



Career Resources and Career Self-Management for Sustainable Careers in the era of Artificial Intelligence: A Narrative Review

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the world of work by changing job roles, skill requirements, and career development processes. With AI technologies coming into workplaces, employees will be required to continually acquire new skills and take responsibility for their own careers to continue to be employable. While there is an increasing amount of literature on AI and career development, there is still very limited research that examines both how career resources and having the ability to manage one's own career assist individuals with working in sustainable careers. This narrative literature review, reviews and synthesizes contemporary research literature in order to demonstrate how individuals can use their career resources and manage their own careers to develop career adaptability and achieve successful careers within the ever-changing workplace affected by the introduction of AI technologies. The review is guided by Hirschi's Career Resource Framework and the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management and demonstrates how human capital, motivational and environmental resources, the need for continuing learning, the importance of making a career plan, the value of networking, and developing skills are all critical components for individuals to successfully adapt to careers in AI-affected workplaces. The synthesized evidence will lead to the development of an integrated conceptual framework, which is presented, as well as the theoretical and practical implications of this framework. The review also addresses future directions for research regarding sustainable career development in an evolving digital work environment.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), career resources, career self-management, career adaptability, career success

Received 26 June., 2026; Revised 01 July, 2026; Accepted 03 July, 2026 © The author(s) 2026.
Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

The job market will continue to evolve with the development of artificial intelligence (AI). Employers utilize AI for their businesses to increase production levels while reducing costs by replacing manual tasks with automated systems, and importantly, AI will likely diminish some people's work-related responsibilities; therefore, the implementation of AI into businesses represents both an opportunity and a threat to the workforce of today (Hirschi, 2018). Career development in this new environment is no longer a clear path to a single destination; instead, it requires employees to be constantly learning, flexible, and to develop proactive means of managing their careers. The increased use of AI increases the need for employees with both technical and human-centred skills, as employers value critical thinking, creativity, communication, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving ability that can be performed in conjunction with AI technologies. Thus, an individual's long-term career success will depend on obtaining new skills and the ability to adapt to and manage changes to their work environment.

Career resources provide insight into preparing for and responding to career-related challenges. According to Hirschi (2012), career resources include four interrelated dimensions: human capital resources, motivational resources, environmental resources, and career management behaviours. These resources help individuals achieve career goals, improve employability, and respond effectively to changes in the labour market. Similarly, the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management (Lent & Brown, 2013) explains how individuals actively shape their careers through goal setting, career planning, continuous learning, networking, and proactive career behaviours. Together they suggest that career success will depend not only on the amount and quality of the resources available to an individual, but also on how well they utilise these resources to successfully manage their career development via intentional and purposeful self-management. More research about AI technologies and their relationship with individual career development has recently evolved, but much of the existing research is fragmented. Most current studies of AI either focus primarily on the technical implications of AI or on traditional career development theories without providing a comprehensive understanding of how these perspectives will work together. Furthermore, Many studies are analysing only a small subset of industries or occupations, therefore making it challenging to develop a broader understanding of how employees in AI-enabled workplaces will build and sustain their careers. A comprehensive synthesis of career resources and career self-management in the context of AI will further advance both the body of research and the development of practical applications for individuals developing sustainable careers in AI.

To address this research gap, this narrative review synthesizes contemporary literature on career resources and career self-management in the context of artificial intelligence. Specifically, the review aims to: (1) examine how AI is transforming careers and the changing nature of work, (2) identify the career resources that enhance employability and career success in AI-enabled workplaces, and (3) explore the career self-management strategies that support career adaptability and sustainable career development. By integrating these perspectives, the review proposes a conceptual framework that advances career development theory while offering practical implications for employees, managers, human resource professionals, career counsellors, and researchers navigating the future of work.

Theoretical Framework

To understand how people are developing their careers during this time period, which includes many new technological advances (AI), we must look at both what people have and how they behave with regard to their careers. As jobs are transformed by more technology (e.g. robots), in order for someone to find success in their career, they will need to have both knowledge/skills and the capacity to adapt to, learn from, and respond to new ways of working (due to changes in job characteristics). Career development theories that have been established provide helpful insights into how individuals can create, use, and maintain career-related resources throughout their working life in relation to these challenges.

Two different but complementary theoretical frameworks are the basis for this review: Hirschi's Career Resources Framework (2012) and the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management developed by Lent & Brown (2013). Together, these frameworks provide an overall perspective on developing a career in an AI-enabled workplace. The Career Resources Framework identifies resource categories required to support career success, while the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management explains how an individual actively uses these resources by engaging in career behaviour that is purposeful in nature. By combining these two frameworks into a single perspective, we can explain to employees what they can do to be employable and successful in their careers as they experience rapid, ongoing changes in work environments.

Career Resources Framework

The Career Resources Framework proposed by Hirschi (2012) was developed in response to the changing nature of careers, where individuals increasingly take responsibility for managing their own career development. Rather than viewing career success as the outcome of organisational career systems alone, the framework suggests that individuals require a combination of personal and contextual resources to achieve sustainable career outcomes. These resources influence an individual's ability to adapt to career challenges, seize new opportunities, and maintain employability over time.

The framework identifies four interrelated categories of career resources: human capital resources, motivational resources, environmental resources, and career management behaviours. The first, Human capital resources include knowledge, professional skills, work experience, and competencies that enable individuals to perform effectively in their occupations. In the context of AI, human capital extends beyond technical expertise to include digital literacy, AI awareness, analytical thinking, and the ability to work collaboratively with intelligent technologies. As organisations increasingly adopt AI, employees must continuously update their competencies to remain relevant in evolving labour markets.

Secondly, Motivational resources refer to the psychological factors that encourage individuals to pursue career goals. These include career confidence, career clarity, optimism, resilience, and the willingness to engage in lifelong learning. Such resources become particularly important during periods of technological

disruption, where uncertainty and frequent career transitions require individuals to remain adaptable and motivated. Employees with strong motivational resources are generally better prepared to cope with changing work demands and pursue continuous professional development.

The third Environmental resources consist of the external support available to individuals, including mentoring, professional networks, organisational support, supervisors, colleagues, and learning opportunities. These resources provide access to career information, developmental opportunities, and social support that facilitate career progression. In AI-enabled workplaces, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, and supportive organisational cultures become increasingly important as employees acquire new digital competencies and adapt to changing job roles.

Then the fourth dimension, career management behaviours, refers to the proactive actions individuals undertake to manage their careers. These behaviours include career planning, networking, skill development, career exploration, seeking feedback, and continuous learning. Rather than passively responding to organisational changes, employees actively invest in behaviours that strengthen their employability and prepare them for future career opportunities. Such proactive career management has become increasingly essential in dynamic labour markets characterised by rapid technological change.

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that career resources are positively associated with career adaptability, employability, job satisfaction, and both objective and subjective career success (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020; Hirschi et al., 2018). The Career Resources Questionnaire (CRQ), developed by Hirschi et al. (2018), has further validated the multidimensional nature of these resources across different occupational and cultural contexts. Collectively, these findings suggest that career resources provide a strong foundation for understanding how individuals successfully manage career development in uncertain and rapidly evolving work environments.

Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management

While career resources explain what individuals need for career success, the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management explains how individuals actively utilise these resources to achieve career goals. Developed by Lent and Brown (2013), the model extends Social Cognitive Career Theory by emphasising personal agency and proactive career behaviours throughout the career lifespan. According to the model, career self-management involves setting career goals, making informed career decisions, exploring opportunities, developing relevant competencies, and adapting career plans in response to changing circumstances. Individuals are viewed as active participants in shaping their careers rather than passive recipients of organisational opportunities. Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, personal goals, and contextual supports influence the extent to which individuals engage in effective career self-management behaviours.

The relevance of this model has increased considerably in the AI era. Continuous technological change requires employees to regularly update their skills, monitor labour market trends, seek learning opportunities, and make strategic career decisions. Career self-management therefore becomes an ongoing process of adaptation rather than a one-time career planning activity. Individuals who actively engage in learning, networking, and career planning are more likely to maintain employability and successfully navigate AI-driven career transitions.

Integrating Career Resources and Career Self-Management

Although both frameworks have independently contributed to career development research, integrating them provides a more comprehensive explanation of sustainable careers in AI-enabled workplaces. Career resources represent the personal and contextual assets that individuals possess, whereas career self-management represents the behavioural processes through which these resources are developed, maintained, and effectively utilised. In other words, career resources answer the question of what individuals need, while career self-management explains how these resources are transformed into successful career outcomes.

This integrated perspective is particularly relevant in the context of AI, where career success increasingly depends on the interaction between resources and behaviour. Employees may possess valuable technical knowledge, professional networks, and strong motivation, but without proactive career planning, continuous learning, and adaptability, these resources may not translate into sustainable employability. Likewise, proactive career behaviours are more effective when supported by adequate career resources. Accordingly, this review adopts an integrated theoretical perspective that combines Hirschi's Career Resources Framework with the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management to examine how individuals can successfully manage career development in AI-driven workplaces. This integrated foundation guides the thematic synthesis presented in the following sections and provides the basis for the proposed conceptual framework on sustainable career development in the age of artificial intelligence.

II. Methodology and Results

This study employed a narrative literature review to synthesize existing knowledge on career resources and career self-management in the context of artificial intelligence (AI). A narrative review was considered appropriate because it enables the integration of evidence from diverse theoretical and empirical studies and facilitates the development of conceptual understanding in emerging research areas (Green et al., 2006). Relevant literature was identified through searches of Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. Peer-reviewed journal articles published primarily between 2012 and 2026 were included, while seminal studies published before this period were considered to establish the theoretical foundation. The search used combinations of keywords such as *career resources*, *career self-management*, *career adaptability*, *career success*, *artificial intelligence*, *AI*, *employability*, and *career development*. Reference lists of relevant studies were also reviewed to identify additional sources.

The selected studies were analysed using thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Recurring concepts, key findings, and research gaps were identified and synthesized into three overarching themes. These themes form the basis for the discussion and the proposed conceptual framework.

Thematic Synthesis

The thematic synthesis integrates contemporary literature to examine how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping career development through changes in work, career resources, and career self-management. Across the reviewed studies, three interconnected themes emerged: **(1) AI-driven transformation of careers and work**, **(2) career resources for sustainable employability**, and **(3) career self-management strategies in AI-enabled workplaces**. Together, these themes demonstrate that sustainable career success increasingly depends on individuals' ability to continuously develop career resources while proactively managing their careers in response to technological change.

1) AI-Driven Transformation of Careers and Work

AI has drastically altered labour market structures by disrupting and changing the job design, skill requirements and employment pathways of individuals. Earlier technological change was primarily based on automation of repetitive physical tasks; however, today, AI is primarily replacing (as well as enhancing) knowledge-type jobs, with new employment opportunities being created while traditional types of employment (jobs) are at risk of being disrupted. As a result, career development now needs to be more adaptive, so that individuals can continue to meet the requirements of their organisation or labour market across the continuum of their working life through ongoing skills development (McKinsey & Company, 2023). There is now a large body of empirical evidence indicating that AI will cause many jobs to be completely and permanently eliminated by virtue of AI having the ability to accomplish tasks at a rate much faster than human workers doing the same tasks. For example, McKinsey & Company (2023) predicts that in 2030, as much as 30% of all work activities will have been automated, leading to significant changes in occupational transitions between various sectors and occupations. Similarly, more recent evidence indicates that AI-driven activities will lead to the emergence of new types of jobs classified as being data-driven (including AI solution architect, AI workflow engineer, AI ethics specialist, and data ecosystem administrator), because there will be a greater need for individuals who possess the ability to reconcile the technical competencies involved in employing technology into their working environments and the soft/human qualifications required for working in people-centric/people-oriented environments (George et al., 2025). As such, this change demonstrates that in any future career opportunities, individuals will be more likely to secure employment based on the ability to complement, rather than compete against AI.

The reviewed literature further makes it clear that AI has had a disparate effect on employment and economies throughout the world, depending on the job/career type. Specifically, preliminary studies indicate that jobs requiring little skill or that are highly repetitive have been the most affected by automation. On the other hand, jobs that require higher-level cognitive thinking (e.g., analytical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and/or solving complex problems) continue to see job growth (Ly et al., 2026). Evidence from the Sri Lankan IT sector also indicates that AI adoption simultaneously promotes employability in specialised occupations while reducing demand for repetitive tasks, reinforcing the need for continuous workforce reskilling (Marasinghe & Gunathunga, 2025). Taken together, these studies highlight that workers must constantly learn and adapt to new technology to maintain a sustainable career in this era of technological change.

2) Career Resources for Sustainable Employability

Career resources are increasingly recognised for their significant role as determinants of employability and long-term career success due to the rapid shift in how work is performed. Hirschi's (2012) Career Resources Framework identifies four resource dimensions that are interrelated: human capital, motivational resources, environmental resources and career management behaviours. Collectively, these resources provide individuals with a strong foundation for responding to emerging demands on their careers, and by working together to

enhance their ability to adapt to change and achieve sustainable career outcomes. Although human capital remains the primary resource of a career; its definition has shifted significantly with the introduction of AI into the workplace. In addition to having occupational knowledge and technical skills, companies now focus on hiring employees who possess hybrid competencies. These include AI literacy, digital fluency, analytical ability, and domain-specific expertise as well as soft skills such as creativity, communication, ethical judgement and emotional intelligence (Nakash et al., 2025; Sunkar, 2025). Therefore, successful professionals will be defined not only by their technical capabilities but also by their ability to assess AI-generated results, collaborate with intelligent systems, and use human judgement to solve complex organisational challenges (Kumar, 2026). Equally as important for careers to be sustainable amid technological disruption are motivational resources. Career confidence, resilience, adaptability, a learning orientation and psychological readiness all support individuals' continued professional development despite challenges (Hirschi, 2012).

Career adaptability has been widely recognized by academics as an important resource for helping workers adjust to transitions in their jobs and to the quick change in skills from job to job (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020; Ko'charov, 2026; Testa et al., 2026). However, AI implementation has introduced new psychological hurdles in the workplace, creating a state of technostress, reducing employees' sense of control and adding to employee worries about losing their job (Adiki et al., 2024; Burhan, 2024; Kadir, 2025; Subramaniam et al., 2026). If these issues are not addressed, they can diminish employee intrinsic motivation to perform as well as their sense of career agency.

Despite technological change, environmental resources have remained an essential element of an employee's career development. Employees continue to receive assistance from their organisations in the form of supportive managers, mentors, professional networks, supervisors and access to learning resources. Together, these resources provide employees with the information, guidance and experience needed for successful career advancement (Hirschi, 2012). However, assorted literature states that employees are now using AI in different ways to develop and receive environmental resources. For example, as a result of increased automation replacing the way junior employees have traditionally learned from performing repeatable tasks over time, organisations are being forced to change how they create mentoring systems and how they strengthen collaborative learning environments in an effort to promote continuous knowledge transfer (Marasinghe & Gunathunga, 2025). Therefore, career resources must now be viewed as a dynamic capacity that requires continual investment and re-adaptation, not as a static trait that only resides within the individual

3) Career Self-Management Strategies in AI-Enabled Workplaces

While career resources provide the foundation for career success, career self-management determines how effectively these resources are utilised to achieve sustainable career outcomes. The Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management (Lent & Brown, 2013) emphasises that individuals actively shape their careers through goal setting, career planning, continuous learning, networking, and proactive career behaviours. This perspective is particularly relevant in AI-enabled workplaces, where career success increasingly depends on personal agency rather than organisational career structures. As career adaptability is considered one of the most essential self-management skills in relation to the employment market in the age of AI, literature findings have repeatedly affirmed that those individuals who consistently anticipate changes in the labour market, search for opportunities for development, and keep their competencies up to date are more likely to have a long-term career path and will have a lot easier time making transitions into different roles (Hirschi, 2012; Ko'charov, 2026; Westover, 2024). In addition, career conversations, coaching, and professional guidance help develop individuals' confidence in their careers by fostering a sense of ownership of the development of their careers (Maree, 2020).

Continuous learning has emerged as a defining characteristic of successful career self-management. Given the rapid evolution of AI technologies, employees can no longer completely rely on formal education acquired at the beginning of their careers. Therefore, lifelong learning will now include all forms of education, from professional development courses, micro-credentials, online certificates, immersive learning technologies, and collaborations between universities and industries due to the necessity for many individuals to continue building their relevant competencies (Kai-Ming, 2025; Kumar, 2026; Ly et al., 2026; Tariq, 2025). Those organisations that have made the financial investment in providing both reskilling and upskilling pathways within their organisations will enhance their employee retention, as well as their ability to continue being successful competitors in the marketplace (Marasinghe & Gunathunga, 2025). AI is also beginning to serve as an important resource for managing one's career. For instance, career coaching platforms that use AI, intelligent career guidance systems, custom learning recommendations, automated résumé creation and virtual interview simulations help individuals to make more informed career choices and identify future skill gaps (Khandelwal, 2026; Lent, 2025; Muhammad, 2024). Nonetheless, research continuously supports the idea that these technologies should enhance rather than replace human judgment, mentoring, and career counselling for complex choices relating to professional development and personal growth (Maree, 2020; Muhammad, 2024).

In general, the evidence compiled above indicates that sustainable careers in AI workplaces are predicated on the interaction between career resources and self-management of one's career. Career resources provide individuals with the tools necessary to respond to technological change; proactive self-management behaviours allow individuals to develop, utilise, and re-establish their career resources throughout their career. The integrated approach forms the basis of the conceptual framework that will be described in the next section.

Integrated Conceptual Framework

The reviewed literature indicates that sustainable career development in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) is shaped by the interaction between career resources and career self-management. Building on Hirschi's (2012) Career Resources Framework and the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management (Lent & Brown, 2013), this review proposes an integrated conceptual framework explaining how individuals adapt to AI-driven workplace changes.

Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework
Figure 1
Proposed Conceptual Framework of Career Resources and Career Self-Management in AI-Driven Workplaces



Source- Author Creation

AI acts as a contextual force that continuously reshapes job roles, skill requirements, and career opportunities. In response, employees must strengthen four key career resources: human capital, motivational resources, environmental resources, and career management behaviours (Hirschi, 2012). However, these resources alone are insufficient unless individuals actively develop and apply them through career self-management. Proactive behaviours such as career planning, continuous learning, networking, and skill development enable employees to adapt to technological change, enhance career adaptability, and achieve sustainable career outcomes (Lent & Brown, 2013).

Accordingly, the proposed framework suggests that the combination of strong career resources and effective career self-management promotes career adaptability and further career outcomes such as - employability, career resilience, career satisfaction, and long-term career success in AI-enabled workplaces.

III. Discussion and Implications

Through this review, AI is revolutionizing how we think of Career Development. Instead of looking at Career Development as a series of jobs with a steady salary, it will become increasingly focused on Continuous Learning, Adaptability and Proactive Management of one's Career Development. Because of the way AI is changing how we work and how long our skills will be useful (McKinsey & Company, 2023; George et al., 2025), employees will need to continuously improve not just their Technical Capabilities but also their Human-Centred Skills in order to establish themselves in the workplace.

The synthesised findings added to Hirschi's (2012) Career Resources Framework demonstrate that Career Resources are Dynamic Capabilities that must be continuously developed in order for employees to be able to work with changing technology. By combining Human Capital, Motivation, Organisational Support and Behaviours for Managing one's Career, employees will increase their Capacity for Career Adaptability and Sustainable Employability (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020; Hirschi et al., 2018). In addition, consistent with Lent and Brown (2013), Career Self-Management will allow individuals to take these resources and convert them into meaningful Employment through proactive learning, career planning, and Career Exploration. This review also demonstrates the complementary roles that Organisations and Employees play in creating Sustainable Careers. Organisations need to make investments in Reskilling Initiatives, AI Literacy Programs, Mentoring Opportunities and Supportive Learning Environments, while Employees must take greater Personal Responsibility for Updating and Managing their Career Development Competencies. Through these two interrelated approaches, Employees will be better equipped for Adaptability and Will have Increased Opportunities for Long-Term Career Success in an AI-Enabled Workforce.

Theoretical Implications

This review contributes to the career development and human resource management literature by integrating Hirschi's (2012) Career Resources Framework with the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management (Lent & Brown, 2013) within the context of artificial intelligence (AI). While previous studies have largely examined AI adoption, career resources, and career self-management related independently, this review demonstrates that sustainable career development depends on the interaction between these perspectives. The proposed conceptual framework extends existing theory by positioning AI as a contextual force that reshapes career resources, influences self-management behaviours, and strengthens career adaptability. Consequently, the review offers an integrated perspective for understanding career sustainability in technology-driven workplaces.

Practical Implications

Through these reviews, the study shows that organizations, employees, and career development professionals all have to change the way they view and use continuous learning, AI literacy, mentoring, and career development programs in order to improve their employees' ability to adaptability and gain employment in a world with more technology than ever before. HR professionals can work to build employee resilience through technology-driven skills development programs that will help reduce the skill gap in the workforce by incorporating AI-based competencies into their career development strategies.

For employees, sustainable career success requires upskilling through continuing education, proactive career planning, networking, and lifelong learning. Instead of viewing AI as a challenge, employees should embrace the potential benefits of AI-enabled career development and training platforms to build the skill sets they need to excel in their future careers. Career counsellors and educators should also assist in teaching employees to be more adaptable, pursue self-directed learning opportunities, and make informed employment decisions as they adjust to evolving job markets and career paths.

Future Research Directions

Despite the growing body of literature, there are still some research gaps that exist. First, in this context, empirical studies are needed to validate the proposed conceptual framework in various industries and occupational groups. Second, future research should examine how AI influences career development over time through longitudinal designs. Third, comparative studies across countries and organisational contexts would provide greater insight into how cultural and institutional factors shape career resources and self-management. Finally, researchers need to conduct studies to understand the impact of AI-enabled career development interventions, such as smart career coaching systems and personalised learning platforms, on improving employability and career outcomes.

Limitations

This review has some limitations. As a narrative review, the findings are based on the interpretation and synthesis of selected literature rather than a systematic assessment of all available evidence. Although studies from multiple disciplines were included, relevant publications may have been omitted due to database coverage and publication restrictions. In addition, the rapid evolution of AI means that new evidence may further refine the relationships proposed in the conceptual framework.

IV. Conclusion

AI is changing how we think about jobs, skill sets, and careers, which will help us create a new picture of sustainable success. In today's rapidly changing workplaces, it's important to have both the technical skills to succeed at our jobs and the ability to combine career resources effectively and manage our own careers

proactively. The evidence reviewed in this article indicates that through continuous learning and self-directed career development, human capital, career motivation, environmental support and career management will work together to help strengthen both an employee's ability to adapt to change in their careers as well as their long-term employability. By using the Career Resources Framework with the Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-Management, we can build an understanding of how individuals can effectively navigate workplace changes driven by AI. The conceptual framework presented in this study provides a basis for empirical research in the area of careers and also provides organizations, employees, and career development professionals with practical ways to help promote sustainable careers during and after the changes brought on by Artificial Intelligence.

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