

# How Does Organizational Culture Influence the Adoption of AI Ethics Practices Across Sectors?

By

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing sectors; ethical adoption depends on more than compliance or technical fixes. This paper investigates how organizational culture, including formal cultural artifacts, normative behaviors, and reinforcement mechanisms, shapes the success or failure of AI ethics projects spanning several sectors. The analysis reflects both pre- and post-generative AI research, acknowledging earlier studies on culture's role in adopting ethical practices in technology before large-scale AI deployment. While high-velocity technology companies often struggle without intentional cultural changes, industries with strong compliance traditions, like finance and healthcare, more readily embed responsible artificial intelli-

**As artificial intelligence (AI) enters every industry, organizational culture—rather than technology—will decide whether ethics succeed or fail. Leaders who support accountability, transparency, and responsible innovation can influence future developments in reliable AI.**

gence. However, without translating principles into actionable policies and equipping teams with practical tools, even compliance-oriented cultures risk superficial adoption. The results underline the critical role that cross-functional cooperation, leadership tone, and ongoing training play in operationalizing artificial intelligence ethics. Leveraging Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Diffusion of Innovations, and Theory of Planned Behavior, the analysis provides managers and legislators with practical advice. Embedding an ethical AI culture is no longer optional; it is a strategic imperative for sustainable innovation, long-term trust, and measurable progress toward responsible AI maturity.

**Keywords:** Ethical Artificial Intelligence (AI), Organizational Culture, Responsible AI, AI Governance, Technology Adoption, Cross-sector Analysis, Diffusion of Innovations, Theory of Planned Behavior

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in business provides enormous opportunities for efficiency and innovation but poses significant ethical challenges. Recent AI failures, such as biased hiring algorithms, have harmed reputations and led to regulatory fines (Deodhar et al., 2024). Researchers have also linked social media AI tools to privacy violations and misinformation outbreaks (Blackman, 2023). In response, governments and organizations worldwide have issued numerous AI ethics guidelines. Zhou and Chen (2023) report that guidance is often fragmented by sector or region, leaving no unified cross-sector framework. Morley et al. (2023) note that definitions and priorities vary by culture and sector, complicating any standardized implementation. According to the 2024 Stanford AI Index, AI adoption is rising globally while organizations still struggle to operationalize ethics because governance structures remain inconsistent (Maslej et al., 2024). Importantly, management and behavioral research before generative AI already showed that culture and norms steer ethical behavior and intentions, insights that remain central here (Ajzen, 1991; Epley & Kumar, 2019; Hofstede, 1980).

Organizational culture, understood here as formal artifacts (codes, values), normative behaviors (everyday decision patterns), and reinforcement mechanisms (training, incentives), is a critical but understudied piece of this puzzle: the deeply embedded values, norms, and behaviors that shape decisions. Organizational culture has a significant impact on technology adoption and governance. Companies prioritizing transparency, accountability, and long-term trust are more likely to anticipate and mitigate ethical risks associated with AI. In contrast, cultures prioritizing rapid innovation over ethical considerations, such as Silicon Valley's well-known "move fast and break things" philosophy, frequently struggle to ensure AI safety and fairness (Blackman, 2023; Morley et al., 2023). According to Acar et al. (2025), many firms pledge responsible AI publicly, yet few embed those principles in their core strategy due to resource and incentive constraints.

Leadership is decisive. As AI adoption increases, leaders must guide organizations in incorporating AI ethics principles into their daily operations. According to Sposato (2024), organizations that invest in AI-specific leadership training can better deal with ethical issues. The literature frames AI ethics as an operational priority, not a mere compliance task (Maslej et al., 2024). Companies with strong governance structures prioritizing AI ethics principles, stakeholder engagement, and accountability are more likely to gain public trust and achieve long-term AI integration results. A recurring barrier is simple awareness: many managers and engineers lack working knowledge of AI ethics principles and how to apply them in context, which slows adoption

even in willing firms (Morley et al., 2023; Pant et al., 2024; Wade & Yokoi, 2024).

**Despite growing awareness, the literature has yet to clearly define how organizational culture shapes industrywide adoption of AI ethics.** Most existing literature focuses on broad ethical principles or technical solutions, with little consideration given to the internal cultural factors that facilitate

## Protocol

The author followed a structured protocol in this review to ensure a thorough and unbiased literature survey. The author also defined the scope of the research question, focusing on the intersection of organizational culture (e.g., values, norms, leadership behaviors) and the adoption of AI ethics practices (e.g., implementation of AI ethics guidelines, responsible AI governance, AI bias mitigation) across different sectors.

The author systematically searched scholarly databases (IEEE Xplore, ABI/INFORM, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, and Google Scholar) and University of South Florida resources. For current AI ethics developments, the author limited his search to recent publications (2019-2025). Keyword combinations included "AI ethics," "AI ethics guidelines," "organizational culture," "corporate culture," "AI governance," "responsible AI," and "adoption" or "implementation".

The author cited peer-reviewed academic literature, reputable industry reports, and articles explicitly discussing how organizational culture influences the implementation of ethical or responsible AI. This work included empirical studies (such as qualitative case studies), conceptual papers, and practitioner-oriented articles from credible sources. For example, the author included Harvard Business Review articles on AI ethics to provide practical insights. Following an initial screening of titles and abstracts that yielded over 100 candidates, the author reduced the list to 21 sources most relevant to the research question after full-text review. These sources cover various industries and regions, including technology, finance, and healthcare, providing a cross-sector and global perspective.

Table 1 contains a literature summary created by the author to synthesize the evidence and distill key findings from the chosen sources. This table is the foundation for discussion, allowing comparisons of patterns, consistency, and contradictions across the literature. Using this systematic approach, this review increases confidence that the conclusions reached are well-supported by the existing knowledge base and are not unjustly influenced by any study or viewpoint.

or impede AI ethics implementation (Morley et al., 2023). This failure to consider cultural factors reveals a significant research gap: practitioners require more than just a list of AI ethics guidelines. They require a framework for creating an organizational culture that incorporates these principles into daily operations.

To fill this gap, the author systematically reviews recent academic studies, industry reports, and thought leadership to answer the following question: How do various aspects of organizational culture facilitate or impede the effective adoption and ongoing integration of AI ethics practices across sectors? The goal is to emphasize the significance of organizational culture in AI ethics, identify the most influential cultural characteristics, and provide actionable insights for managers and policymakers seeking to foster AI ethics ecosystems. The paper uses theoretical lenses (expanded in subsequent sections) to investigate how specific cultural factors influence the adoption of AI ethics. This review integrates classic behavioral theory with contemporary case evidence to keep practice front and center.

## Literature Summary

This summary of key literature findings in Table 1 highlights the significance of ethical values, lead-

ership support, and training in fostering a strong moral commitment to adopting AI ethics practices across the sector. Table 2 presents a summary of key literature findings that identify cultural obstacles such as resource constraints, misaligned incentives, or abstract principles that impede the implementation of AI ethics within organizations. Table 3 presents a summary of literature findings showing how sector-specific norms and regional cultural contexts influence organizational approaches to responsible AI adoption.

The results show a complex but unified message: organizational culture's "humanware" is decisive in ensuring AI ethics. Supportive cultural environments are necessary to align AI innovation with moral principles across industries, from banks to tech startups. Notably, several sources agreed that companies need to promote the use of technical tools and guidelines by creating an atmosphere that supports them. Disparities exist in how AI ethics are implemented across organizations. These differences, especially between firms with formal compliance cultures and those with informal innovation cultures, are often underappreciated.

Finding	Sources
<b>Strong ethical cultures promote responsible AI adoption. Organizations with a clear set of moral values, norms, and an integrity culture are more likely to integrate AI ethics into their practices effectively. Employees in these cultures feel comfortable raising AI concerns, and fairness and transparency are prioritized in AI development. An ethical organizational culture fosters an environment in which responsible AI can flourish.</b>	Mohammadabbasi et al., 2022; Diab & El Hajj, 2024
<b>Leadership commitment and "tone at the top" are crucial. Active leadership support (e.g., ethics committees, ethical modeling, resource allocation) indicates that AI ethics are top priorities within the organization. Many studies identified leadership actions such as incorporating ethics into strategic objectives and reward systems as critical success factors in transitioning from principles to practice. In contrast, a lack of executive support is a common barrier, resulting in ethics remaining "on paper" only.</b>	Epley & Kumar, 2019; Wade & Yokoi, 2024
<b>It is necessary to translate abstract principles into operational guidelines. Many organizations have published AI ethics charters, but must take active steps to turn these high-level principles into concrete policies and processes. Companies that successfully implemented AI ethics provided practical tools such as checklists, "AI ethics playbooks," or detailed process guidelines to assist engineers and project teams in implementing ethics at each stage. Deutsche Telekom, for example, developed AI usage rules that specify actions at each project stage (design, testing, deployment) to incorporate ethics into daily work. This cultural norm of integrating values into daily practices distinguishes leaders in AI ethics.</b>	Wade & Yokoi, 2024

<p>Cross-functional collaboration and governance structures promote AI ethics. A recurring theme is the need to break down silos, as relying solely on one team to manage ethics is insufficient. Successful firms established governance structures (such as ethics boards and AI councils) and encouraged collaboration among technical teams, compliance/legal units, and business leaders. For example, at Thomson Reuters, data scientists collaborated closely with the data governance and ethics teams to ensure responsible AI use, demonstrating that digital innovation and compliance were co-priorities. Such cross-functional alignment fosters a culture where ethical considerations are built into AI projects rather than added as an afterthought. Zhou and Chen (2023) elaborated on this, stating that overreliance on abstract principles without integrated, multidisciplinary implementation frequently leads to failed ethical adoption. They advocate for closer collaboration among ethics officers, designers, and engineers to ensure consistent, value-driven development.</p>	<p>Mohammadabbasi et al. 2022; Wade &amp; Yokoi, 2024; Zhou &amp; Chen, 2023</p>
<p>Continuous training and ethical awareness programs help to instill AI ethics in the culture. Several sources emphasized education as a critical component: organizations that provide regular AI ethics training, scenario workshops, and open forums for discussing AI dilemmas have higher workforce engagement in AI ethics practices. One example is Bristol Myers Squibb’s internal “AI Collective,” a grassroots community of practice where employees gather to share insights and learn about responsible AI, fostering bottom-up ethical innovation. Such initiatives foster a learning culture around AI ethics, empowering employees at all levels to maintain ethical standards. Tenakwah and Watson (2025) proposed a framework for preparing the workforce for AI integration. HR strategically aligned AI with business goals, served as a “translator” between human and machine needs, and fostered culture through reskilling and planning.</p>	<p>Diab &amp; El Hajj, 2024; Tenakwah &amp; Watson, 2025; Wade &amp; Yokoi, 2024</p>
<p>Stakeholder trust and public perception are dependent on ethical culture. The significance of organizational culture in AI ethics goes beyond the company’s walls. Public trust in AI is critical for its continued adoption. According to a survey of AI governance perceptions in the United States, people attribute responsibility for AI’s impacts to governments and companies that develop and deploy AI. Organizations with a strong ethical culture are more likely to gain stakeholder trust and face less opposition from customers, regulators, and society when introducing AI innovations. Companies can improve their reputation and “license to operate” AI systems by demonstrating accountability and transparency (for example, through public ethics reports or external algorithm audits). In short, as AI governance expectations rise, culture-driven ethical practices are emerging as a competitive advantage.</p>	<p>David et al., 2024; Maslej et al., 2024</p>
<p>Responsible AI (RAI) initiatives build consumer trust, influencing their willingness to use AI products. Privacy, auditability, and comprehensibility have a significant impact on consumer decisions.</p>	<p>Acar et al., 2025</p>
<p>Tailored leadership training and development programs are critical for successful AI adoption. To foster trust during organizational change, leaders must be capable of managing AI-driven decisions while maintaining human oversight and communicating clearly. Sposato (2024) contends that traditional leadership development approaches are insufficient for the AI era, calling for specialized leadership training that combines technical proficiency in AI systems with emotional intelligence to guide workforce transitions and foster trust.</p>	<p>Sposato, 2024</p>

Table 2: Cultural Barriers to AI Ethics Adoption

Finding	Sources
<p>Limited resources and misaligned incentives are frequently cited barriers to implementing AI ethics, and the literature further highlights underlying cultural and organizational factors that impede AI ethics initiatives. Employees who see AI ethics work as an extra hassle with no clear reward may not prioritize it. Many businesses have not allocated adequate personnel, budget, or time to ethics oversight and ongoing monitoring. When a company's culture fails to recognize or reward ethical behavior – for example, leaders only praising teams for speed-to-market – such misaligned incentives undermine long-term ethical practices. Overcoming these barriers requires a shift in organizational norms to value ethical diligence as much as traditional performance outcomes.</p>	<p>Diab &amp; El Hajj, 2024; Wade &amp; Yokoi, 2024</p>
<p>Companies operating in “move fast” innovation cultures, particularly those in the technology sector, frequently struggle to integrate AI ethics practices effectively. Blackman (2023) criticizes the tech industry's preference for speed over foresight, emphasizing the importance of proactive ethical safeguards. In addition, Dukach (2023) presents a collection of expert perspectives on how Silicon Valley's culture of rapid iteration and minimal regulation frequently marginalizes ethical reflection, arguing that deliberate cultural interventions are required to correct the course.</p>	<p>Blackman, 2023; Dukach, 2023</p>
<p>Many organizations struggle to translate AI ethics from abstract principles to practical applications. Significant barriers include overly abstract ethical guidelines, inconsistent interpretations of moral responsibilities, and a lack of proper tools or guidelines for AI practitioners. This aligns with Wade and Yokoi's observation that high-level ethical principles need to be translated into practical guidance (see Table 1). When such translation doesn't happen, it becomes a barrier – organizations are left with abstract ideals but no clear implementation path.</p>	<p>Morley et al., 2023; Zhou &amp; Chen, 2023</p>
<p>Investigated the power shifts caused by AI in healthcare and introduced “ethical power” as an essential organizational virtue alongside responsibility. To balance the power dynamics created by AI, procedural justice and virtue ethics were emphasized.</p>	<p>Hähnel et al., 2024</p>
<p>A survey of 100 AI practitioners found that while workplace policies raised awareness of AI ethics, there were still persistent implementation challenges (technical, human, and organizational). It also introduced new tools, such as the ECCOLA method and ethical maturity models, to help implement principles.</p>	<p>Pant et al., 2024</p>

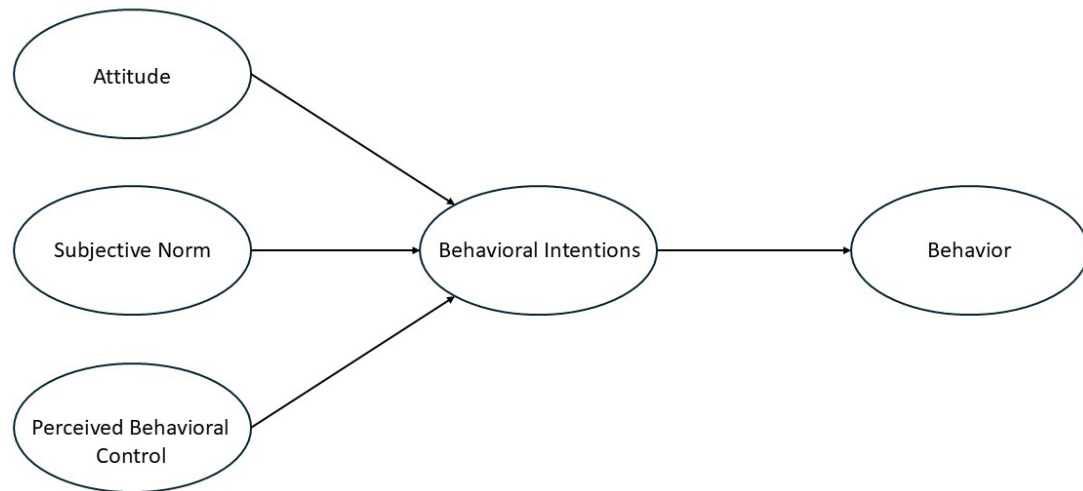
**Table 3: Sectoral and Geographic Factors Affecting AI Ethics Adoption**

Finding	Sources
Existing compliance-oriented cultures facilitate the implementation of AI ethics. Organizations in highly regulated industries (finance, healthcare, and aviation) frequently have mature risk management and compliance practices. According to the literature, these companies can incorporate AI ethics principles into their existing processes (for example, data privacy reviews and model validation routines). CaixaBank (financial sector) adapted its robust privacy and security protocols to include over 100 controls for fairness, transparency, and robustness in AI models in response to new regulations, building on its established compliance culture. A culture accustomed to regulation and oversight lays a solid foundation for implementing AI ethics.	Wade & Yokoi, 2024
Global differences necessitate locally tailored AI ethics approaches. National and regional cultures influence the adoption of AI ethics, an international theme. What constitutes an ethical use of AI varies; for example, attitudes toward privacy and algorithmic bias differ across Europe, the United States, and Asia. One study found that current AI ethics guidelines are overwhelmingly Western in origin (Deodhar et al., 2024), which may not translate well to other cultural contexts. Companies with global operations should decentralize AI ethics governance by working with local teams to tailor guidelines to local values and legal requirements. Ignoring cultural context can result in ethical blind spots and public backlash in various markets.	Deodhar et al., 2024; UNESCO, 2021
The study investigated ethical governance in defense AI applications and identified five normative tradeoffs that influence ethical implementation: lifecycle modeling, stakeholder involvement scope, accountability frameworks, auditing, and transparency mechanisms.	Blanchard et al., 2025
Argued for “experiential AI” grounded in human-in-the-loop feedback and the intentional capture of intervention data. Stressed the urgent need for a responsible AI culture due to growing global regulations and the reputational and legal risks of misuse.	Baeza-Yates & Fayyad, 2024

### Theoretical Lenses

Before presenting the relevant AI-specific literature, it is helpful to introduce some of the lenses employed. Two primary theoretical frameworks guide this exploration: the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Diffusion of Innovations. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991) posits that intentions to perform specific behaviors are shaped by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes refer to the individual's favorable or unfavorable evaluations of the behavior, subjective norms involve perceived social pressures to engage or not engage in the behavior, and perceived behavioral control relates to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior, influenced by past experiences and anticipated obstacles (Ajzen, 1991). Within AI ethics adoption, organizational culture directly influences these components. Attitudes are shaped through an organizational emphasis on ethical practices, subjective norms through explicit and implicit social expectations communicated by leaders and peers, and perceived behavioral control by providing employees with necessary resources, training, and empowerment to implement AI ethics practices effectively. A robust ethical culture thus

enhances employees' intentions and behaviors toward responsible AI practices, creating a reinforcing cycle of moral behavior and adoption (Ajzen, 1991). Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory (2003) complements the Theory of Planned Behavior by providing a structured understanding of how AI ethics practices spread within and across organizations and sectors. Rogers classifies adopters into five categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards based on their relative willingness and speed to embrace new ideas or technologies (Rogers, 2003). Diffusion occurs as organizational and social factors, such as communication channels, social structures, and cultural values, shape adoption patterns. AI ethics practices will likely be adopted quickly in organizations that value openness, transparency, strong leadership support, and collaborative cross-functional interactions. These organizations frequently emerge as innovators or early adopters, setting the bar for responsible AI integration (Rogers, 2003). Organizations with a culture that prioritizes rapid innovation over ethical considerations may find themselves resistant, falling into the late majority or laggard category, only adopting AI ethics practices in response to external



**Figure 1. Ajzen's 1991 Theory of Planned Behavior model. Adapted from Ajzen (1991). This model shows how a person's Behavioral Intention, which determines their actual behavior, is shaped by their Attitude, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control. Employees are encouraged to develop intentions to act ethically and eventually participate in AI ethics practices when an organization has a strong ethical culture that positively influences the subjective norms and perceived control surrounding AI ethics (e.g., making it normal and feasible to raise concerns). The cultural elements found in this review essentially fit Ajzen's framework: culture influences employees' attitudes (by indicating that moral behavior is valued), norms (by making moral behavior the norm), and perceived control (by offering resources and support), all of which reinforce intentions and strengthen the model's effectiveness in encouraging more ethical behavior in AI.**

pressures such as regulatory requirements or public scrutiny (Rogers, 2003).

These theoretical lenses highlight how deeply organizational culture influences the intention to adopt ethical behaviors (Ajzen, 1991) and the diffusion or spread of these innovations across and within organizations (Rogers, 2003). Thus, these frameworks provide critical insights into how organizational culture can help or hinder the effective adoption and long-term integration of AI ethics practices.

## Cultural Dimensions and Organizational Types

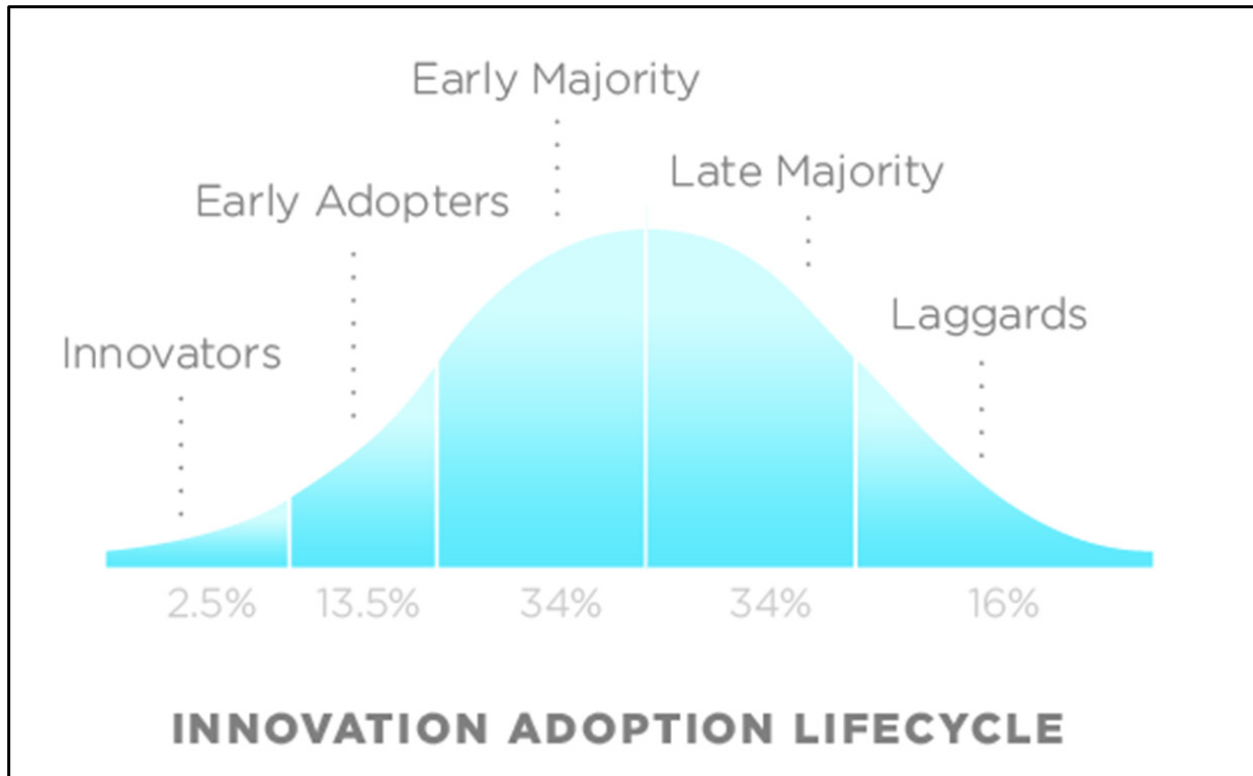
Beyond behavioral theories, the literature uses dimensions like Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to categorize organizational culture. Hofstede (1980) identified six distinct dimensions, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, long-term orientation, and indulgence-restraint, which have been widely used in organizational analysis. For example, organizations with a high-power distance may have more hierarchical structures and centralized

decision-making, which may impact AI ethics adoption by limiting open communication about ethical issues. On the other hand, organizations with low power distance and high individualism frequently promote open discussion and individual responsibility, which may result in faster diffusion and stronger adherence to AI ethics practices. Similarly, cultures with high uncertainty avoidance may be more cautious and thorough in adopting new technologies, prioritizing compliance and rigorous ethical scrutiny of AI implementations.

These theoretical insights and cultural classifications provide essential context and framing for the subsequent literature review. Establishing a theoretical and conceptual foundation explains why specific cultural characteristics consistently facilitate or impede AI ethics practices, guiding managerial and policy interventions.

## Discussion

The literature synthesis closely follows the theoretical frameworks and cultural dimensions discussed earlier in this review. According to Ajzen's Theory



**Figure 2.** The diffusion of innovations adoption curve (Rogers, 2003). Adapted from Rogers (2003). The blue bell curve represents the distribution of adopter categories (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, laggards) over time. An ethical organizational culture can help a company move earlier on this curve (becoming an “early adopter” of AI ethics practices) rather than lagging as a late adopter. This classic model underscores how a supportive culture catalyzes the adoption of new practices like AI ethics faster.

of Planned Behavior (1991) and Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovations (2003), internal attitudes, perceived social pressures, and cultural contexts significantly impact the adoption of AI ethics practices across an organization. Furthermore, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (1980) explain how organizational characteristics such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance affect practical ethical considerations and adoption behaviors.

The literature review identifies several key patterns in the impact of organizational culture on AI ethics practice. First and foremost, it is widely acknowledged that culture “makes or breaks” the ethical adoption of AI. Almost all sources, whether academic studies or industry reports, agree that without an internal culture that prioritizes ethics, even the best AI principles or regulations will be ineffective. This finding is consistent with long-standing technology adoption models, such as Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovations, which emphasizes the role of organizational context and social dynamics in adopting and integrating new practices. In the case of AI ethics, organizational culture determines whether ethical guidelines are followed or adopted on the surface. According to Rogers (2003), the timing of innova-

tion adoption—whether early or late—is strongly influenced by the characteristics of the surrounding social system. Within this framework, an ethics-oriented culture serves as a receptive environment for the spread of responsible AI practices, establishing the organization as an early adopter. In contrast, a weak or misaligned culture may hinder adoption, leaving the firm among the laggards.

One notable pattern is the importance of leadership and explicit cultural values. When leaders publicly support AI ethics and demonstrate commitment, it sends a strong message throughout the organization. Multiple cases (e.g., at Deutsche Telekom and Thomson Reuters) demonstrated that executives who invested in ethics committees, training programs, and internal communications about responsible AI saw their teams more easily incorporate ethical checks into AI projects (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). This top-down influence is frequently called setting the “tone at the top.” It has a knock-on effect: project managers and engineers value ethics because they see it valued by those in positions of authority.

Furthermore, explicit cultural artifacts such as a published AI ethics code or well-defined company values centered on transparency, fairness, and ac-

countability provide employees with a clear framework for expected behavior. According to Epley and Kumar (2019), clearly stated principles and norms, reinforced through incentives and everyday actions, form the foundation of an ethical culture. As a result, organizations should incorporate ethical considerations into mission statements, leadership communications, performance evaluations, and storytelling, thereby providing ethical guidance for AI practices.

However, culture is reinforced not only from the top-down but also from the bottom up through daily practices and habits. A significant theme in the literature is the translation of high-level ethics into everyday practice, which is fundamentally a cultural process. Many organizations struggle with this middle layer: they have ethics policies (the “talk”) and ethical intentions among employees, but they lack the mechanisms to turn talk into a consistent “walk.” As Blanchard, Thomas, and Taddeo (2025) point out, even in high-stakes domains like defense, ethical governance of AI frequently fails due to unresolved normative tradeoffs in translating those principles into actionable guidance. Pant et al. (2024) support this challenge with empirical data from 100 AI practitioners. While there was a high level of awareness about AI ethics, practical implementation was hampered by a lack of tools, guidance, and integration into development workflows. They introduce promising early-stage solutions, such as the ECCOLA framework and AI ethics maturity models, but emphasize that they are underutilized in real-world settings. This highlights the importance of cultural and operational alignment in translating ethical intent into systematic action.

Cultural norms and peer practices can either close or widen the gap. Assume the prevailing norm in an organization is to double-check algorithms for bias and encourage critical questions. In that case, developers are more likely to identify and address ethical issues early on. Suppose the norm is to “get the product out ASAP” and not question decisions. In that case, ethical issues may be overlooked until a crisis occurs. Wade and Yokoi’s (2024) case studies demonstrated that companies advancing in responsible AI frequently established new norms, such as requiring ethics reviews in project workflows, encouraging teams to seek advice through an ethics hotline or committee, and celebrating employees who raise ethical concerns rather than marginalizing them. Over time, these practices become ingrained in the culture, defining “how we do things

here.” These dynamics emphasize the power of shared norms in steering behavior (Ajzen, 1991). When an ethical culture encourages employees to speak up and act with integrity, they internalize the norms and are likely to behave ethically. In contrast, a culture of silence or unchecked urgency can lead to ethical lapses.

One of the most visible examples of cultural transformation from ethics-as-compliance to ethics-as-core can be found at Deutsche Telekom, a major European telecommunications company. The company began incorporating responsible AI principles into its development processes in preparation for emerging AI regulations as early as 2018. However, leaders quickly realized that high-level principles were insufficient for actual impact. Developers required clear, operational guidance. In response, Deutsche Telekom released its AI Engineering and Usage Guidelines in 2021, which detailed best practices across the AI lifecycle through role-specific instructions in both German and English. These guidelines specified ethical checkpoints at each development stage (design, testing, and deployment) to ensure

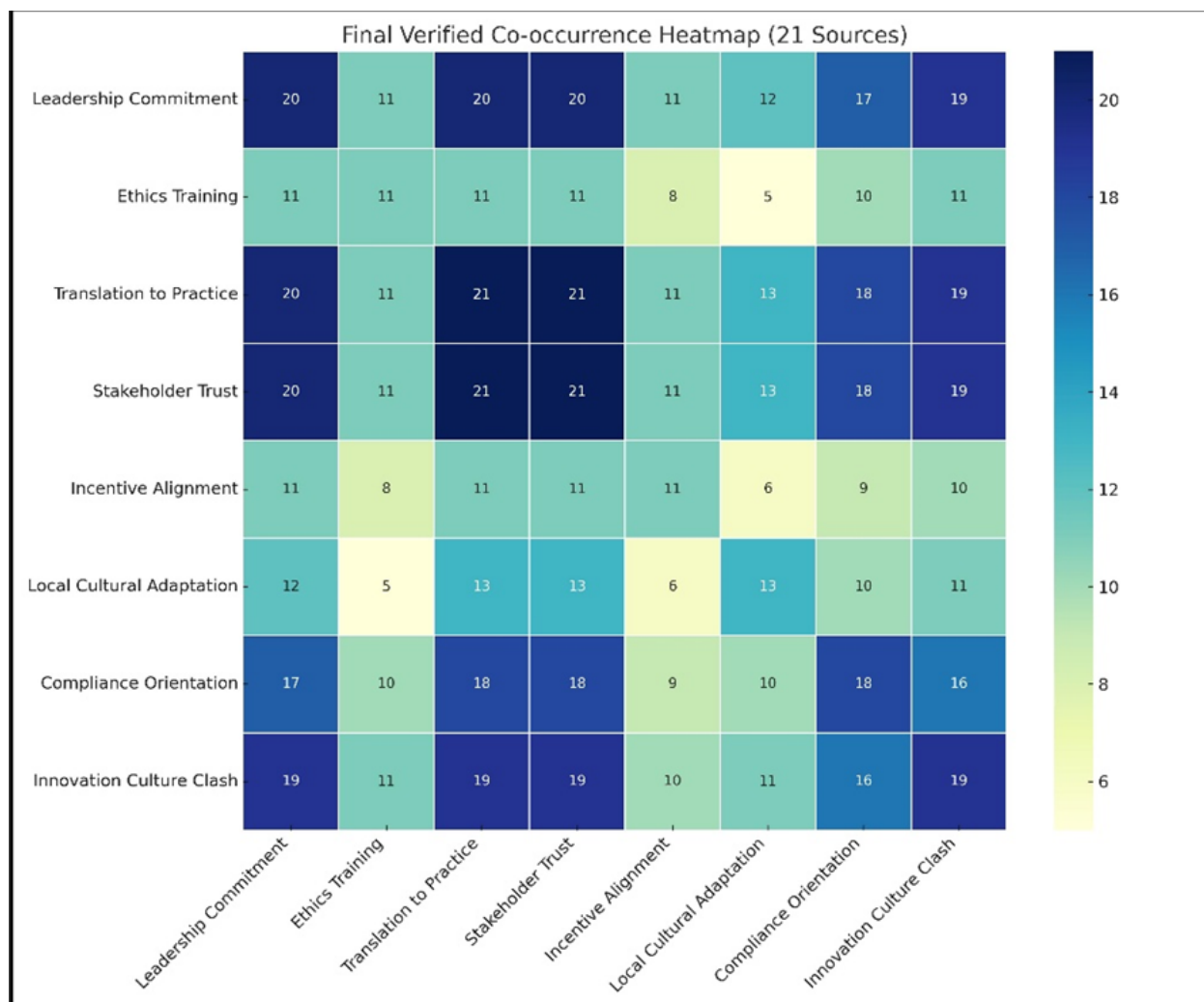
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that ethical alignment was built into standard workflows. To further culturally embed these norms, the compliance and ethics team created an open email channel for AI ethics inquiries, audited 10% of AI projects annually, and issued internal certifications for ethical compliance. Instead of being viewed as an external re-

quirement, responsible AI became an integral part of the organization’s identity. The primary drivers were cross-functional governance and peer accountability, but clear leadership sponsorship was critical. Their assistance was crucial in establishing ethical AI practices. This transformation demonstrates how culture, structure, and tools can work together to effectively implement AI ethics throughout a large enterprise.

A co-occurrence heatmap was created to supplement this analysis based on a verified manual review of 21 academic and practitioner sources (see Figure 3). This heatmap depicts how frequently cultural factors, such as leadership commitment and ethics training, were highlighted in the literature. The goal was to find structural relationships between cultural enablers and barriers to implementing AI ethics.

Figure 3 depicts how some factors frequently co-occurred, implying that they form cohesive cultural “clusters.” For example, leadership commitment was consistently associated with ethics training, principles translation into practice, and stakeholder trust.



**Figure 3. Verified co-occurrence heatmap of cultural factors influencing AI ethics adoption. Each cell indicates the number of sources where a pair of cultural dimensions was jointly discussed, based on 21 manually reviewed academic and practitioner sources from 2019–2025.**

This demonstrates a closely linked “leadership-ethics ecosystem,” in which formal commitments are reinforced through internal training and stakeholder communication. In contrast, challenges such as innovation urgency and local cultural adaptation frequently appear together, particularly in high-growth or globally dispersed organizations where speed and decentralization complicate ethical oversight. These recurring pairings reflect underlying organizational tensions, which can either facilitate or impede responsible AI integration.

Unlike a thematic summary, this heatmap provides a semi-quantitative synthesis that clarifies what factors matter and how they interrelate. It reinforces the idea that adopting AI ethics depends on cultural systems, not isolated practices. Organizations should, therefore, pursue bundled interventions that align leadership tone, incentives, training, and operational design. Addressing ethics without leadership

sponsorship or cultural integration risks superficial compliance rather than meaningful change. This co-occurrence analysis offers researchers and practitioners a practical diagnostic tool to identify which combinations of cultural elements are most effective and which unaddressed gaps may jeopardize adoption success.

Cross-sector comparisons show how different cultural starting points affect the adoption of AI ethics. For example, highly regulated industries such as banking and healthcare traditionally have a compliance and risk management culture. Employees in these sectors are accustomed to procedures such as audits, checklists, and oversight, which can be applied to AI ethics. The author’s review discovered evidence that banks could more easily incorporate AI ethics requirements because it was a natural extension of their quality-control culture (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). In contrast, tech firms (particularly younger

companies or startups) frequently pride themselves on agile innovation and low bureaucracy. This cultural orientation can conflict with the demands of ethical governance, which may be perceived as “slowing things down.” According to a Harvard Business Review roundtable, Silicon Valley’s ingrained culture of speed and disruption treats governance or “guardrails” as an afterthought, making it difficult to implement comprehensive ethical oversight (Blackman, 2023; Dukach, 2023). In Hofstede’s terms, highly regulated fields often exhibit high uncertainty avoidance and higher power distance, favoring formal oversight and top-down controls; this predisposition naturally prioritizes compliance structures. By contrast, tech organizations typically have lower uncertainty avoidance and a flatter, low power distance ethos that encourages grassroots innovation, albeit sometimes at the expense of structured ethical checks. This does not imply that tech companies cannot practice AI ethics. Many try, but it may take a cultural shift or intense external pressure (such as regulation or public scrutiny) to rebalance priorities. Interestingly, some tech companies are now hiring ethicists, forming internal ethics teams, or implementing AI risk assessment checkpoints, attempting to instill some of the more common conscientious traits in older, regulated industries.

Another aspect of cross-sector comparison is geographical or societal culture, which overlaps with organizational culture. Tenakwah and Watson (2025) contend that HR functions must evolve into strategic “translators” between human and machine systems. HR can help with reskilling, role design, and value alignment to ensure AI ethics practices are ingrained in systems and daily culture. Furthermore, Hähnel et al. (2024) contend that AI frequently alters power dynamics within organizations, establishing new points of decision-making authority. They introduce the concept of “ethical power” and the ability to use power transparently and justly, which are critical for balancing organizational justice in artificial intelligence systems. Diab and El Hajj (2024) conducted a detailed comparison of companies operating in various national contexts. For example, the Lebanese business environment, which is rife with corruption and a weak rule of law, has created organizational cultures in which ethical behavior is rarely rewarded, and employees are afraid to challenge their superiors. As a result, AI adoption in that context was hampered by a lack of trust and governance.

Meanwhile, the same AI model performed significantly better in a more robust governance environment (Poland in their study) (Diab & El Hajj, 2024).

This suggests that national culture and the larger governance context permeate organizational culture, influencing AI ethics outcomes. It also aligns with the point made by Deodhar et al. (2024) that ethical norms vary globally, so a “responsible AI” approach in one country may not directly translate into another. For example, a strongly collectivist society may define fairness in terms of collective well-being or equitable group outcomes, whereas a highly individualistic culture emphasizes individual rights and meritocracy in evaluating fairness. Likewise, power distance influences transparency and accountability expectations: high power distance environments are less likely to demand full disclosure or openly challenge decisions, whereas low power distance cultures expect information sharing and encourage questioning of authority. Furthermore, Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension underscores why one-size-fits-all ethics strategies can falter: employees in high uncertainty avoidance cultures expect detailed rules and formal oversight to feel secure with AI initiatives, whereas those in low uncertainty avoidance settings are comfortable with flexible, principle-based guidelines that leave more room for innovation. The challenge is to maintain a consistent

**The challenge is to maintain a consistent AI ethics stance for multinational corporations while also respecting and adapting to local cultural and regulatory differences.**

AI ethics stance for multinational corporations while also respecting and adapting to local cultural and regulatory differences. According to the literature, the recommended practice is to take a globally consistent but locally adaptable approach,

which means establishing core principles (such as fairness and transparency) company-wide but allowing local units to implement them in ways that are appropriate for the local context and regulations (Deodhar et al., 2024).

While the literature generally agrees on the importance of culture, researchers have identified some gaps and emerging challenges. One issue is the absence of standardized metrics and benchmarks for “AI ethics performance.” According to the Stanford University AI Index Report 2024, companies and AI labs use various benchmarks to assess AI fairness, bias, and safety (Maslej et al., 2024). Assessing or comparing how well organizations perform on responsible AI remains difficult without a common standard. One way to address this gap is by developing a maturity model for AI governance, outlining progressive levels of evaluation rigor and standardized practices. In the absence of agreed-upon benchmarks or a model, organizations and regulators face uncertainty, which slows regulatory readiness and leads to uneven adoption of responsible AI practices (Maslej et al., 2024). From a cultural standpoint,

organizations rely on intuition. Each company may define “ethical success” differently based on its values and stakeholder expectations. For example, one company’s culture may prioritize data privacy over all else, while another prioritizes algorithmic fairness; both are important, but without a common framework, their efforts will appear disparate. The implication is that, without universal standards, organizations must frequently establish internal AI ethics standards and goals (shaped by their values). This can be a double-edged sword: a strong culture can motivate a company to go above and beyond the minimum legal requirements (for example, some firms voluntarily publish AI ethics toolkits). However, a weak culture may use the lack of external standards to do the bare minimum. According to survey data from the Stanford University AI Index report, while many organizations are beginning to mitigate AI-related risks such as bias and security, most have only addressed a small portion of the dangers thus far (Maslej et al., 2024). Prioritizing comprehensive AI risk management presents an opportunity for cultural growth.

Another nuanced point is the role of transparency and stakeholder trust, and how culture influences them from the outside. Baeza-Yates and Fayyad (2024) advocate for “experiential AI,” a feedback system that involves humans. Organizations can ensure ongoing alignment between AI outputs and evolving ethical expectations by systematically collecting intervention data and feedback on AI behavior. This experiential loop reinforces transparency, accountability, and long-term trust when embedded within a culture. David et al. (2024) discovered that public trust in AI governance heavily depends on ethics and transparency. Public trust can erode if an organization has a culture of secrecy or evasion surrounding its AI (for example, not disclosing how an algorithm makes decisions or failing to admit mistakes).

In contrast, an open culture that freely shares information and engages stakeholders can foster trust. This is becoming increasingly important as regulators and the public question not only “Is your AI accurate?” but also “Is your AI aligned with our values, and who is accountable if something goes wrong?” (David et al., 2024). Companies respond to this pressure by publishing responsible AI reports and engaging independent auditors to verify compliance. These steps require norms of humility and accountability—reinforced by leadership and incentives—to be credible and effective. Notably, the call for an “interdependent framework” of AI governance in which government, corporations, and citizens all play roles necessitates a collaborative and open culture within organizations rather than a defensive or insular stance (David et al., 2024).

These findings paint a coherent picture: organizational culture decisively accelerates or obstructs the

adoption of AI ethics. When culture, structure, and strategy are aligned to value ethics (what we might call the “AI ethics trifecta”), organizations tend to navigate the complex moral challenges of AI much more successfully. They create internal mechanisms to foresee issues, address them, and continuously learn. When culture is misaligned, a company values speed over safety, or profit over principles, AI ethics efforts often falter. They appear only as superficial compliance or reactive measures after a scandal. Notably, the author’s sources do not fundamentally contradict each other on these points; instead, they reinforce each other by examining the issue from different angles (theoretical, empirical, and practical). Minor differences in emphasis are usually due to context (sector or geography) or scope (for example, some sources focus on data privacy ethics, while others focus on AI in decisionmaking). Collectively, these variations reinforce that AI ethics adoption is as much a cultural journey as a technical one.

One encouraging insight for practitioners is that cultivating an AI ethics culture can be done intentionally rather than accidentally. Several sources provided concrete steps to create such a culture. Wade and Yokoi’s (2024) “Four Moves” framework, for example, boils down to ethical change management: translating principles into practice, incorporating ethics into design, continuously calibrating with feedback, and proliferating learning. These steps demonstrate how organizations can proactively shape their cultures through training, incentives, and structural changes to better support AI ethics. Another insight is that culture can provide a competitive advantage. Firms that figure out how to combine innovation and ethics may avoid pitfalls, gain public trust, and even reap operational benefits (for example, diverse teams detecting flaws early, resulting in better AI products for a larger market).

The discussion suggests a virtuous cycle: a strong ethical culture leads to more effective AI ethics practices, reinforcing the culture. In contrast, ignoring culture can create a vicious cycle of ethical failures and trust erosion. According to the evidence reviewed, culture is the linchpin that can create fertile ground or rocky soil for AI ethics to grow. Based on the findings, the author concludes with specific recommendations for managers and policymakers on fostering an organizational culture that promotes the adoption of AI ethics.

### **Weaknesses, gaps, and areas for future research**

The literature review delves deeply into the critical role of organizational culture in shaping the adoption of AI ethics practices across sectors. However, several significant gaps impede theoretical understanding and application.

A significant limitation identified in multiple studies is the abstract and generalized nature of AI ethics principles, making practical implementation difficult for organizations. Researchers such as Zhou and Chen (2023), Morley et al. (2023), and Wade and Yokoi (2024) have repeatedly highlighted the disconnect between high-level ethical guidelines and actionable operational frameworks. Despite widespread acceptance of fundamental principles like transparency, fairness, and accountability, organizations struggle to implement them, limiting their practical effectiveness and complicating consistency. Furthermore, there is a clear gap in leadership readiness for AI-driven organizational transformation. Sposato (2024) emphasizes that traditional leadership training does not adequately prepare leaders to deal with AI-induced changes such as workforce transformations, cultural shifts, and ethical quandaries. This gap underscores the critical need for leadership development programs that equip leaders with the skills to guide organizations through AI ethics integration. Another significant flaw in the literature is the absence of consideration for diverse cultural contexts in global AI ethics standards. Deodhar et al. (2024) argue that existing ethical frameworks have a significant Western-centric bias, making applying these standards universally across diverse cultural environments difficult. This cultural bias undermines the global relevance and effectiveness of AI ethics guidelines, emphasizing the need for additional research that explicitly addresses the cross-cultural dimensions of AI ethics.

Also, organizational justice and internal fairness perceptions are essential but understudied factors. Mohammadabbasi et al. (2022) found that perceived organizational justice mediates AI ethics adoption, implying that employee perceptions of fairness significantly impact AI integration outcomes. Nonetheless, this dimension is largely ignored in current literature, necessitating additional empirical research into organizational justice as a critical component of successful AI ethics implementation. Furthermore, the reviewed studies show insufficient empirical research on effective strategies for mitigating AI bias. Sharabati et al. (2024) show how algorithm diversity, quality data management, employee training, and regulatory compliance can help reduce AI bias in practice. However, concrete guidance and empirical evidence of best practices remain scarce, indicating a significant gap in understanding how organizations can systematically address and prevent biases in AI systems.

Likewise, consistent shortcomings in transparency and standardized practices make it more difficult for organizations to establish public trust in AI systems. According to the Stanford University AI Index 2024 Annual Report, the absence of standardized responsible AI benchmarks complicates comparative

assessments of AI risks (Maslej et al., 2024). It limits meaningful regulatory and management oversight, making it difficult for stakeholders to evaluate AI applications accurately. This lack of transparency erodes stakeholder trust, preventing broad acceptance and ethical adoption.

Finally, there is a significant difference between ethical responsibility and perceived profitability. Acar et al. (2025) identify a disconnect between managers' understanding of the importance of AI ethics and their practical readiness to implement it effectively. Organizations frequently perceive ethical frameworks as costly with uncertain returns, emphasizing the need for more research to quantify and communicate responsible AI's tangible benefits and business value.

Addressing identified gaps through targeted future research, developing practical operational frameworks, fostering AI-specific leadership competencies, thoroughly exploring cultural influences, considering organizational fairness, improving transparency and bias-mitigation strategies, and clarifying the relationship between ethics and profitability will significantly advance both theoretical understanding and practical application of AI ethics across various sectors.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on the following areas to build on the findings of this review and improve the scholarly and practical utility of AI ethics studies:

- Conducting comparative studies on AI ethics adoption in high and low-regulation sectors to understand how compliance-driven cultures impact ethical integration.
- Standardized metrics for assessing "AI ethics culture maturity" can help organizations benchmark and track internal progress.
- Longitudinal research is needed to assess how leadership ethics training programs impact AI deployment quality, organizational behavior, and ethical outcomes over time.
- Explore cross-cultural studies and how global companies can align ethical principles with local norms to minimize ethical blind spots and increase relevance.
- Investigating AI practitioner mindsets and how ethics and values intersect with organizational norms to impact real-world behavior.
- Analyze how organizations across sectors handle the five normative tradeoffs identified by Blanchard et al. (2025): lifecycle modeling, stakeholder inclusion scope, accountability goals, audit mechanisms, and transparency strategies.

## Implications and Recommendations

### Organizational Leaders

*Cultivate and Commit to Core Ethical Values:* Establish an ethical organizational culture from the ground up. This entails clearly articulating the values that govern AI use (for example, fairness, transparency, privacy, and human centricity) and consistently modeling them at the executive level (Diab & El Haggi, 2024). Leaders should explain why AI ethics is essential for the company's mission and reputation. Importantly, aligning incentives and evaluations with these values rewards teams for identifying and resolving ethical issues, rather than just technical performance. One study emphasized the importance of incorporating ethics into daily operations and decision-making criteria to maintain an ethical culture. The tone at the top is critical: if employees witness managers cutting corners or ignoring ethical concerns, cultural messages about ethics will be hollow.

*Translate Principles into Practice with Guidance and Tools:* Many organizations have high-level AI ethics charters; the next step is to help employees put those principles into practice (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). Create and distribute clear guidelines, checklists, and toolkits for AI ethics. Create standard operating procedures that require an "AI ethics check" at key project milestones, such as design, testing, and deployment. Balasubramaniam et al. (2023) propose a structured requirements engineering template to assist teams in defining explainability criteria, providing a tangible method for incorporating transparency into system design. Integrating tools like these can help to operationalize otherwise abstract ethical mandates, reducing ambiguity and reinforcing consistency. Consider forming an AI ethics committee or advisory group where employees can direct their questions (some companies have done this through dedicated ethics inboxes or hotlines) (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). The goal is to embed ethics into existing workflows so that "doing the right thing" becomes the path of least resistance. When ethical considerations are documented and easily accessible, engineers and product managers can follow the company's values without guesswork.

*Integrate Ethical Oversight into AI Development and Governance:* Effective AI ethics adoption necessitates organizational support. Companies should incorporate ethical principles into their AI and data governance frameworks. This can include establishing cross-functional ethics review boards and incorporating ethical risk assessments into existing governance processes (such as project approvals, model validation, and audits). The literature suggests building on what already works; for example, if a company has strong data privacy processes, expand them

to include AI fairness and accountability (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). Establish clear ownership of AI ethics at the project level by designating who is responsible for compliance with ethics guidelines. Some leading companies assign "ethics champions" or even create a position (such as an AI ethics officer) to oversee this. It is also prudent to continuously monitor AI systems after deployment for ethical performance (e.g., bias drift or misuse) (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). While monitoring can be time-consuming, spreading the responsibility across deployment teams and using automated tools to flag issues can help (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). The bottom line is that AI ethics should not be a one-time effort at launch, but rather an ongoing governance priority, just as cybersecurity is treated as a persistent priority in organizational culture.

*Foster an Open, Learning-Oriented Environment:* Encourage a culture of transparency, inquiry, and continuous learning regarding AI ethics. Employees at all levels should feel free to raise concerns or questions about AI behavior without fear of repercussions. To achieve this, ethics training should be provided, as well as workshops or roundtables where staff can discuss real-world AI dilemmas relevant to the business. Another effective practice mentioned in the review is fostering communities of practice or working groups (such as Bristol Myers Squibb's "AI Collective") that allow employees to share ideas and stay up to date on best practices (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). Such peer learning forums democratize ethical knowledge and foster a sense of shared responsibility.

Furthermore, cross-pollination of knowledge should be considered by rotating staff through ethics-related roles or inviting external experts to speak. An open culture also entails internal transparency regarding AI projects, such as sharing the results of ethics audits or decisions made by the ethics committee. As a result, everyone becomes aware of what is and is not acceptable. This learning culture gradually improves the organization's overall "AI ethics literacy," allowing for faster issue detection and resolution.

*Treat AI Ethics as a Value-Driver, not a Compliance Burden:* To maintain momentum, responsible AI practices should be positioned as essential to business success and innovation quality, rather than as red tape. Several companies have successfully positioned AI ethics as the key to trust and competitive advantage (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). For example, emphasize how AI ethics will help you reach underserved markets, avoid costly incidents, and increase customer loyalty. When employees see ethical considerations as beneficial to the product and the company's reputation, they are more likely to embrace them with intrinsic motivation. Some companies formed interdisciplinary teams (data science, product, compliance, marketing) to balance business ob-

jectives with ethical standards, reinforcing the link between the two (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). Leaders can demonstrate that ethics and innovation are mutually beneficial by highlighting “wins” (for example, an AI product improved through an ethics review). This mindset shift represents a cultural evolution: it establishes responsible AI as a component of quality and excellence, rather than just a legal checkbox.

*Engage Stakeholders and External Partners:* Extend the ethical culture beyond the organization’s boundaries. Proactively seek feedback on AI systems from industry consortia, regulatory sandboxes, academic researchers, or ethics-focused organizations (Wade & Yokoi, 2024). Working with external partners can provide new perspectives and help benchmark practices against peers. It also sends a message throughout the organization that accountability is encouraged rather than avoided. Some organizations collaborate with universities or nonprofits to audit algorithms or co-develop ethics training, which can boost credibility. In addition, maintain transparency with customers and the public by publishing an annual Responsible AI report or using model “fact sheets” that explain how your AI systems make decisions. This transparency reinforces the internal culture (employees take pride in honesty and accountability) and increases external trust. A culture that values ethics will seek dialogue and collaboration, acknowledging that shared responsibility is essential for managing AI’s societal impact (David et al., 2024).

## Policymakers & Regulators

*Encourage Cross-Sector Ethical Standards while Allowing Flexibility:* Policymakers should work to establish baseline standards for AI ethics (based on core principles such as transparency, fairness, and accountability) that apply across industries. Clear expectations from regulators can shape organizational cultures by sending strong external signals about what is expected. However, regulation should be principle-based and adaptable, allowing different sectors to implement the details in ways that are appropriate for their context. As we saw, a banking AI system and a healthcare AI system may approach ethics differently, but they should both follow the same principles. Regulators may develop frameworks or certification programs (similar to ISO standards) for AI ethics governance. When developed collaboratively with industry input, such standards can reinforce internal culture through external validation; for example, a company aiming to earn a “Trustworthy AI” certification will create a supportive culture to achieve it. At the same time, global policymakers must incorporate multiple cultural perspectives into these standards. Deodhar et al. (2024) found that global AI ethics guidelines favor Western perspectives. Involving international bod-

ies and experts from various regions, such as UNESCO’s approach in its AI Ethics Recommendation, can ensure that standards are understood globally.

*Mandate Transparency and Accountability Measures:* Regulators can speed up cultural change by requiring practices that force them to become organizational norms. For example, laws could require companies that use high-risk AI (such as AI in hiring or lending) to conduct bias audits and publish the results, or they could appoint an AI ethics officer to oversee the process. Similarly, requiring meaningful human oversight of key AI decisions (as proposed in the EU’s AI Act) forces businesses to maintain a culture where human judgment and accountability cannot be avoided. Another approach calls for public reporting on AI ethics efforts, such as how financial or ESG disclosures are handled. When organizations know they must openly disclose their ethics processes and outcomes, it creates internal pressure to have robust processes (nobody wants to report “we did nothing”). These regulatory pushes should be designed to integrate with business processes rather than as unwieldy add-ons. Well-crafted regulation can act as a “culture catalyst,” especially in sectors that might not prioritize ethics until legally required.

*Support Education and Best-Practice Sharing:* Governments and industry groups should invest in education initiatives to raise awareness of AI ethics among the workforce. This could include funding AI ethics training programs, public-private partnerships to develop curricula, or platforms for sharing best practices. By highlighting success stories (case studies of companies that improved their culture and avoided harm), policymakers can persuade others to follow suit. Furthermore, creating forums where companies from various sectors meet regularly to discuss AI ethics (perhaps with the guidance of a regulatory agency) facilitates knowledge transfer and raises the bar. Many businesses, tiny ones, lack the resources to create comprehensive ethics programs. Providing them with guidelines or toolkits (for example, AI ethics policy templates or SME-specific checklists) can help to level the playing field. Policymakers could also work with professional associations to incorporate AI ethics into professional standards for engineers, data scientists, and managers, reinforcing the expectation that ethical practice is essential to professional duty.

*Foster Multi-Stakeholder Governance and Public Engagement:* Finally, policymakers should respond to the public’s demand for shared responsibility in AI governance (David et al., 2024). A collaborative governance approach is required, rather than the government dictating rules or leaving everything to industry self-regulation. This entails engaging civil society representatives, ethicists, and the public in discussions about how AI is developed and used. For example, citizen panels or ethics commissions could

be formed to assess the impact of AI deployments. From an organizational standpoint, knowing that external stakeholders are actively involved increases the likelihood that companies will internalize a culture of accountability and empathy, considering the impact on users, society, and the bottom line. Policymakers can encourage companies to form external advisory boards for AI ethics or participate in data trusts that include community representatives. The goal is to break down cultural and operational barriers between AI developers and those impacted by AI. Over time, such multi-stakeholder engagement can foster a broader societal culture of responsible AI, percolating into each organization's culture. It unites everyone around a common goal: to maximize AI's benefits while upholding fundamental ethical principles.

As artificial intelligence continues transforming business and society, the organizations that successfully navigate this transformation will prioritize culture in their AI strategies. In the age of AI, an ethical organizational culture is a strategic imperative rather than a "nice-to-have". By shaping culture, organizations can proactively ensure their AI innovations are technically advanced and trustworthy. The review's findings and recommendations provide a road map for leaders and policymakers seeking to align human values with artificial intelligence through the lens of culture. Such an alignment will eventually enable AI to be adopted in a sustainable, inclusive way that benefits all sectors of society.

## Conclusions

Organizational culture influences whether AI ethics principles are successfully implemented or remain aspirational. This study analyzed recent cross-sector literature and applied established theoretical frameworks, such as Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991) and Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (2003), to better understand how culture promotes or impedes responsible AI implementation. The evidence suggests that AI ethics cannot be maintained solely through technical solutions or compliance checklists. Instead, it advocates for a supportive culture built on clear values, ethical leadership, operational alignment, and stakeholder trust. Organizations with strong ethical cultures build fairness, transparency, and accountability in daily operations. These cultures allow employees to express their concerns, follow guidelines, and make decisions consistent with shared ethical standards.

Leadership commitment is essential. Organizations are more likely to progress beyond superficial compliance when executives model ethical behavior, invest in training, and incorporate ethics into strategic goals and incentives. Similarly, ethics must be translated into practical tools like checklists, design reviews, and risk assessments to make responsible

behavior a habit. The sectoral and geographical contexts are also critical. Regulated industries frequently use existing governance systems to support AI ethics. In contrast, high-growth sectors like technology must deliberately slow down to reflect. Global companies must localize ethical frameworks to reflect regional values while avoiding Western-centric assumptions.

A co-occurrence heatmap compiled from 21 sources revealed that adopting AI ethics is driven by interconnected cultural systems rather than isolated practices. Bundled interventions, such as leadership tone, ethics training, and cross-functional governance, outperform individual efforts. AI ethics is built on an understanding of organizational cultures. It affects how principles are perceived, prioritized, and implemented. For leaders and policymakers, this means focusing on which ethics to uphold and how to foster a culture conducive to their success.

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## Review

This article was accepted under the **constructive peer review** option. For further details, see the descriptions at:

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