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Conceptualizing the Influence of Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use of AI on Perceived Employability among Millennial Employees in Brunei: Attitudes toward AI as a Mediator

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Abstract

This paper is based on an integrative review of existing literature on technology acceptance model and perceived employability. While these two research streams have received growing scholarly attention, they have rarely been studied together, leaving a gap in examining how employees' perceptions of artificial intelligence (AI) can influence their confidence in their career security and employability in an increasingly AI-driven environment. A conceptual framework is thus proposed where attitudes towards AI is positioned as the mediator linking perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of AI with perceived employability, as attitudes are more aligned with perceived employability as a psychological outcome compared to behavioral intention which primarily predicts the usage of technology. Basically, it suggests that AI should not only be viewed as a technological tool but also as a psychological factor that shapes employees' perceptions of their long-term career prospects due to its impact on employability across different occupations and career stages. Nevertheless, these proposed relationships have yet to be empirically tested and validated within the Brunei context to determine its practical relevance in supporting workforce adaptability and resilience in the future of work.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Perceived Employability, Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Brunei

Introduction

Recent years have seen unprecedented advancements in digital technologies, such as automation and AI, which have substantially altered job responsibilities and the nature of work especially in roles involving routine and administrative tasks (Kassa and Worku, 2025). These developments have reshaped how individuals perceive their employability and career

prospects, given the increasing demand for new skill sets and the need to continuously adapt and remain technologically relevant in the evolving world. In the context of Brunei, although AI adoption is relatively in the early stages compared to neighboring countries, its development is becoming increasingly evident through growing government initiatives as part of Digital Brunei 2030 agenda, where the country is preparing to achieve a fully digitalized economy by 2030 in line with Brunei Vision 2035 (Digital Brunei, 2026). As Brunei's market is largely dominated by service and sales, followed by professional and technical occupations (DEPS, 2024), these jobs are potentially more susceptible to automation. This highlights the importance for employees to develop technological readiness and adaptability to ensure continued employability in the digital era.

Consequently, the concept of perceived employability has emerged as an important construct to help understand how employees evaluate their capabilities in the labor market (Broeck et al, 2014; Lo Presti et al, 2026), as this can implicitly indicate their psychological state such as their level of confidence, optimism and resilience in responding to technological change (Bagdziuniene and Neverauskiene, 2026; Nguyen et al, 2024). Existing literature on perceived employability has largely focused on undergraduates and early careers, particularly in relation to work readiness and entry into employment (Longxiang et al, 2024), while limited attention has been given to mid-career employees, including millennials who constitute a large segment of the workforce and are also facing significant uncertainty caused by AI-driven transformation on top of other technological transitions throughout their careers. This paper therefore aims to address this gap by adopting the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989) to discuss how perceptions of AI influence perceived employability, with attitudes toward AI serving as a mediator. By integrating both perspectives, it seeks to address the psychological aspect of employability, recognizing that technology perceptions can also play a vital role in shaping how employees interpret their future employability, particularly with AI transforming many aspects of work and skill requirements.

Literature Review

The contemporary global environment, which is characterized by brittle, anxious, non-linear and incomprehensible (BANI) features, reflects the instability and unpredictability of modern organizational and labor market systems (Tshetshe, 2025; Tync et al, 2026). Organizations across diverse industries around the world have been reported to have progressively undergone workforce restructuring, role reconfigurations and downsizing, whereby a significant proportion has been directly, or indirectly, linked to the rising adoption of AI and digital transformation strategies (Wilkinson et al, 2019; Ockerman, 2025). For instance, skills that were highly valued and in demand only a few years ago, such as language skills and cognitive abilities, may now be viewed as less relevant due to the increasing automation or augmentation of tasks by AI (Gaskell, 2025). This illustrates that employability is no longer dependent solely upon formal education and qualifications as rooted in Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) but has ever become more associated with the capacity to adapt and fully align with changing industry demands. Subsequently, this situation has underscored the importance for employees to possess stronger psychological capital, which include synergistic components of confidence, hope, optimism and resilience, to be able to keep pace with uncertainty and meet the work requirements of the 21st century (Luthans et al, 2004; Zhou et al, 2026).

While the emergence of new technologies may increase the trend of career transitions where people move actively within or outside their organization to enhance their personal and professional development, such practice is normally dependent upon several factors including market needs, job openings, and the readiness and confidence of the workforce (Beier et al, 2025; De Vos et al, 2021). In the case of Brunei, these developments intersect with a comparatively small and less diversified market, with challenges such as underemployment and skills mismatches being widely prevalent (Hisa et al, 2024). Although AI adoption is relatively at an early stage, employees may already be exposed to global discourse and discussions on automation and job displacement, and this may affect their perceptions about their future careers especially as instances of restructuring have also been observed in the country (United Daily, 2025). This highlights that job security remains an important concern due to the limited range of job opportunities currently available in the market. For instance, individuals who are laid off may experience challenges in securing new employment due to intensified competition for a limited number of positions, and this may negatively affect their perceived employability. Since Brunei is still in the process of pursuing digital transformation, the impact of emerging technologies and AI is still evolving, and therefore there is still uncertainty regarding future job availability and the competencies required in future work environments.

Perceived Employability

An increasing body of literature has highlighted perceived employability as a central concept for understanding career development in today's unpredictable market (Bagdziuniene and Neverauskiene, 2026, Lo Presti et al, 2026; Zhou et al, 2026). Basically, the term has been defined in different ways across disciplines. For example, in psychology literature, perceived employability is described as individuals' belief about their possibilities in gaining and sustaining employment (Berntson and Marklund, 2007), while in career studies, it is viewed as employees' perception of the labor market inside and outside their current organization (Vanhercke et al, 2014). However, most scholars agree that perceived employability is the subjective dimension of employability, meaning that it is shaped by individuals' judgment and perceptions of their current skills and knowledge, and reflects their confidence about their future career (Berntson et al, 2008; Broeck et al, 2014; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007).

Essentially, different perceptions will influence how individuals mentally and psychologically evaluate their employability irrespective of their proficiency and background. For instance, individuals with good qualifications may see their employability to be low if they feel that their skills are becoming outdated or no longer aligned with market demands (Grosemans et al, 2023, Wittekind et al, 2010), while those with average technical skills but greater adaptability and optimism may perceive themselves as highly employable (Vanhercke et al., 2014; Coetzee and Engelbrecht, 2019). Every so often, these perceptions are influenced not only by situational factors such as exposure to AI, but also by individual differences in terms of personality traits, culture and past experiences (Lo Presti et al, 2026; Longxiang et al, 2024). This makes perceived employability to be different from traditional employability perspectives, as employees with similar qualifications and competencies may differ considerably in their level of confidence, optimism and resilience in adapting to dynamic work environments due to differences in attitudes toward change. Understanding these perceptions can therefore help identify areas where employees require additional support,

and this can guide the development of more targeted training and reskilling initiatives for them to stay competitive and motivated.

Definition of Millennials

While most studies in perceived employability have primarily focused on graduates or job seekers (Chopra and Bhilare, 2020; Longxiang et al, 2024; Zhou et al, 2026), limited attention has been given to study the perceptions of current employees who are already established within organizations. This represents a notable gap as employability has now become a lifelong challenge affecting not only labor market entrants but employees at all career stages. This paper therefore aims to focus on millennial employees as their perceptions and experiences can offer profound insights into employability in Industry 5.0 (Chopra and Bhilare, 2020), and this has been relatively underexplored within the Brunei context.

Generally defined as individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (Choudhary et al, 2024), millennials which are also known as 'Generation Y' represent a significant proportion of Brunei's labor market as approximately 45 percent of the workforce falls within this age group, followed only then by Generation X and Generation Z respectively (DEPS, 2024). It is expected that many millennials in Brunei may currently occupy roles in service and sales as well as professional and technical occupations, which collectively constitute the key occupational groups in the country (ibid). As a result, they are more likely to experience job insecurity and skill obsolescence, given that, unlike younger graduates, millennials did not receive AI-related exposure during their academic years and therefore need to continuously learn and upskill to remain relevant (Chopra and Bhilare, 2020). Additionally, since they are expected to remain in the workforce for many more years, they will need to undergo repeated processes of adaptation to emerging technologies and evolving job roles. Although they may have experienced changes during periods of economic recession, globalization and rapid technological disruption including during the pandemic, these events may not adequately capture the ongoing nature of AI-driven transformation, which requires continuous adaptation and learning rather than episodic adjustment (Shatila et al, 2026). Furthermore, while the exposure may make them more agile and willing to embrace innovation, it may also make them concerned about their job stability, and this is especially relevant in Brunei where diversification remains gradual and job opportunities are limited.

Perceived Usefulness of AI

According to Davis (1989), perceived usefulness (PU) refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a particular technology will enhance his/her job performance. Within the context of AI, this definition can be expanded to include not only improvements in efficiency and quality of work but also to the extent to which AI can support employees' well-being by reducing workload and simplifying tasks (Babu et al, 2024; Bonney et al, 2024). Furthermore, with AI transforming many workplace practices and displacing traditional roles, employees may need to reinterpret their value and relevance in the market (Asiedu and Tenakwah, 2025), and these perceptions will influence key psychological and behavioral factors such as motivation, self-efficacy and career planning (Corr and Mutinelli, 2017). An example can be drawn from Self-Determination Theory, which accentuates how psychological needs involving autonomy, competence and relatedness can contribute to intrinsic motivation and personal development (Deci and Ryan, 2012). In this case, individuals who

view AI as promoting their autonomy and competence are more likely to perceive the technology as useful.

Perceived Ease of Use of AI

Perceived ease of use (PEOU) refers to the degree to which an individual believes that the technology is straightforward and requires minimal effort (Davis, 1989). In the context of AI, this can be related to the perceptions of how convenient or effortless it is to work with AI-powered systems which can either be easy to integrate into daily work activities or complex and difficult to navigate. While it is believed that digital competency and prior experience with advanced technologies are important in shaping individuals' interactions with AI, it can be argued that individuals who are adaptable are also more likely to perceive AI as easy to use, as they tend to be more open to learning and easy to adjust to unfamiliar digital environment (Alabri and Shannaq, 2024; Suryadi et al, 2025).

Attitudes toward AI

The term 'attitude' reflects individuals' affective and cognitive evaluation of using technology (Davis, 1989). Affective mainly represents an individual's emotional responses, such as feelings of excitement, anxiety, trust or fear, while cognitive represent a person's beliefs or judgments about the usefulness, risks and potential outcomes (ibid). Attitudes toward AI therefore exemplify the individuals' overall evaluative responses to the use of AI in the workplace, and this includes the extent to which they view AI as favorable or unfavorable, and beneficial or harmful for their work and career development.

Prior studies have shown a connection between attitudes toward AI and exposure to AI technologies (Alabri and Shannaq, 2025; Maghsoudi et al, 2025). For instance, employees who have long relied on traditional ways of working may initially view AI as disruptive and a potential threat to their job security (Brougham and Haar, 2020; Giancaspro et al, 2021). However, as attitudes are malleable, this means that they can gradually be shaped and changed once employees develop greater familiarity and experience in using the technology (Afroogh et al, 2024). A study by Carter et al (2024) has found that positive attitudes towards AI may develop by working through the negative attitudes, and this includes by enhancing their psychological capital, to become more confident, hopeful, optimistic and resilient, towards the usefulness and usability of the technology.

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most widely applied theoretical frameworks for explaining individuals' acceptance and use of technology (Venkatesh et al, 2012). Originally developed by Davis (1989), TAM theorizes that external variables can affect two key cognitive beliefs, which are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, and these cognitive evaluations shape attitudes toward using technology, which subsequently influence behavioral intentions and actual system usage as shown in Figure 1 below.

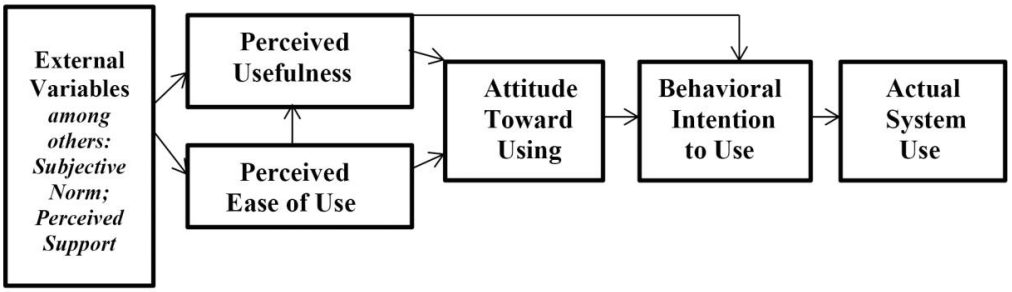


Figure 1: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Source: "Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology"
by Davis, F. D. MIS Quarterly. Copyright 1989

A key assumption of TAM is that technology adoption is not driven solely by the characteristics of the technology, but by how individuals or users perceive and evaluate those characteristics (Venkatesh et al, 2012). This is in line with psychological theories that emphasize the role of cognitive appraisals and subjective interpretations in shaping attitudes and behaviors (McCrae and Costa, 1999). In other words, when AI is perceived as useful in improving productivity, individuals are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward it, and similarly, when AI is perceived as easy to use, it reduces psychological resistance and facilitates acceptance (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000).

Conceptual Framework

This paper proposes a framework grounded in TAM to explain how employees' perceptions of AI shape their attitudes toward AI, which in turn influence their perceived employability. While limited studies have applied TAM to study perceived employability, its application is believed to be increasingly relevant in today's AI-driven workplaces. Unlike the original TAM, behavioral intention and actual system use are excluded in the conceptual framework as this paper aims to examine a different research outcome namely perceived employability rather than technology adoption behavior. Attitudes toward AI is thus proposed as the mediator as it is more conceptually aligned with a career-related psychological evaluation. Based on this, five propositions are developed as shown in Figure 2.

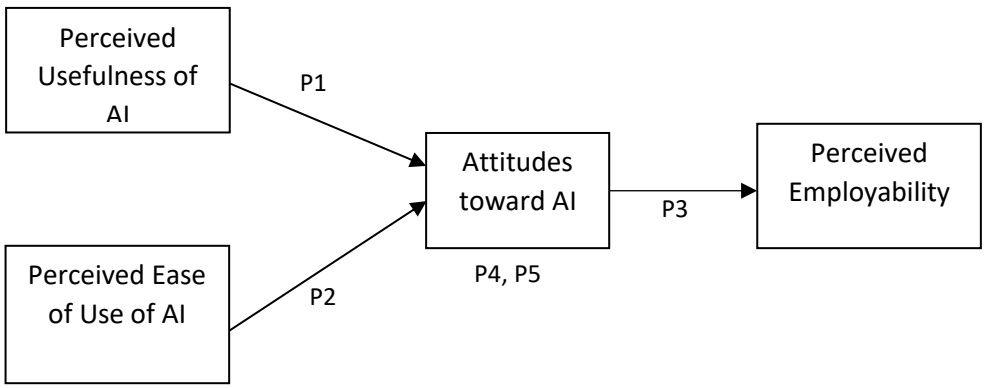


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

The influence of perceived usefulness of AI on attitude toward AI

It is stated in the TAM theory that perceived usefulness directly shapes an individual's attitude toward a technology (Davis, 1989). Essentially, as AI becomes increasingly embedded within organizational processes, employees have little choice but to accept the need to work alongside and with AI systems to gain or maintain a competitive advantage. It is expected that, by 2030, work will be almost evenly distributed between humans, technology and human-machine collaboration, with AI automating routine and data-driven activities and humans focusing on creativity, critical thinking and social interaction (World Economic Forum, 2025). This, however, does not come without challenges, especially with some skills being more complementary to AI, while skills that involve routine work may produce negative impacts, as these have a higher probability of becoming obsolete or losing relevance in the market (Coetzee and Engelbrecht, 2019; Kassa and Worku, 2025). This indicates that employees are more inclined to develop positive attitudes toward AI when they perceive it as a tool that supports their work and enables innovation but have less favorable attitude if it is seen as a threat or as a potential source of displacement.

P1: Perceived usefulness of AI positively influences attitude towards AI.

The influence of perceived ease of use of AI on attitude toward AI

According to TAM, when a technology is viewed as simple and easy to use, individuals will have a more positive attitude towards its adoption and become more willing to explore and utilize the technology (Davis, 1989). This has been supported in recent research, which emphasize that employees are more willing to adopt technologies that are perceived as user-friendly as this can reduce cognitive load and facilitate smoother integration into existing work practices (Alabri and Shannaq, 2024; Kim and Lee, 2024). It is also important to note that PEOU may play a more critical role in emerging economies compared to developed countries, especially where digital literacy and exposure to AI are limited. For instance, studies have shown that those who are unfamiliar with using digital tools may lose confidence and reduce trust in the system, which can negatively affect their motivation and engagement (Afroogh et al, 2024; Suryadi et al, 2025). Furthermore, the need to continuously engage with increasingly complex systems in the workplace may contribute to stress and emotional exhaustion (Babu et al, 2024; Bonney et al, 2024).

P2: Perceived ease of use of AI positively influences attitude towards AI.

The influence of attitudes toward AI on perceived employability

Although a positive attitude toward AI does not automatically make employees more employable due to factors like limited skills and restrained labor market, favorable attitudes toward AI may reflect higher levels of confidence, optimism and resilience, as mentioned by Carter et al (2024), where psychological capital is a significant predictor of individuals' attitudes toward AI. It is believed that, when individuals develop positive attitudes toward AI, they are more likely to view technological change as a facilitator of career advancement than a disruptor. For instance, it is found in a study by Kulikov and Shirokova (2021) that people feel less threatened when a robot replaces them compared to when another person replaces them. In other words, technology can be viewed positively if individuals believe it is helping or supplementing their work instead of taking over their tasks. Although this view may be contested with AI progressively automating many human work functions, positive attitudes may still arise when individuals perceive AI as a tool that improves efficiency and creates

opportunities for skill development. This suggests that those with positive attitudes toward AI are more likely to have a strong belief in their ability to remain employable in a rapidly changing market, while those with negative attitudes toward AI may experience feelings of job insecurity, reduced confidence and are less motivated to upskill.
P3: Attitudes towards AI positively influence perceived employability.

The mediating role of attitudes toward AI
Fundamentally, PU and PEOU are cognitive beliefs that shape individuals' attitudes toward a technology. In this case, while these beliefs are indicative of employees' perceptions on AI, they may not necessarily translate directly into stronger perceived employability. For instance, an employee may view AI as useful and easy to use but, at the same time, may feel concerned that it could replace certain tasks or change the requirements of their current role. This demonstrates that positive beliefs on AI can coexist with uncertainty about their future employability. Therefore, attitude toward AI is proposed as a mediator between PU/PEOU and perceived employability to explain the process through which technology perceptions are translated into career-related judgments.

P4: Attitude toward AI mediates the relationship between perceived usefulness of AI and perceived employability.
P5: Attitude toward AI mediates the relationship between perceived ease of use of AI and perceived employability.

Discussion
Basically, the paper reinforces the importance of psychological and perceptual factors in understanding perceived employability. The primary novelty of this paper lies in the integration of TAM and employability theory by using attitudes toward AI as a critical mediator. While prior TAM studies have largely focused on behavioral intention and system usage (Davis 1989), and employability research has mostly emphasized work readiness and preparation to enter the labor market (Longxiang et al, 2024), this paper positions technology perception as a **psychological and career-shaping mechanism** rather than a functional outcome. In doing so, it highlights that in Brunei's early AI environment, employees are not simply using the technology but are also interpreting what AI means for their long-term career security especially in this case where underemployment and limited job opportunities remain the major labor market challenges. In a relatively small market, employees may not only face concerns about job displacement but also limited alternative career pathways. In such a context, employability is not merely about individuals' skills and competencies but also about psychological confidence in remaining relevant within a structurally constrained market. Therefore, this paper aims to offer a deeper insight of employability in the era of AI from the perspective of an emerging economy that has been underrepresented and relatively underexplored in existing literature. As Brunei is currently undergoing its efforts toward a digital and knowledge-based economy, this presents a timely context for examining employees' perceptions of AI and their perceived employability.

The focus on millennial employees is particularly relevant given their significant proportion in the labor market. In addition, millennials represent a generation that has been, and is expected to remain, active in the workforce for several decades, navigating continuous disruption caused by AI and emerging technologies. It is expected that their attitudes toward

AI today may substantially influence their career adaptability and future labor market positioning and therefore have important implications for their sustained employability. However, the main limitation here is that millennials are not a homogeneous cohort and, despite sharing certain generational experiences, individuals within this group may differ, among others, in terms of their educational backgrounds, social upbringing, professional experience and exposure to technology (Choudhary et al, 2024). Therefore, while the framework proposes relationships, they should not be generalized across all millennials but should be treated as context-specific insights.

Essentially, this paper contributes in two ways. Firstly, it extends TAM into the domain of perceived employability, demonstrating that perceptions of the usefulness and usability of technology can influence beyond actual system usage to employees' confidence and optimism in their future employability. This can be useful for organizations and policymakers as it provides insights into why psychological factors should be considered alongside skills and competencies when addressing workforce employability. Secondly, conceptualizing attitudes toward AI as a mediator provides a psychological explanation of how employees' perceptions of AI may translate into their perceived employability. Positive attitudes toward AI indicate their confidence, optimism and resilience in responding to changes, whereas negative attitudes may lead to disengagement, uncertainty and anxiety (Bonney et al, 2024). This suggests that preparing the workforce for AI involves not only enhancing their digital competencies but also cultivating positive mindsets toward technological change (Carter et al, 2024; Nguyen et al, 2024). Hence, this paper can also contribute to the development of psychological capital interventions within organizations, aimed at enhancing employees' positive psychological resources and thereby improving their adaptability to AI-driven transformation in the workplace.

While it is important to be confident and have a strong sense of employability, high levels of perceived employability may have both opportunities and challenges for an organization (Sakaki, 2022). For instance, individuals with remarkably high perceived employability may be more receptive to innovation and change and therefore are more willing to engage in continuous learning, contributing to career growth and increased satisfaction (Lane and Saint-Martin, 2021), but they may be more likely to search for better job alternatives, thereby resulting in higher turnover intentions and potential loss of investments in training and development (Hootegem et al, 2018). Conversely, employees with low perceived employability may also have adverse organizational consequences, as their feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about future career may make them feel disengaged and demotivated (Giancaspro et al, 2021). Therefore, while both high and low perceived employability carry potential drawbacks, organizations may benefit from a balanced and moderately high level of perceived employability, where employees are competent and capable of adapting to change, yet still able to maintain meaningful commitment to the organization. In this regard, the notion of employee loyalty, as emphasized by Rothwell and Arnold (2007), may be less applicable in contemporary markets but instead, strategies like talent retention and lifelong learning are essential in fostering workforce resilience and organizational stability in an evolving economy (Beier et al, 2025).

Conclusion

This paper proposes a conceptual framework that integrates TAM and perceived employability among millennial employees in Brunei with attitudes toward AI as a mediator. It extends existing employability literature, which has largely focused on graduates and job seekers, by studying employability from the perspective of millennial employees who are consistently required to upskill and reskill to remain competitive and relevant in an AI-driven environment. Their perceptions of technology change therefore serve as important foundations that can shape their responses or attitudes toward technology and may either strengthen or weaken their sense of career security and confidence in the future of work. In the context of Brunei where AI adoption is still at an early stage and challenges such as underemployment and limited job opportunities persist, understanding employees' perceptions of AI is particularly important for informing strategies that can enhance workforce readiness and resilience, thereby contributing to the successful realization of Digital Brunei 2030 and Brunei Vision 2035. In addition to that, understanding perceived employability can guide organizations and policymakers into areas where greater training, reskilling and career support may be required.

As this paper is conceptual, empirical research is necessary to test and validate the proposed framework. This can be done by gathering data from various industries and organizations in Brunei to assess its applicability across different settings. It is also worth to note that employees are not only exposed to technological change but also to broader changes such as organizational restructuring and labor market transformations. This indicates that this paper only captures one aspect of the factors that may shape perceived employability by focusing specifically on technology-related perceptions. Therefore, empirical research could consider adding career-related variables such as career adaptability into the framework as this would give a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing perceived employability in an AI-driven market.

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