Journal Website

Article history:
Received 11 August 2026
Revised 17 November 2026
Accepted 25 November 2026
Initial Publication 27 November 2026
Final Publication 01 November 2027

International Journal of Innovation Management and Organizational Behavior

Open Peer-Review Report

E-ISSN: 3041-8992

Identifying the Components of Artificial Intelligence–Based Organizational Behavior in Iranian Sports Federations from the Perspective of Psychological Capital

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The Introduction states that “psychological capital represents a developable positive psychological state commonly characterized by self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism,” but the manuscript should provide a stronger theoretical explanation for why psychological capital was selected as the primary interpretive lens rather than other potentially relevant frameworks such as technology acceptance, job demands-resources theory, psychological readiness for change, or sociotechnical systems theory. The present version establishes that PsyCap is important but does not sufficiently justify its privileged theoretical position in relation to AI-based organizational behavior. The authors should articulate a more explicit theoretical argument showing how self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism are expected to influence employees’ interpretations of AI, adaptation to algorithmic work environments, innovative behavior, and reactions to technological uncertainty.

The Data Collection Tools section states that "an interview guide was developed on the basis of the conceptual focus of the study and a review of the relevant theoretical literature." The manuscript should provide greater transparency regarding development of the interview protocol. The authors should report the principal interview questions, explain whether the guide was reviewed by methodological or subject-matter experts, indicate whether a pilot interview was conducted, and describe any modifications made before formal data collection. Since the emerging framework depends entirely on interview data, the quality and neutrality of the interview prompts are central to the validity of the study. The authors should also clarify how they avoided leading participants toward predetermined PsyCap dimensions.

The Methods section indicates that interviews examined "self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism," while the Findings section subsequently identifies these same four constructs as a major dimension. This raises a potential concern regarding deductive contamination of an ostensibly inductive analysis. If participants were explicitly asked about the four established dimensions of psychological capital, their later emergence as qualitative categories cannot be presented entirely as inductively discovered. The authors should clarify which categories were sensitizing concepts derived from prior theory and which emerged independently from the data. A hybrid inductive-deductive coding description may be more accurate and methodologically defensible than claiming a purely inductive process.

The qualitative trustworthiness section states that "the coding structure, categories, and preliminary conceptual model were independently examined by two academic experts familiar with qualitative research and organizational behavior." This is useful, but the manuscript should provide more information about the role of these reviewers. It should be clarified whether they independently coded raw transcripts, reviewed only the coding framework, or evaluated category definitions after coding had been completed. If intercoder agreement was not calculated because the analysis followed an interpretive qualitative approach, this should be stated explicitly. Conversely, if independent coding occurred, some description of agreement and resolution of discrepancies would strengthen dependability.

The Findings section reports that "341 preliminary codes" were reduced to "82 distinct open codes," then grouped into "21 subcategories and six overarching dimensions." This progression is clearly presented numerically, but the analytical logic connecting these levels requires more evidence. The authors should explain the criteria used to merge initial codes, the conceptual thresholds for creating a subcategory, and the basis for grouping subcategories into the six dimensions. At present, the numbers demonstrate coding activity but not necessarily analytical depth. Including representative quotations for each major dimension and several key subcategories would provide empirical grounding and allow readers to judge whether the categories accurately represent participants' statements.

Table 1 identifies "psychological capital capacities, AI readiness and intelligent work competencies, adaptive and innovative organizational behavior, intelligent leadership and human resource management, organizational and technological enabling conditions, and individual and organizational outcomes" as six major dimensions. However, these dimensions are not all at the same conceptual level. Psychological capital represents an individual resource, AI readiness represents competency, adaptive behavior represents a behavioral mechanism, leadership represents a managerial mechanism, enabling conditions represent contextual antecedents, and outcomes represent consequences. The authors should reconsider whether these are appropriately labeled as parallel "dimensions" or whether the findings would be more theoretically coherent if organized into antecedents, individual resources, behavioral mechanisms, organizational facilitators, and outcomes.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The paragraph beginning with "The emergence of artificial intelligence has intensified the need to understand these interactions" should more clearly differentiate the positive and negative psychological mechanisms associated with AI adoption. The discussion of AI anxiety, technostress, digital overload, and psychological capital is relevant, but these constructs are presented largely in parallel. A stronger manuscript would develop a conceptual tension showing that AI may function

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E-ISSN: 3041-8992

simultaneously as a job resource and a job demand, depending on employees' psychological resources and organizational conditions. This would provide a more sophisticated theoretical foundation for the later qualitative finding that AI outcomes are conditional rather than automatically beneficial.

The Introduction identifies a research gap by stating that "there remains limited qualitative understanding of how experts conceptualize the specific components of organizational behavior emerging from the interaction between artificial intelligence and psychological capital, particularly within sports federations." This gap should be made considerably more specific. The authors should distinguish between an empirical gap, a contextual gap, and a theoretical gap. For example, it should be clarified whether previous studies have not examined AI and psychological capital simultaneously, whether existing studies have focused mainly on non-sport organizations, whether Iranian sports federations have been understudied, or whether previous research has failed to develop a qualitative component model. A more precise gap statement would strengthen the originality claim and demonstrate exactly how the present study advances existing scholarship.

In the Methods section, the sentence "This study employed a qualitative exploratory design to identify and conceptualize the components of artificial intelligence–based organizational behavior in Iranian sports federations from the perspective of psychological capital" is appropriate, but the manuscript does not identify the specific qualitative methodological tradition used. The later use of open, axial, and selective coding strongly resembles grounded theory procedures, while the text also repeatedly refers to thematic analysis. These are methodologically distinct traditions and should not be used interchangeably. The authors should explicitly state whether the study used grounded theory, conventional qualitative content analysis, thematic analysis, or another approach, and then ensure that the terminology, coding procedures, saturation logic, and model development are consistent with that methodological choice throughout the manuscript.

The Methods section reports that "participants were selected using purposive sampling combined with the snowball technique," but the criteria governing purposive selection require greater precision. The authors should specify the minimum educational qualification, minimum years of professional experience, type of involvement with sports federations, evidence of expertise in AI or organizational behavior, and whether participants were required to possess expertise across multiple domains or only one. Because the study claims to identify interdisciplinary components spanning AI, psychological capital, sports management, and organizational behavior, the credibility of the findings depends heavily on the composition of the expert panel. Explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria would make the sampling strategy more transparent and reproducible.

The manuscript states that "saturation was achieved after interviews with 18 experts," but the basis for determining saturation is insufficiently documented. The authors should explain how saturation was monitored during data collection, whether coding occurred concurrently with interviewing, at which interview no substantially new codes or categories emerged, and whether any additional interviews were conducted to confirm saturation. Merely stating that saturation occurred at 18 interviews is not enough for methodological rigor. A brief saturation audit—for example, indicating that no new subcategories emerged after a particular interview and that subsequent interviews only reinforced existing categories—would provide much stronger evidence.

In the participant description, the manuscript reports that "participants represented different areas of specialization, including sports management, organizational behavior, artificial intelligence, industrial and organizational psychology, and human resource management." This diversity is a strength, but the manuscript should explain how potential differences in disciplinary perspective were handled analytically. An AI specialist may interpret intelligent organizational behavior very differently from a sports executive or organizational psychologist. The authors should indicate whether disciplinary contrasts were explored during constant comparison, whether certain themes were predominantly raised by specific expert groups, and whether disagreements among experts were treated as analytically meaningful. Incorporating this information could deepen the analysis beyond a simple aggregation of expert opinions.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

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E-ISSN: 3041-8992

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.

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E-ISSN: 3041-8992