



Artificial Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness: Empirical Evidence from Multinational Corporations in Uganda

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Published Online: 30 May 2025	As Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies continue to reshape global business landscapes, their implications for leadership effectiveness remain underexplored in developing economies. This study investigates the impact of AI adoption on leadership effectiveness within multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Uganda. Using a concurrent mixed-methods design, data were collected from 160 leaders and senior managers through structured surveys and 15 executive interviews across 20 MNCs. The findings reveal that AI is widely used for strategic planning (72.9%), operational efficiency (70.8%), and customer insights (68.8%), with 75% of respondents leveraging AI tools for decision-making. AI adoption was found to significantly enhance leadership effectiveness, explaining 65% of the variance in leadership outcomes. Key improvements were noted in decision accuracy, team coordination, and strategic foresight. However, challenges such as poor data quality, limited technical skills, cybersecurity concerns, and cultural resistance hinder full integration. Leaders emphasized the need to balance AI-driven insights with empathy, ethical reasoning, and cultural sensitivity—particularly within Uganda's diverse workforce. The study concludes that while AI holds transformative potential for enhancing leadership, successful implementation requires context-specific strategies that integrate technology with human-centered leadership. Recommendations include investing in digital upskilling, strengthening data infrastructure, and developing localized AI governance frameworks to ensure equitable and ethical adoption. This research contributes novel empirical evidence from an African perspective and offers practical insights for responsible AI integration in emerging market leadership contexts.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to revolutionize contemporary organizational leadership by offering sophisticated tools that enhance decision-making, streamline operational workflows, and foster strategic agility. With the advancement of machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics, AI now enables leaders to interpret complex data sets, detect trends, automate repetitive functions, and facilitate real-time communication across organizational layers (Ameen et al., 2021; Haenlein & Kaplan, 2021). These capabilities are proving increasingly critical in today's fast-paced, uncertain, and hyper-competitive business environment, where informed, agile, and timely decision-making defines organizational success (Sheng et al., 2021; Wahab et al., 2022).

Despite its transformative potential, the discourse on AI's integration into leadership has largely been centered in

developed economies, where digital infrastructure, institutional maturity, and regulatory support are well-established (Ransbotham et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021). In contrast, empirical research examining the intersection of AI and leadership in emerging markets—particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa—remains sparse. This gap is significant given that organizational dynamics in these settings are shaped by infrastructural limitations, talent shortages, evolving governance structures, and complex socio-cultural norms (Kar & Dwivedi, 2020; Asongu & Odhiambo, 2021).

In Uganda, multinational corporations (MNCs) are increasingly turning to AI as a strategic lever for maintaining competitiveness in the global digital economy. However, leaders within these organizations face unique challenges that include limited ICT infrastructure, fragmented data ecosystems, low digital literacy among employees, and skepticism around automation and job security (Belhadi et al.,

2021; Bonga & Nyoni, 2023). Furthermore, Uganda’s multicultural organizational context—marked by linguistic diversity, communal leadership traditions, and varying employee expectations—necessitates AI tools that are not only technically robust but also culturally responsive. AI models developed in high-income Western contexts may not be directly applicable in Uganda without substantial adaptation, given the disparities in institutional capacity and cultural expectations (Chui et al., 2023; Hofstede, 2021).

Ethical considerations further complicate AI deployment in leadership. Concerns related to algorithmic bias, data privacy, transparency, and fairness continue to surface, especially in organizational contexts where regulatory safeguards are still emerging (Babic et al., 2021; Rai, 2020). Leaders in Uganda are increasingly required to navigate a delicate balance between leveraging the efficiency and scalability of AI technologies and upholding human-centric leadership values such as empathy, inclusivity, and accountability (Wang et al., 2023). This tension is particularly pronounced in environments where interpersonal relationships and collective decision-making are deeply embedded in organizational culture.

While AI has demonstrated considerable promise in transforming leadership functions—from strategy formulation to talent management—most existing literature falls short in addressing its contextual integration in low-resource, high-diversity settings like Uganda. Studies often highlight AI’s operational efficiency and analytical precision while underexploring its socio-cultural implications, ethical risks, and adaptive challenges in emerging economies (Ameen et al., 2021; Belhadi et al., 2021). As a result, leaders in Ugandan MNCs are navigating AI adoption without locally grounded, evidence-based frameworks to guide implementation.

This study responds to that gap by critically examining how AI adoption influences leadership effectiveness in multinational corporations in Uganda. It focuses on both the benefits and constraints of AI integration within organizational leadership while attending to the unique socio-economic, infrastructural, and cultural conditions of Uganda’s business landscape. The research contributes to academic literature and managerial practice by offering context-specific insights and policy-relevant recommendations. Ultimately, it advances the understanding of how leaders can responsibly harness AI’s capabilities while preserving the human-centered values essential to effective and ethical leadership in emerging markets.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a concurrent mixed-methods research design to investigate the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption on leadership effectiveness within multinational corporations (MNCs) in Uganda. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative approaches allowed the researcher to triangulate findings, offering both

statistical generalizability and deeper contextual understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This design was deemed appropriate given the complex and multidimensional nature of leadership and AI technologies, particularly in the dynamic environments in which MNCs operate.

2.1 Quantitative Strand

2.1.1 Population and Sample Size

The target population comprised leadership and senior management personnel within MNCs registered in Uganda. According to the Uganda Investment Authority (2025), there were 925 active MNCs across various sectors, including telecommunications, finance, manufacturing, and agriculture. From this population, a sample of 160 respondents was drawn to participate in the quantitative survey.

2.1.2 Sampling Procedure

To ensure sectoral representation and minimize sampling bias, the study used stratified random sampling. The MNCs were first categorized into four key sectors: telecommunications, finance, manufacturing, and agriculture. From each stratum, five companies were randomly selected, resulting in a total of 20 companies. Within these companies, leadership and senior employees with decision-making roles were randomly selected to participate in the survey. Inclusion criteria required that participants had at least two years of experience in a leadership role and some exposure to AI-related initiatives or tools within their organization.

2.1.3 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed around the study objectives. The questionnaire consisted of five sections: demographic characteristics, AI adoption practices, leadership decision-making, perceived leadership effectiveness, and organizational outcomes. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents’ perceptions, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The instrument was pre-tested on 10 respondents from non-sampled firms to assess clarity, internal consistency, and reliability.

2.1.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize demographic profiles and general trends in AI usage. Inferential statistics—specifically multiple regression analysis—were employed to assess the relationship between AI adoption and perceived leadership effectiveness. The model controlled for industry sector, company size, and respondents’ years of experience. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used to determine statistical significance.

2.2 Qualitative Strand

2.2.1 Design and Sampling

To complement the quantitative data, a qualitative inquiry was conducted using in-depth semi-structured interviews. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 15 executive-level leaders across the same 20 MNCs. Selection

was based on their strategic roles in technology integration and organizational leadership. This method ensured the inclusion of information-rich participants with direct experience in AI-enabled leadership decision-making.

2.2.2 Interview Protocol

The interviews were guided by an open-ended protocol aligned with the study’s core themes: decision-making, team management, AI-related challenges, cultural factors, and ethical considerations. Interviews lasted between 45–60 minutes and were conducted in-person or via secure video conferencing, depending on the availability and preference of the participant. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

2.2.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step framework. Coding was both deductive, guided by the study’s theoretical framework, and inductive, allowing new themes to emerge from the participants’ narratives. Initial codes were generated using NVivo software and later organized into broader categories, such as “AI-enhanced decision-making,” “human-AI collaboration,” “cultural resistance,” and “ethical uncertainty.” Triangulation was employed to ensure consistency between findings from different sources.

2.3 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the quantitative instrument, face and content validity were assessed by three subject matter experts in AI and organizational leadership. Reliability was tested using Cronbach’s alpha, with all constructs exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating internal consistency. For the qualitative component, credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement and member checking. Transcripts were shared with participants for verification of key interpretations. Dependability was ensured through detailed documentation of the coding and analysis process.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards as outlined by the European Institute of Applied Science and Management. Participants were provided with informed consent forms, which outlined the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any stage. Data confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing

transcripts and storing data securely on encrypted devices. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the study regarding the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in leadership among multinational corporations (MNCs) in Uganda. The findings are organized into four main subsections: AI usage patterns, perceived benefits of AI adoption on leadership effectiveness, challenges to AI integration, and regression analysis of the impact of AI tools on leadership effectiveness. Each subsection includes both quantitative results and qualitative insights derived from in-depth interviews with executive-level leaders.

3.1 AI Usage Patterns in Leadership

The study found that AI tools are increasingly being utilized across leadership functions in Ugandan MNCs. Quantitative data revealed that 75% of leaders confirmed the use of AI-based systems such as dashboards, predictive analytics platforms, and customer relationship management (CRM) software. These tools are being applied to enhance several leadership functions. Specifically, 72.9% of respondents reported the use of AI for innovation and strategic planning, while 70.8% indicated usage in driving operational efficiency. Additionally, 68.8% of respondents stated that AI is leveraged to generate insights into customer behavior and support marketing strategies.

Interview findings echoed these results, with leaders describing AI as a “strategic companion” that enables real-time monitoring, scenario simulation, and informed decision-making. One executive in the manufacturing sector noted that “AI helps us track performance and forecast resource needs weeks in advance,” highlighting AI’s role in forward-looking operational planning.

The patterns suggest that AI is not limited to isolated applications but is embedded across strategic, operational, and marketing domains. Leaders emphasized that while AI offers advanced analytic capabilities, it is still viewed as a tool that supplements, rather than replaces, human judgment. This trend is illustrated in Table 1 below, which presents the percentage of leaders using AI across key functional domains:

Table 1: AI Usage Patterns in Ugandan MNCs

AI Application Area	% of Leaders Using AI
Predictive analytics, dashboards, CRM tools	75.0%
Strategic planning	72.9%
Operational monitoring	70.8%
Customer insights	68.8%

These statistics confirm that AI is most commonly used to support strategic foresight, streamline operations, and enable

data-driven customer engagement in MNCs operating in Uganda.

3.2 Benefits of AI on Leadership Effectiveness

The findings revealed that AI adoption had a substantial and statistically significant impact on leadership effectiveness. Regression analysis results indicated that AI explained 65% of the variation in leadership performance ($R^2 = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting a strong positive correlation between AI usage and improved leadership outcomes. Respondents reported various specific benefits, including enhanced decision-making speed and accuracy (70.8%), improved operational efficiency (71.7%), strengthened team collaboration and communication (70.8%), and greater capacity for strategic foresight and innovation (70.8%).

Qualitative evidence from interviews added depth to these findings. Many leaders highlighted that AI systems enabled them to synthesize large data sets quickly and make informed decisions in complex, fast-paced environments. One leader explained, “We used to take a week to finalize a decision that now takes an afternoon because AI gives us real-time projections.” Others noted that AI enhanced internal collaboration by facilitating cross-functional data sharing, thereby aligning teams on strategic objectives. The impact of AI on various leadership domains is captured in Table 2, which summarizes average ratings on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = No Impact, 5 = Extremely Significant Impact):

Table 2: Perceived Benefits of AI on Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership Domain	Mean	Standard Deviation
Enhancing communication within teams	4.2	0.8
Improving operational efficiency	4.2	0.7
Facilitating strategic foresight and innovation	4.3	0.8
Supporting workforce management and engagement	4.2	0.8
Enhancing data-driven decision-making	4.3	0.7
Increasing competitive advantage	4.1	0.8
Automating routine leadership tasks	4.0	0.9
Strengthening risk assessment and mitigation	4.2	0.8
Enhancing stakeholder engagement	4.2	0.8
Adapting to technological changes	4.2	0.7

These scores reflect a generally high perception of AI’s contribution to leadership effectiveness, with strategic foresight and data-driven decision-making rated as the most positively impacted areas.

3.3 Challenges in Integrating AI into Leadership

Despite the transformative potential of AI, several significant challenges were reported by respondents. Among these, poor data quality emerged as the most critical, affecting 37.5% of participants. Many organizations struggled with incomplete, outdated, or poorly structured data, which limited the performance of AI systems. Technical knowledge gaps were also identified, with 35.4% of respondents indicating that insufficient expertise among staff hindered AI adoption. Cybersecurity concerns were cited by 33.3%, particularly

related to sensitive data handled by AI systems. Ethical concerns—such as algorithmic bias, transparency, and fairness—were raised by 29.2% of respondents, while 25% pointed to organizational resistance from employees reluctant to embrace automation.

Qualitative responses added further insight into these findings. Leaders highlighted that mistrust of AI outputs—especially in human resource decisions—was a barrier to full integration. One manager observed, “When staff feel judged by algorithms, they disengage emotionally.” Others noted that inadequate ICT infrastructure, including unreliable internet and power interruptions, made it difficult to rely on AI systems consistently. Table 3 below summarizes the percentage of leaders who identified each challenge as a barrier to successful AI integration in their organizations:

Table 3: Challenges to AI Integration into Leadership Functions

Challenge Area	% of Respondents Affected
Data quality issues	37.5%
Technical knowledge gaps	35.4%
Cybersecurity concerns	33.3%
Ethical concerns (e.g., bias, transparency)	29.2%
Organizational resistance	25.0%

These findings underscore that while AI is embraced for its benefits, the technical and cultural foundations required to

support its successful implementation are still evolving in Ugandan MNCs.

3.4 Regression Analysis: AI Tools and Leadership Effectiveness

To statistically quantify the effect of different AI applications on leadership effectiveness, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using six independent variables representing domains of AI usage. The results revealed that AI-based decision-making had the strongest positive influence on leadership effectiveness ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$). This was followed by the use of AI in innovation and strategic planning ($\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$), workforce management ($\beta = 0.29, p = 0.001$), and operational efficiency ($\beta = 0.26, p = 0.002$). Other

significant predictors included AI in customer insight and marketing ($\beta = 0.28, p = 0.001$), and in supply chain and logistics ($\beta = 0.25, p = 0.002$). The overall model was statistically significant, explaining 65% of the variance in leadership effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.65, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.63, F(12, 227) = 52.20, p < 0.001$). These results confirm that AI integration into various leadership functions contributes meaningfully to improved leadership outcomes. Table 4 presents the regression coefficients for each domain of AI usage:

Table 4: Regression Coefficients – AI Applications and Leadership Effectiveness

AI Application Domain	Standardized β	Significance (p-value)
AI-Based Decision Making (AIDM)	0.38	< 0.001
Innovation & Strategic Planning (AIISP)	0.33	< 0.001
Workforce Management (AIWM)	0.29	0.001
Operational Efficiency (AIOE)	0.26	0.002
Marketing & Customer Insights (AIMC)	0.28	0.001
Supply Chain & Logistics (AISCL)	0.25	0.002

These coefficients suggest that leadership functions enhanced by AI—particularly in strategic, operational, and HR domains—have a significant and positive impact on overall leadership effectiveness.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study sought to explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption influences leadership effectiveness in multinational corporations (MNCs) in Uganda. The findings provide robust evidence that AI tools are being increasingly integrated into leadership practices and are contributing significantly to enhanced decision-making, strategic planning, and operational coordination. At the same time, the results reveal critical barriers—including limited data quality, technical skill shortages, and ethical concerns—that shape how AI is adopted in a resource-constrained and culturally diverse environment like Uganda.

The widespread application of AI in leadership functions, particularly in strategic planning (72.9%), operational monitoring (70.8%), and customer insights (68.8%), aligns with the growing global trend of leveraging AI for enterprise-level decision-making (Ransbotham et al., 2020). These tools allow leaders to process vast volumes of data rapidly and generate predictive models that inform long-term strategies. The study’s findings are consistent with those of Ameen et al. (2021), who noted that AI adoption enhances managerial responsiveness and helps organizations become more agile in dynamic environments. However, while the global discourse often emphasizes AI’s autonomy in decision-making, the Ugandan leaders in this study emphasized AI as a supplement to human reasoning, not a replacement. This interpretation is in line with Dwivedi et al. (2021), who argue that in many developing countries, AI is still perceived as a decision-

support system due to contextual challenges such as low digital maturity, infrastructural gaps, and limited human capital.

The results further show that AI adoption has a statistically significant and positive impact on leadership effectiveness, explaining 65% of the variance in leadership performance. This strong relationship validates earlier studies that have highlighted the capacity of AI to improve the quality, speed, and precision of executive decisions (Sheng et al., 2021; Bresciani et al., 2021). Leaders in the current study reported improvements not only in decision-making but also in team collaboration and operational efficiency—findings that are consistent with Wahab et al. (2022), who identified AI as a catalyst for digital collaboration and streamlined communication across departments. Moreover, the enhancement of strategic foresight, which was the highest-rated benefit, reflects arguments by Haenlein and Kaplan (2021), who stress AI’s potential to drive visionary leadership by identifying emerging opportunities and risks.

Nevertheless, the study also uncovered significant limitations to AI integration in Ugandan MNCs. Chief among these were data quality issues (37.5%), limited technical knowledge (35.4%), and cybersecurity and ethical concerns. These challenges align with global findings by Belhadi et al. (2021), who identified poor data governance and insufficient skills as critical bottlenecks to AI implementation, particularly in emerging economies. In Uganda, these challenges are exacerbated by infrastructural constraints such as unreliable electricity and limited broadband access, as well as organizational cultures that may be slow to adapt to disruptive technologies. Ethical concerns, including algorithmic bias and lack of transparency in decision-making, were echoed by leaders in this study and resonate with the conclusions of

Babic et al. (2021), who caution that unchecked AI systems can amplify structural biases and erode trust among employees.

The regression results from the study offer deeper insight into how various AI applications predict leadership outcomes. AI-based decision-making was the most significant predictor of leadership effectiveness ($\beta = 0.38$), followed by AI for innovation and strategic planning ($\beta = 0.33$), workforce management ($\beta = 0.29$), and operational efficiency ($\beta = 0.26$). These findings corroborate the model proposed by Syam and Sharma (2021), who argue that AI's core value lies in optimizing complex cognitive tasks and facilitating adaptive leadership behaviors. The strong predictive power of AI in strategic and operational domains also echoes research by Rai (2020), who notes that organizations that embed AI in core planning processes are better positioned to respond to volatility and disruption.

What distinguishes this study from prior research is its context-specific insight. While many global studies focus on AI adoption in advanced economies, the current research contributes to the limited but growing literature on AI in African organizational contexts. As pointed out by Kar and Dwivedi (2020), successful AI adoption in the Global South requires a hybrid leadership model that blends algorithmic intelligence with ethical reflection and contextual awareness. This study affirms that AI integration in Ugandan MNCs follows such a hybrid model, where leaders embrace AI for its analytic power but remain cautious about its interpretive and moral limitations.

In sum, this study provides empirical support for the view that AI enhances leadership effectiveness by improving decision-making, increasing operational efficiency, and enabling strategic foresight. However, the extent to which these benefits are realized depends heavily on the organization's readiness—particularly in terms of infrastructure, data governance, technical expertise, and cultural alignment. These findings emphasize the importance of designing AI strategies that are not only technologically sound but also socially and ethically grounded. The evidence from Uganda's MNCs highlights the need for a “human-in-the-loop” approach to AI leadership—an approach that ensures technology is guided by human judgment, cultural sensitivity, and ethical responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption on leadership effectiveness within multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in Uganda. The investigation focused on how AI tools are being used in leadership functions, the benefits they offer, the challenges they present, and the extent to which various AI applications impact leadership outcomes. The findings clearly indicate that AI is becoming an integral part of leadership practices across key domains such as strategic planning, decision-

making, operations, workforce management, and customer engagement.

The results demonstrated that AI adoption significantly enhances leadership effectiveness. AI tools were found to improve the speed and accuracy of decisions, strengthen communication and coordination among teams, and provide leaders with the ability to anticipate and respond to emerging risks. Leaders described AI as an essential tool for navigating today's complex and data-rich business environments. However, it was also emphasized that AI serves as a support system—not a replacement—for human judgment, particularly in contexts that require empathy, cultural understanding, and ethical considerations.

At the same time, the study revealed a number of critical challenges that hinder the seamless integration of AI into leadership functions. These include poor data quality, limited technical expertise, cybersecurity risks, and concerns about fairness and transparency in algorithmic decision-making. Infrastructure limitations such as unstable electricity and low internet penetration were also cited as practical obstacles. Leaders expressed a need for clearer governance structures and greater investment in digital skills development to fully harness AI's potential.

Overall, the study confirms that AI has the capacity to transform leadership practice in Ugandan MNCs, but this potential is most fully realized when AI is embedded within a supportive organizational environment. Rather than displacing human leadership, AI should be viewed as a tool that enhances human capabilities. The emerging model is one of collaboration between human and machine—where AI handles complexity and speed, while leaders provide the judgment, empathy, and ethical oversight required for sustainable decision-making.

In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights to the growing discourse on AI in leadership by illustrating how AI adoption can drive effectiveness when implemented in a context-sensitive, human-centered manner. The findings suggest that organizations should approach AI not simply as a technological upgrade, but as a strategic opportunity to redefine leadership in the digital era—balancing innovation with inclusion, speed with sensitivity, and data with discernment.

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