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The Impact of Gender Inequity, System Inefficiencies, Declining Customer Experience, Challenges in AI Adoption, Employee Isolation and Workforce Well-being Aniku Ahmed

Usman Rehmat

Imperial College of Business studies

usmanrehmat2016@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Even though digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and modern management philosophies have come a long way, many businesses, especially in developing economies, are still having trouble making the transition to effective modernization. Companies are proud to show off new digital tools and better office spaces, but these surface-level changes often hide deeper, unresolved problems with the way the company is structured and the culture. This study examines the disparity between symbolic modernization and substantive modernization by analyzing six enduring obstacles: gender inequity, dysfunctional organizational systems, deteriorating customer experience, misaligned AI adoption, abuse of authority, and employee isolation. Employing an auto ethnographic approach underpinned by established academic literature, the study elucidates the inadequacy of superficial modernization in the absence of ethical leadership, an inclusive culture, equitable HR practices, and psychological safety. The results show that technology alone cannot bring about real modernization. It needs people to be invested in, leaders who are empathetic, open systems, and fair workplace practices. The study ends with a list of suggestions for making organizations that are focused on people, based on ethics, and strong enough to handle technology.

Keywords: *Corporate Modernization, Gender Equality, Workplace Systems, Company Culture, AI Mismanagement, Abuse of Power, Customer Service, Employee Isolation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern businesses are working in a time when they have never had so much access to global knowledge, management theories, digital tools, and artificial intelligence (Michael, 2024). Today's leaders know more about the best practices used around the world than any other generation (Kouzes et al., 2024). This should help companies modernize quickly and easily on paper. But in reality, modernization failures are still common, especially in places where rigid hierarchies, informal processes, and culturally ingrained power dynamics have a big impact on how organizations work (Hassan et al., 2025).

A clear paradox arises as organizations deploy new software, establish dashboards, or integrate AI-driven systems, while the fundamental ethics, culture, and managerial practices remain static (Häikiö & Heikkilä, 2024). This is causing a bigger gap between technological progress and human progress. Even though technology is getting better, people still work in old systems that stifle new ideas, make things less clear, and hurt employee health. The issue is worse in developing countries where there aren't many protections for workers, informal leaders make most of the decisions, and HR policies aren't always fair or consistent (Parker et al., 2025). Many companies see modernization as a way to make things look better, like by renovating offices, adding automation tools, or reorganizing departments. They don't pay enough attention to the more

complicated but important parts of workplace culture, integrity, accountability, and inclusivity (Dupuis & Massicotte, 2025).

This study addresses these deficiencies by examining six principal factors that hinder authentic modernization such as efficiency, equality, and general sustainability are threatened in many modern organizational settings by a number of serious issues (Nyakomitah, 2024). One urgent problem is the unjust treatment of women, which limits the opportunity for different viewpoints in decision-making while also sustaining gender inequity (Ali, 2024). In addition, structural issues with institutional structures frequently result in inefficiencies and impede smooth operations, which worsens the experience for clients who anticipate dependability and high-quality service (Pacheco et al., 2024). The bad management of artificial intelligence, where insufficient supervision or technological abuse can lead to moral conundrums and operational hazards, is another growing concern (Jeel, 2024). Additionally, misusing authority and using power for selfish ends undermines organizational integrity, erodes trust, and increases stakeholder resentment. Lastly, employee isolation—whether due to poor communication, exclusion, or disengagement—decreases creativity and teamwork, which eventually impairs the organization's long-term performance (Figueiredo et al., 2025). When taken as a whole, these related problems show how urgently reforms that put accountability, equity, and responsible management practices first are needed. The study employs an auto ethnographic approach, integrating personal experience with academic analysis, to elucidate the coexistence and mutual reinforcement of these issues within actual organizational contexts.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The culture of an organization and the false idea of modernization

Huang & Wu (2025) contend that organizational culture is the foremost influence on enduring behavior within an enterprise. When culture fails to progress in tandem with technology, modernization devolves into a mere performative exercise. The cultural dimensions model backs this up by saying that cultures with a lot of power distance, which are common in developing areas, don't like open and fair systems (Omeihe et al., 2025).

Some companies focus on the visible parts of modernization, like technology, branding, and how the office looks, while leaving the invisible parts, like ethics, trust, communication, and fairness, the same. This disconnects results in a type of "symbolic adoption," where modernization seems real but doesn't actually make things better for employees or performance (Shams et al., 2025).

2.2 Gender Inequality and Structural Bias

Women in the workplace always points out that there are still gaps in safety, pay, and representation. Gendered barriers, like informal promotion criteria, limited access to leadership, and cultural stereotypes, still affect how people work. These problems get worse when HR rules aren't enforced (Morin, 2025).

Research consistently demonstrates that gender inequality arises not from individual deficiencies but from systemic failures that obstruct equitable treatment. Men also deal with problems that haven't been studied enough, like hiding their feelings, the stigma around getting help for mental health issues, and stereotypes about certain jobs (Volodzkiene, 2025).

2.3 Inefficient Processes and Dysfunctional Systems

The performance and quality systems need to be used consistently in order to have a real effect. But a lot of companies only use frameworks like ISO or Lean Six Sigma to get certified, not to

really improve their operations. This results in "paper systems" that only exist in documents, while day-to-day operations depend on undocumented shortcuts or individual.

2.4 A worse experience for customers

The level of maturity in an organization has a big effect on how happy its customers are. Harvard Business Review (2020)¹ documented that the customer experience is a long-term way to stand out from the competition. But a lot of businesses get lazy once the market is stable.

2.5 Problems with using AI

AI has a lot of potential, but if it's used wrong, it can cause bad decisions, biased results, and less trust among employees (Brink et al., 2024). The OECD (2021)² lists common risks like not enough training, bad data quality, and relying too much on automated outputs without checking them with a human. AI is often brought into workplaces before the basic systems are ready, which makes things worse instead of better.

2.6 Abuse of Power and Authority Disparities

The toxic leadership to higher turnover, mental health problems, and less commitment to the organization. Power abuse is especially common in places where HR isn't very strong or where the culture supports leaders more than workers. These kinds of places make it less likely that people will report bad behavior and make fear-based management seem normal (Hassani, 2025).

2.7 Being Alone at Work and Mental Health

People are starting to see workplace isolation as a problem all over the world. WHO (2022)³ documented that more and more workers are feeling burned out, lonely, and emotionally drained. Expatriates are particularly susceptible due to cultural disparities, absence of social networks, and insufficient institutional assistance (Wang & Chen, 2024).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative auto ethnographic methodology, underpinned by comprehensive secondary literature. Auto ethnography enables the author to utilize authentic lived experiences and conduct a critical analysis in relation to overarching organizational patterns.

3.1 Method of Auto ethnography

The difficulties, and contemplations in various workplaces constitute a fundamental perspective for this study. This method is especially good at finding hidden dynamics in organizations, such as a number of subtle but potent dynamics influence behavior and results in social and organizational situations (Lehmann, 2025). These include the unspoken laws of power, which frequently govern choices and have an impact on hierarchies outside of official frameworks (Baqai, 2024). Emotional and cultural barriers that keep people from fully engaging or voicing disagreement serve to reinforce these implicit standards, which in turn perpetuate inequity (Dawkins, 2024). Unspoken expectations are equally important since they create unseen forces that influence behavior without being acknowledged (Chaudhry et al 2025). The lived experiences of exclusion or discrimination, which not only marginalize particular groups but also undermine trust and a sense of belonging inside institutions, further exacerbate these dynamics.

¹ <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/>

² https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2021/05/oecd-economic-outlook-volume-2021-issue-1_88e062cf.html

³ <https://www.who.int/data/gho/publications/world-health-statistics>

Lastly, people often struggle with their own reactions to moral inconsistencies, juggling the conflict between their own beliefs and company policies. Collectively, these elements draw attention to the intricate relationships between culture, ethics, and power, highlighting the necessity of critical analysis in organizational justice and inclusion research. Auto ethnography does not just talk about individual experiences; it puts them in the context of well-known academic frameworks.

3.2 Sources of Secondary Data

Secondary data, which draws from reputable reports from international organizations like the ILO, OECD, WHO, McKinsey, and Gartner, as well as established scholarship in organizational culture and human resource management, provides a crucial basis for analysis in this study. Furthermore, a wide variety of management literature offers theoretical and practical viewpoints that enhance the conversation. The research gains more credibility and depth by combining these reliable sources with firsthand knowledge and contextual awareness, guaranteeing that the conclusions are both practically applicable to current organizational issues and rigorously academic.

3.3 Thematic Coding and Interpretation

We got themes by coding narrative reflections and matching them up with patterns we found in the literature. This process brought to light problems that happen over and over again in different workplaces and show that the organization as a whole is not working well.

4. RESULTS

The results show that a variety of deeply ingrained organizational issues constantly impede modernization efforts. Unfair remuneration systems, discriminatory recruiting and promotion practices, hazardous work settings for women, and cultural constraints that hinder mobility all contribute to gender inequality, which is a persistent barrier. The lack of sufficient psychological assistance for both men and women further compromises productivity and well-being, and harassment instances are frequently underreported, creating accountability gaps (Shah et al., 2024). These disparities are not coincidental; rather, they are ingrained in opaque processes and strengthened by unofficial hierarchy, which makes reforming them difficult. Beyond gender concerns, structural inefficiencies erode organizational resilience because of gaps in workflows, overlapping duties that obscure accountability, and regulations that are only in place on paper but are not consistently enforced. Many companies rely significantly on a small number of "system saviors" who possess vital information; when these people depart, entire operations break down, revealing the system's vulnerability (Zeiser, 2024). Customers are directly impacted by these flaws because businesses that disregard consumer feedback, rely on antiquated systems, neglect rivals, and presume long-term loyalty provide deteriorating service quality, especially in times of crisis (Asamoah, 2025). Furthermore, inadequate AI integration creates new dangers, including as biased algorithms, automated screening errors, untrained staff misinterpreting outputs, and improper use of AI as a surveillance tool rather than a productivity booster, which instills mistrust and anxiety in workers (Khurram et al., 2025). A culture of fear that stifles creativity and involvement is created when managers abuse their power by intimidation, covert threats, taking advantage of employment instability, punitive blocking of approvals, and irrational demands (Hecker, 2024). Furthermore, racial and cultural discrimination, exclusion from teams, a lack of social and emotional support, a poor work-life balance, and loneliness and cultural detachment among expats are all examples of how employee

isolation is still a serious problem (Temlong, 2025). The performance of the organization is further weakened by this isolation, which immediately leads to burnout, anxiety, and diminishing motivation. All together, these interconnected obstacles highlight the fact that modernization calls for structural changes, moral leadership, inclusivity, and a sincere dedication to worker welfare.

5. Discussion

The results of the study show that modernization that only consists of technology improvements does not result in significant organizational growth since people, their values, and their leadership are the real problems. Fair HR practices are hampered by cultural rigidity in hierarchical, high-power-distance businesses, where employees are afraid to voice problems, decision-making is centralized, and there is a lack of openness. The emotional stress brought on by gender discrimination, power abuse, and a lack of belonging is a clear example of the human cost of institutional failure (Bareket & Fiske, 2025). It results in mental exhaustion, decreased productivity, disengagement, and eventually turnover, with expatriates experiencing further cultural isolation (Abdalla et al., 2025). Additionally, modernization initiatives are weakened by ethical gaps since instruments cannot make up for leadership that puts control and status ahead of competence and teamwork (Singun, 2025). In a similar vein, technology devoid of human intervention is ineffectual; rather than addressing systemic issues, AI frequently exacerbates inequality and creates new hazards. A number of recommendations are made to alleviate these obstacles: HR structures should be strengthened with clear policies, independent complaint procedures, whistleblower protection, and alignment with international standards; ethical leadership based on honesty, empathy, consistency, and accountability needed to be encouraged while fear-based management should be discouraged; inclusive cultures should be built, diversity should be taught, expatriates should be supported, and social connections are encouraged; operational systems should be strengthened with KPI-driven workflows, standardized processes, clear accountability frameworks, and employee training should be prioritizing mental health (Abril et al., 2024). When taken as a whole, these actions highlight the need for modernization to be both human-centered and technology in order to achieve long-term organizational growth.

6. CONCLUSION

Modernization calls on companies to face and address ingrained structural and cultural issues, going far beyond surface-level enhancements or the simple updating of technology (George, A. S. 2024). Integrity, accountability, and transparency must take the place of force and fear-based management in order to achieve true modernization. Additionally, it calls for cultural inclusivity in order to guarantee that other perspectives are not only heard but also actively respected during the decision-making process. Since safe working conditions, fair promotion procedures, and equal compensation are necessary to promote participation and trust, gender equality is still a crucial component (Adeniyi et al., 2024). System reliability is equally crucial, and in order to avoid being overly dependent on people and to guarantee resilience, workflows, accountability frameworks, and corrective procedures must be created. Lastly, no technology advancement can make up for a workforce that feels helpless, invisible, or emotionally alone, thus it is imperative that employee health and well-being—both psychological and physical—be given first priority (Johnson et al., 2024). Modernization is a complete transition that necessitates companies to address deeply rooted structural and cultural issues. It goes beyond simply updating technology or adding new tools to current processes. A mentality change is necessary for true modernization,

replacing antiquated methods based on hierarchy, fear, or coercion with principles of honesty, responsibility, and openness. These values serve as the cornerstone of long-term organizational development by guaranteeing moral decision-making and transparent communication, which builds trust among employees at all levels (Dahiya et al., 2025).

The development of cultural inclusion is equally crucial. Contemporary companies need to understand that diversity involves more than just representation; it also involves active engagement. In decision-making processes, inclusivity guarantees that voices from various origins, genders, and experiences are not only recognized but also appreciated. This strategy fosters innovation, broadens organizational perspectives, and keeps limited perspectives from taking over and impeding advancement (Aggarwal et al., 2025). One of the pillars of modernization is still gender equality. Building trust and promoting participation requires fair wages, fair promotion processes, and safe working environments. Organizations run the risk of alienating talent and lowering morale without these protections. Fairness must therefore be ingrained in a modern workplace's procedures to guarantee that all workers, regardless of gender or background, have access to possibilities.

Another crucial factor is system reliability. Ad hoc solutions and individual performance are too costly for modern enterprises. They must instead create robust processes, frameworks for accountability, and remedial measures that ensure continuation even during disruptions. Organizational resilience is strengthened, efficiency is improved, and vulnerability is decreased by this structural dependability (Usman, 2024). Lastly, modernization ought to put workers' welfare first. No technological development can make up for a workforce that feels invisible, underappreciated, or emotionally alone (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024). Initiatives for physical well-being, mental health support, and psychological safety must all be incorporated into organizational plans. Employees that experience empowerment and support are more engaged, creative, and dedicated to long-term success. Modernization is essentially a multifaceted process that incorporates resilience, well-being, equality, inclusivity, and ethical leadership. Organizations can only truly restructure in a way that is human-centered and sustainable by addressing these interrelated components (Thomas, 2024).

Even though digital tools are useful, they are not enough on their own; modernization also involves the structures, human experiences, and values that influence regular organizational interactions. Businesses that prioritize people, develop emotional intelligence, and maintain high moral standards are better positioned to prosper in quickly evolving contexts. Fairness, empathy, transparency (Shi & Wei, 2025), and shared accountability are the cornerstones of sustainable modernization, which combined produce workplaces that are not only technologically sophisticated but also morally upright, inclusive of all cultures, and focused on people (Gil et al., 2025).

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