly examine how diverse organizational and national cultural contexts influence the effectiveness of ambidextrous leadership and the broader socio-technical adoption processes. Exploring cross-cultural or comparative organizational studies would enhance understanding of the adaptability and transferability of ambidextrous leadership strategies across different cultural environments.

By explicitly pursuing these strategic research avenues, future studies can further validate, enrich, and expand upon the theoretical advancements and practical frameworks proposed in this research, significantly contributing to both scholarly knowledge and sensible management of complex socio-technical AI adoption challenges.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization: NW. Data curation: NW. Formal analysis: NW. Investigation: NW. Methodology: NW. Project administration: NW. Resources: NW. Supervision: NW. Validation: NW. Visualization: NW. Writing – original draft: NW. Writing – review & editing: NW. **Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial, financial, or other relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. **Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable. **Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

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