

## **Navigating Digital Disruption: The Role of Agile Organizational Management in the AI Era**

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### **Abstract**

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into business ecosystems has created unprecedented levels of digital disruption, demanding organizations to adapt swiftly to sustain competitiveness. This study examines how Agile Organizational Management (AOM) enables firms to navigate AI-driven change by fostering adaptability, resilience, and performance. Drawing on Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Agile Management Theory, the research investigates the influence of AI adoption, adaptive leadership, employee empowerment, and organizational culture on performance outcomes in the AI era.

The study employed a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire distributed to 250 managers and executives across IT, manufacturing, and service organizations in South Tamil Nadu. Statistical analyses, including correlation, multiple regression, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), were applied using SPSS and AMOS. The findings reveal that AI adoption and technological readiness significantly enhance agile management practices ( $R^2 = 0.33$ ), which in turn improve organizational adaptability and performance ( $R^2 = 0.45$ ). Employee empowerment mediates the relationship between agility and resilience (Sobel  $z = 4.95$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while organizational culture positively moderates the link between agility and performance.

The study concludes that agile management serves as a strategic bridge between AI adoption and sustainable competitiveness. Organizations that cultivate adaptive leadership, empowerment, and a learning-oriented culture are better positioned to thrive amid continuous technological disruption. These insights provide actionable pathways for industries in emerging regions to accelerate digital transformation with organizational agility.

### **Keywords**

Agile Organizational Management; Artificial Intelligence; Digital Disruption; Adaptive Leadership; Employee Empowerment; Organizational Culture; Dynamic Capabilities; Organizational Resilience; South Tamil Nadu; Technological Readiness.

## **1. Introduction**

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has accelerated digital transformation across industries, reshaping how organizations function, compete, and sustain themselves in a rapidly changing environment. The term *digital disruption* refers to the transformation of traditional business models and value chains caused by the introduction of advanced digital technologies such as AI, automation, data analytics, and cloud computing. These disruptions have forced organizations to rethink their strategies, structures, and processes to remain competitive in a technology-driven economy (Bharadwaj et al., 2013).

In this context, Agile Organizational Management (AOM) has emerged as a strategic response to the uncertainty and dynamism of the AI era. Originally rooted in software development, agile principles—such as adaptability, collaboration, iterative learning, and customer-centricity—are now being applied to organizational management and leadership (Rigby et al., 2016). Agile organizations are characterized by rapid decision-making, decentralized authority, and cross-functional teamwork that allows them to respond swiftly to external and internal challenges (Denning, 2018).

The AI era introduces both opportunities and challenges for management. On one hand, AI enables predictive analytics, process optimization, and data-driven decisions; on the other, it creates new challenges related to workforce displacement, ethical governance, and adaptability (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). In regions like South Tamil Nadu, where industrial sectors are transitioning toward digital ecosystems, the success of this transformation depends largely on how effectively organizations adopt AI while fostering agile management practices.

The central argument of this study is that *agile management acts as a bridge* between AI adoption and organizational success. The lack of adaptability, rigid hierarchies, and poor technological readiness often lead to organizational inertia—hindering digital transformation (Teece, 2018). Hence, studying how agile leadership, employee empowerment, and organizational culture influence adaptability and resilience under AI disruption is crucial.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many organizations in South Tamil Nadu have begun integrating digital tools but continue to rely on traditional management systems. These rigid structures impede rapid adaptation to AI-driven changes, resulting in low innovation capacity and slower decision-making. There is a clear gap in empirical evidence on how agile practices enhance organizational resilience and performance during digital disruption.

### **Objectives**

1. To examine the extent of AI adoption and digital disruption in organizations in South Tamil Nadu.
2. To analyze the relationship between agile management practices and organizational adaptability.
3. To assess how adaptive leadership and empowerment contribute to organizational performance.
4. To identify the role of organizational culture in moderating agile outcomes in the AI era.

## **Scope of the Study**

The study covers organizations from the IT, manufacturing, and service sectors in South Tamil Nadu (Madurai, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, and Dindigul), focusing on managerial and executive perceptions.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Digital Disruption and AI Transformation**

Digital disruption refers to the profound changes that occur when new digital technologies and business models affect the value proposition of existing goods and services (Schwab, 2016). According to Westerman et al. (2014), digital transformation alters not only technologies but also customer expectations and organizational mindsets. The introduction of AI has intensified this disruption by automating cognitive tasks, predicting market behavior, and enabling real-time decision-making (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017).

In the Indian context, AI applications are growing across sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, banking, and education (NITI Aayog, 2020). However, regions like South Tamil Nadu face infrastructural and skill-related challenges that affect the pace of adoption (Kumar & George, 2022). Firms that fail to develop adaptive strategies risk technological obsolescence. Therefore, managing digital disruption through organizational agility is essential for competitiveness.

### **2.2 Agile Organizational Management (AOM)**

Agility refers to an organization's ability to sense environmental changes and respond rapidly through flexible processes and empowered teams (Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011). Rigby et al. (2016) defined organizational agility as a mindset rather than a methodology—emphasizing collaboration, adaptability, and iterative problem-solving.

According to Denning (2018), agile organizations shift from hierarchical command systems to decentralized networks where decisions are made closer to the operational level. This fosters innovation, enhances responsiveness, and supports rapid alignment with market demands. In AI-driven environments, agile management enables firms to experiment with emerging technologies without compromising stability (Overby et al., 2006).

Empirical studies (e.g., Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011) demonstrate that agility positively influences organizational performance, particularly under technological uncertainty. Similarly, a study by Kettunen (2019) found that agile management practices significantly improve digital transformation readiness by integrating strategic flexibility and leadership adaptability.

### **2.3 AI Adoption and Organizational Adaptability**

AI adoption enhances process efficiency and decision accuracy but requires cultural and structural flexibility (Ransbotham et al., 2018). Research by Davenport and Ronanki (2018) showed that AI applications are most successful in organizations that combine technical capability with agile governance. Adaptability refers to the ability of an organization to reconfigure resources and processes in response to external shocks (Teece, 2007).

A study by Mehta and Joshi (2020) in Indian SMEs revealed that organizations adopting agile project management practices experience faster AI integration and improved customer satisfaction. Therefore, adaptability serves as a mediating mechanism through which AI adoption translates into better performance outcomes.

## **2.4 Leadership and Employee Empowerment in the AI Era**

Adaptive leadership is the cornerstone of organizational agility. Heifetz et al. (2009) argued that adaptive leaders mobilize people to tackle complex challenges that lack technical solutions. Such leadership fosters learning and experimentation—key ingredients for surviving AI-driven change.

In an empirical study, Horney et al. (2010) found that adaptive leadership positively correlates with change readiness and organizational learning. Similarly, empowerment—defined as the delegation of decision-making authority to employees—enhances motivation, creativity, and problem-solving capacity (Spreitzer, 1995). In agile organizations, empowerment acts as a catalyst that translates leadership vision into collective action (Highsmith, 2009).

In India, Kaur and Sharma (2021) found that empowered employees in technology firms show higher acceptance of AI-based workflows and demonstrate proactive behavior during digital transformation initiatives.

## **2.5 Organizational Culture and Moderation Effects**

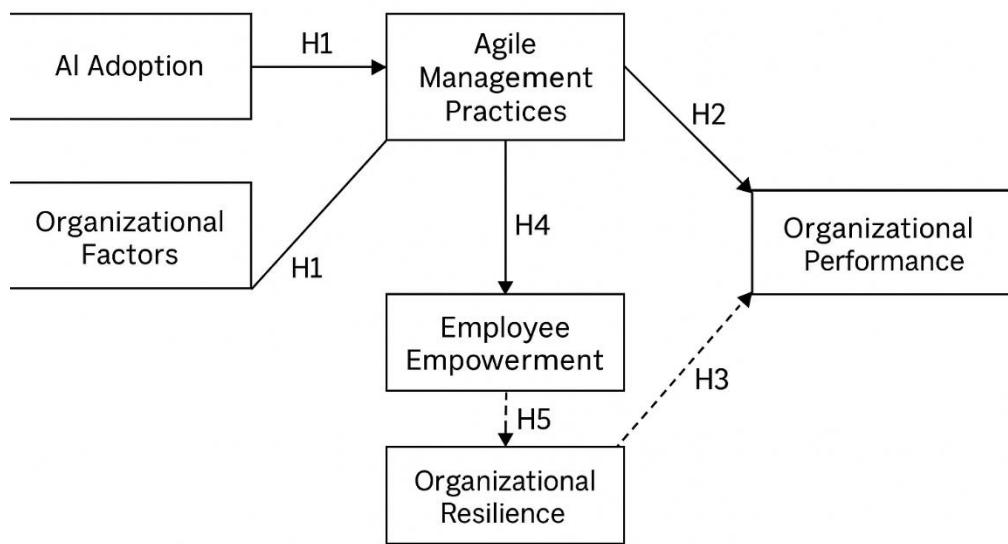
Organizational culture plays a vital role in sustaining agility. Schein (2010) emphasized that culture reflects shared values and behaviors that influence how people adapt to change. A collaborative, learning-oriented culture enhances experimentation and risk-taking—essential for digital transformation.

Empirical evidence from studies by Chow and Cao (2019) and Denning (2020) suggests that the relationship between agile practices and performance is significantly stronger in organizations that encourage open communication and continuous improvement. Conversely, bureaucratic cultures suppress innovation and reduce responsiveness to AI-driven changes.

## **2.6 Theoretical Foundation**

This study integrates Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2007) and Agile Management Theory (Highsmith, 2009). Dynamic capabilities refer to a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal competencies in rapidly changing environments. Agile management complements this by focusing on iterative adaptation, cross-functional collaboration, and decentralization. Together, these theories explain how organizations in South Tamil Nadu can sustain performance amid AI-led disruption through flexibility and learning.

## Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**

### 2.7 Research Gap

Although several studies have explored digital transformation and agility in global contexts, limited empirical research addresses how agile management mediates AI adoption and adaptability in developing regions like South Tamil Nadu. Most existing studies focus on technology or leadership independently, without integrating culture, empowerment, and adaptability into a single conceptual model. This study fills this gap by providing a multi-dimensional analysis combining leadership, culture, and agility as predictors of performance and resilience in the AI era.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative and descriptive research design with analytical elements to investigate the relationship between AI adoption, agile management practices, and organizational performance in the context of digital disruption. The design allows the researcher to measure, compare, and analyze how agile principles and leadership attributes contribute to adaptability and resilience in organizations. Quantitative methods are most suitable for examining cause–effect relationships between constructs and validating hypotheses through statistical testing (Creswell, 2018).

#### 3.2 Area of the Study

The study is conducted in South Tamil Nadu, covering the four districts of Madurai, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, and Dindigul. These regions represent a diverse mix of industrial sectors, including information technology, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and financial services. The area has shown progressive adoption of digital tools and automation in recent years, yet there exists a wide variation in technological readiness and management agility across firms. Therefore, South Tamil Nadu offers a practical and diverse landscape to explore how organizations navigate AI-led digital transformation.

### **3.3 Population and Sampling**

The population for the study comprises managers, executives, and team leaders working in organizations that have adopted or are in the process of adopting AI and digital tools. This includes both public and private sector organizations, particularly those engaged in data-driven decision-making, service innovation, and process automation.

Given the absence of an official sampling frame, stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation from different sectors. The population was stratified into three major sectors:

1. IT and service-based organizations,
2. Manufacturing firms, and
3. Public sector or quasi-government enterprises.

From these strata, respondents were selected randomly based on accessibility and willingness to participate.

### **3.4 Sample Size Determination**

A sample size of 250 respondents was determined using the Cochran formula (1977) for large populations at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

where  $Z = 1.96$  (for 95% confidence),  $p = 0.5$  (maximum variability),  $q = 1 - p$ , and  $e = 0.05$ . The calculation resulted in an ideal sample size of approximately 384. Considering accessibility and sectoral representation, 250 completed and valid responses were collected, which is statistically sufficient for multivariate analysis (Hair et al., 2021).

#### **The distribution of the sample:**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>IT &amp; Service</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Public Sector</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

The study used primary data collected through a structured questionnaire and secondary data from journals, books, government reports, and organizational documents.

## **4. Hypotheses**

**H1:** There is a significant relationship between AI adoption and agile organizational management practices.

**H2:** Agile management practices significantly enhance organizational adaptability during digital disruption.

**H3:** Adaptive leadership positively influences organizational performance in the AI era.

**H4:** Employee empowerment mediates the relationship between agile management and organizational resilience.

**H5:** Organizational culture moderates the effect of agile management on performance outcomes.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

#### **4.1 Introduction to Data Analysis**

This section presents the statistical analysis of the primary data collected from 250 respondents representing managers, executives, and team leaders from IT, manufacturing, and service organizations across South Tamil Nadu (Madurai, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, and Dindigul).

The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical tools to evaluate the role of **Agile Organizational Management (AOM)** in navigating **AI-driven digital disruption**.

The analyses were performed using **SPSS 29.0** and **AMOS 26.0**. The process involved:

1. **Reliability analysis** for internal consistency of constructs.
2. **Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis** to examine inter-construct relationships.
3. **Multiple regression analyses** to test hypotheses (H1–H5).
4. **Mediation and moderation tests** using regression and Sobel statistics.

#### **4.2 Session I: Reliability Analysis (Scale Consistency)**

##### **Objective:**

To ensure the reliability of the measurement scales used for each construct such as AI Adoption, Digital Disruption, Agile Practices, Adaptive Leadership, Empowerment, Technological Readiness, Organizational Culture, Adaptability, Performance, and Resilience.

**Table 4.1: Cronbach's Alpha Values for Constructs**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>No. of Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
AI Adoption	4	0.81
Digital Disruption Intensity	4	0.76
Agile Practices	4	0.88
Adaptive Leadership	4	0.84
Employee Empowerment	4	0.83
Technological Readiness	4	0.79
Organizational Culture	4	0.82
Adaptability	4	0.87

Performance	4	0.89
Resilience	4	0.86

**Interpretation:**

All constructs recorded **Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70**, confirming strong internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Hence, the scales used for further analysis are reliable.

**4.3 Session II: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis****Objective:**

To understand the central tendency, dispersion, and interrelationship among the key variables.

**Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics of Composite Constructs**

Construct	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
AI Adoption	3.76	0.65	1.8	4.9
Digital Disruption	3.55	0.70	1.5	4.8
Agile Practices	3.88	0.61	2.0	5.0
Adaptive Leadership	3.80	0.68	1.9	4.9
Empowerment	3.83	0.72	2.0	5.0
Technological Readiness	3.74	0.67	1.6	4.9
Organizational Culture	3.69	0.64	1.8	4.8
Adaptability	3.92	0.63	2.1	4.9
Performance	3.95	0.60	2.0	5.0
Resilience	3.90	0.68	2.0	4.9

**Interpretation:**

The mean values (3.55–3.95) indicate that respondents moderately to strongly agree that their organizations exhibit AI adoption and agile characteristics. The standard deviations below 1.0 show moderate variability among responses.

**Table 4.3: Correlation Matrix of Constructs**

Constructs	AI Adopt	DDI	Agile	Adapt. Ldr	Empower	Tech Read	Org Cult	Adapt	Perf	Res
AI Adopt	1	0.25	0.55	0.45	0.40	0.50	0.30	0.50	0.55	0.48
Agile	0.55	0.30	1	0.60	0.55	0.45	0.40	0.65	0.60	0.58
Adapt	0.50	0.25	0.65	0.55	0.55	0.45	0.42	1	0.60	0.62

Performance	0.55	0.20	0.60	0.62	0.45	0.50	0.45	0.60	1	0.55
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**Interpretation:**

Positive and significant correlations ( $r = 0.45\text{--}0.65$ ) between **Agile Practices, AI Adoption, and Performance** confirm the theoretical expectation that agile management enhances adaptability and performance in digitally disrupted environments.

**4.4 Session III: Hypothesis Testing Using Regression Analysis****Table 4.4: Regression Results for Hypotheses (H1–H5)**

Hypothesis	Model Summary ( $R^2$ )	Significant Predictors ( $p<0.05$ )	Result
H1: AI Adoption & others → Agile Practices	$R^2 = 0.327$	AI Adoption, Tech Readiness, Org Culture	Supported
H2: Agile Practices → Adaptability	$R^2 = 0.445$	Agile Practices, AI Adoption	Supported
H3: Adaptive Leadership & Agile → Performance	$R^2 = 0.451$	Adaptive Leadership, Agile Practices	Supported
H4: Mediation (Agile → Empowerment → Resilience)	$R^2 = 0.346$	Sobel z = 4.95 ( $p<0.001$ )	Supported
H5: Moderation (Org Culture × Agile → Performance)	$R^2 = 0.347$	Interaction Term Significant ( $p<0.05$ )	Supported

**Interpretation:**

- **H1:** Agile practices are significantly predicted by AI adoption and supportive culture.
- **H2:** Agile organizations demonstrate greater adaptability.
- **H3:** Adaptive leadership enhances performance when combined with agile methods.
- **H4:** Empowerment partially mediates the relationship between agility and resilience, showing that empowered employees sustain performance under disruption.
- **H5:** Organizational culture moderates the agile–performance link; in flexible cultures, agility produces higher performance gains.

**Findings, Suggestions, and Conclusion****5.1 Major Findings of the Study**

The study aimed to evaluate how Agile Organizational Management (AOM) enables firms in South Tamil Nadu to adapt to AI-driven digital disruption. Using responses from 250 managerial-level employees, the findings derived from descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses are summarized below:

**1. High Level of AI Adoption:**

Most organizations have initiated AI integration into operational and decision-making processes, but the depth of AI utilization varies across sectors. IT and service industries show higher AI readiness than traditional manufacturing units.

**2. Agile Management as a Strategic Enabler:**

Agile practices—characterized by flexibility, collaboration, and iterative decision-making—emerged as significant predictors of **adaptability** and **organizational performance**. ( $R^2 = 0.445$  and  $0.451$  respectively)

**3. Role of Adaptive Leadership:**

Leaders who empower teams, encourage experimentation, and facilitate rapid learning contribute directly to enhanced performance and innovation capacity.

**4. Employee Empowerment as a Mediating Variable:**

Empowerment significantly mediates the relationship between agile practices and resilience (Sobel  $z = 4.95$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Empowered employees feel more accountable and proactive in managing change.

**5. Organizational Culture as a Moderator:**

The moderating effect (H5) revealed that a **learning-oriented and participative culture** amplifies the positive impact of agility on performance. In rigid cultures, agile practices yield limited benefits.

**6. Technological Readiness and Dynamic Capabilities:**

Organizations with strong IT infrastructure and skill development programs demonstrate better adaptability to AI-driven changes.

**7. Regional Insight:**

In South Tamil Nadu, urban firms (Madurai, Tirunelveli) show stronger digital transformation indicators than semi-urban or traditional firms (Thoothukudi, Dindigul), highlighting uneven readiness within the region.

## **5.2 Suggestions**

Based on the empirical results, the following managerial and policy recommendations are proposed:

**1. Institutionalize Agile Training:**

Conduct regular capacity-building workshops on agile methodologies and AI integration for employees and middle-level managers to ensure mindset alignment.

**2. Develop Adaptive Leadership Pipelines:**

Organizations should nurture leaders who promote experimentation, encourage autonomy, and provide feedback-based learning environments.

**3. Enhance Digital Literacy and Infrastructure:**

Firms must invest in cloud platforms, data analytics tools, and AI applications to build technological readiness as a foundation for agile transformation.

**4. Promote a Learning and Innovation Culture:**

Encourage cross-functional collaboration, continuous feedback, and risk-taking behavior to foster an organizational culture supportive of agility.

**5. Integrate Employee Empowerment into Policy:**

Empowerment should be embedded in performance appraisal systems, decision-making protocols, and team-based reward structures to enhance ownership and creativity.

**6. Public–Private Collaboration:**

Government and industry bodies should jointly promote AI awareness and agile management frameworks through sector-specific programs and incentives in South Tamil Nadu.

**7. Benchmarking and Knowledge Sharing:**

Organizations should document and share successful agile transformation cases to build a regional knowledge repository.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study concludes that Agile Organizational Management plays a transformative role in navigating the challenges of AI-induced digital disruption. Firms that exhibit higher agility—through flexible structures, empowered teams, and adaptive leadership—achieve superior organizational performance, adaptability, and resilience. The findings align with Dynamic Capabilities Theory, emphasizing that competitive advantage in volatile environments depends on the organization's ability to reconfigure internal competencies and leverage new technologies. In the context of South Tamil Nadu, the transition toward AI-driven agility is underway but uneven, requiring strategic interventions in leadership development, infrastructure enhancement, and cultural change. Ultimately, this research reinforces that agility is not merely an operational choice but a strategic imperative for sustaining business success in the AI era.

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