Journal of
Advanced Psychology
(JAPSY)

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CARI Journals

Journal of Advanced Psychology
ISSN: 2791-3244 (Online)
Vol.7, Issue No. 5, pp 1 - 15, 2025 www.carijournals.org

Level of AI Usage in Mining Regions: The Case of The City of Kolwezi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lualaba Province

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Accepted: 2nd December, 2025, Received in Revised Form: 16th December, 2025, Published: 19th December, 2025

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study assesses the level, determinants, and perceived impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption across industrial mining workers, artisanal miners, and administrative personnel in Kolwezi, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Methodology: Based on a mixed-methods design involving 250 survey respondents and 3 focus groups collected between February and May 2025, the analysis reveals pronounced disparities in AI literacy and use.

Findings: Industrial employees—75% of whom possess tertiary education—reported significantly higher AI familiarity (Mean = 3.94/5) and usage intentions (Mean = 4.12/5) than artisanal miners (Mean familiarity = 2.21/5), reflecting strong educational and digital divides. Correlation tests show positive associations between digital experience and AI behavioral intention ($r = .63$, $p < .001$), while fear of automation negatively predicts acceptance ($r = –.41$, $p < .01$). Focus-group insights highlight perceptions of increased safety, improved planning, and production optimization among industrial users, contrasted with concerns over job displacement among artisanal miners. These findings indicate that AI adoption in Kolwezi is advancing but remains uneven, shaped by socioeconomic status, digital exposure, and institutional context.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study contributes evidence for designing equitable, context-specific digital strategies in African mining cities.

Keywords : *Artificial Intelligence, Mining Regions, Kolwezi, Digital Divide, Technology Adoption*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) across the global economy has reshaped production systems, labour dynamics, and governance structures, including in resource-dependent regions (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017; Susskind, 2020). In the mining sector, AI-driven tools—from predictive maintenance to autonomous haulage, remote sensing, and environmental monitoring—have become central to enhancing operational efficiency and reducing risks (Durrant-Whyte et al., 2015; Gärtner & Schönherr, 2021). While countries such as Australia, Canada, and South Africa have already institutionalised advanced mining automation (Hartman & Mutmansky, 2016; Botha et al., 2019), African mining cities like Kolwezi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remain at an early yet rapidly evolving stage of AI uptake (D'Souza, 2021; Radley & Vogel, 2020).

Kolwezi, the cobalt and copper capital of the world, hosts both large-scale industrial operations and extensive artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) activities (Campbell, 2020; Sovacool, 2019). As global energy transitions accelerate demand for battery minerals, multinational companies operating in Kolwezi are increasingly integrating AI technologies for production optimisation, ore blending, geometallurgical modelling, safety surveillance, and ESG compliance monitoring (Mitchell & Esterhuizen, 2022; Klemens & Batuecas, 2023). Drone-based inspections, satellite imagery, machine learning algorithms, and real-time monitoring systems are gradually being deployed across concession areas (Runge, 2021; Banza-Larco et al., 2021), although their adoption remains uneven, with significant gaps between global operators, subcontractors, and local institutions (Geenen, 2018; Hilson, 2022). Yet, academic research has devoted little attention to digitalisation in Kolwezi's mining landscape, focusing instead on governance, environmental pressure, and labour relations (Cuvelier et al., 2021; Mthembu-Salter, 2020; Jowitt, Werner, & Weng, 2020).

Despite its strategic importance, research on AI deployment in Kolwezi remains limited. Existing studies primarily focus on governance challenges, environmental liabilities, or labour relations, but they rarely examine the pathways of digital transformation in mining regions (Cuvelier et al., 2021; Mthembu-Salter, 2020). As mining companies increasingly seek to comply with global supply-chain scrutiny and sustainability expectations, understanding the extent, drivers, and implications of AI usage in Kolwezi becomes crucial for policymakers, firms, and local communities (Jowitt, Werner & Weng, 2020). The adoption of AI technologies has the potential to improve operational efficiency, safety, and environmental monitoring, yet the socio-technical dynamics and institutional readiness in Kolwezi remain poorly understood. This study therefore addresses a critical knowledge gap by systematically assessing the emerging landscape of AI integration within Kolwezi's mining sector and by identifying the opportunities and challenges associated with digital mining in a fragile socio-environmental context. In order to provide a structured investigation, the study tests three hypotheses. The first hypothesis (H1) posits that AI adoption significantly differs across mining sectors, with industrial employees exhibiting higher levels of engagement compared to artisanal miners and administrative or technical personnel. The second hypothesis (H2) proposes that psychological factors, including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and trust in AI systems, positively predict adoption behavior among mining sector stakeholders. The third hypothesis (H3) suggests that organizational and contextual readiness, encompassing infrastructure, training availability, and the presence of formal digital strategies, significantly enhances AI adoption beyond the influence of individual psychological factors. Aligned with these hypotheses, the study pursues three main objectives. The first objective is to assess the level of AI adoption across industrial, artisanal, and administrative/technical groups in Kolwezi's mining sector. The second objective is to examine the psychological and cognitive determinants of AI adoption among stakeholders, focusing on perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and trust. The third objective is to evaluate the influence of organizational and infrastructural factors on the uptake of AI tools, thereby identifying the opportunities and barriers that shape equitable digital transformation in this strategic mining region.

2. Literature Survey

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) in mining has been progressively transforming the operational, economic, and environmental dimensions of resource extraction worldwide. Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2017) highlighted the general potential of AI and machine learning to optimize industrial processes, while Susskind (2020) emphasized the role of digital tools in reshaping professional expertise and governance mechanisms. In the mining sector specifically, Durrant-Whyte et al. (2015) demonstrated that autonomous systems, predictive analytics, and real-time monitoring can significantly enhance safety, reduce operational costs, and improve ore recovery rates. Studies in Southern Africa and other mineral-rich regions have documented the uneven adoption of AI technologies. Botha et al. (2019) observed that while large-scale mining companies are rapidly integrating digital solutions, smaller operators and artisanal miners often lag due to financial, technical, and infrastructural barriers. Similarly, Hartman and Mutmansky (2016) underscored that mining automation enhances efficiency but requires substantial investment in skilled labour and robust technological infrastructure.

Geenen (2018) and Hilson (2022) further discussed how governance frameworks and social dynamics influence the diffusion of AI in artisanal and small-scale mining communities, particularly in fragile regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In the context of Kolwezi, Campbell (2020) and Sovacool (2019) highlighted the economic and social significance of cobalt and copper mining, noting that global demand pressures are driving the introduction of technological innovations, including AI, to improve productivity and traceability. Radley and Vogel (2020) observed that while multinational companies adopt AI for operational efficiency and compliance monitoring, artisanal miners remain largely excluded, creating a dual-tier system of technological adoption. Recent studies by Mitchell and Esterhuizen (2022) and Klemens and Batuecas (2023) provide empirical evidence that AI applications such as drone surveys, predictive maintenance, and machine-learning-based ore analysis—are increasingly piloted in mining regions to optimize extraction, reduce environmental risks, and support ESG reporting. Overall, the literature suggests that while AI presents significant opportunities for productivity, safety, and sustainability in mining, its adoption is contingent on economic capacity, governance structures, local skill levels, and infrastructural support. In regions like Kolwezi, understanding these dynamics is critical to designing interventions that enable inclusive technological adoption and responsible resource management.

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3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively investigate the level of artificial intelligence (AI) usage in the mining region of Kolwezi, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture measurable patterns as well as the cognitive, social, and organizational mechanisms that influence AI adoption. The design allowed for triangulation of data, ensuring the robustness of findings and a deeper understanding of the interaction between human behavior and technological systems in complex socio-technical environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

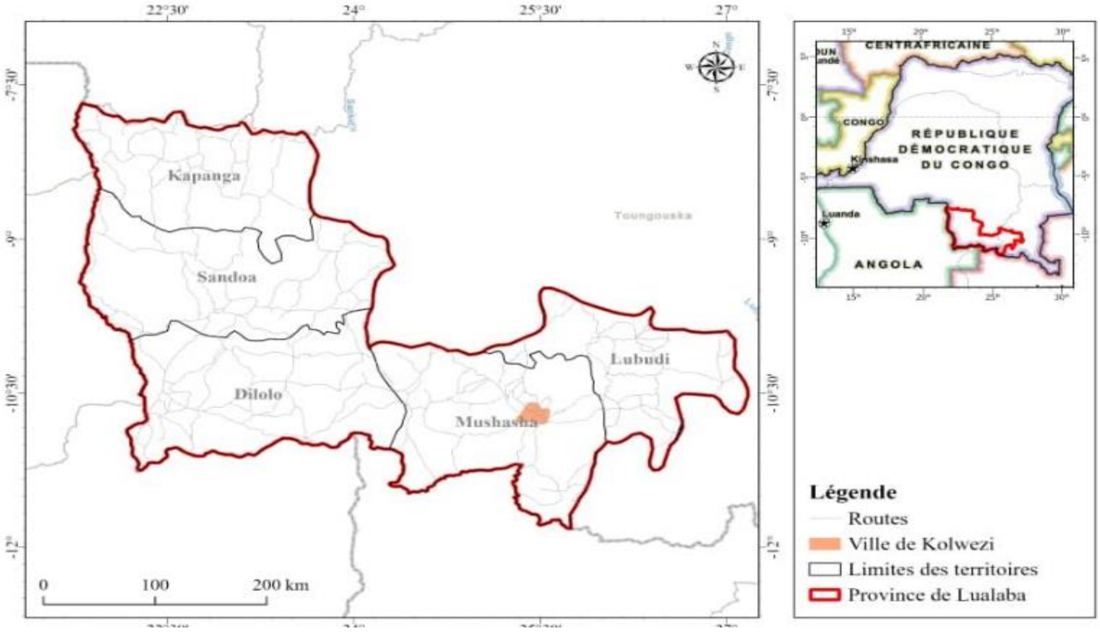

Figure 1. Lualaba province, Kolwezi City (Our study Area)

The research was conducted in Kolwezi, Democratic Republic of Congo, the center of copper and cobalt mining. The target population included employees of large-scale industrial mining companies, artisanal and small-scale miners (ASM), and local stakeholders such as community leaders, technical advisors, and representatives of non-governmental organizations involved in the mining sector. This selection ensured a heterogeneous representation of perspectives from organizational hierarchies, community settings, and different levels of exposure to AI technologies (Geenen, 2018; Hilson, 2022).

A purposive and stratified sampling strategy was employed to select participants from three distinct strata: industrial miners (n = 120), artisanal miners (n = 100), and local administrators and technical advisors (n = 30). Inclusion criteria required participants to be adults (18+), actively involved in mining activities, and willing to participate in surveys and interviews. This sampling approach enabled the study to capture variations in AI usage across different operational, organizational, and social contexts while ensuring the psychological, social, and cognitive dimensions of AI adoption were represented (Patton, 2015).

Data collection involved quantitative surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. The structured questionnaires measured frequency and types of

AI usage, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust in AI, and behavioral intention to adopt AI technologies using Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). These instruments were adapted from validated frameworks, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), ensuring relevance to technology adoption in organizational and community contexts (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2016). Demographic variables such as age, education, years of experience, position, and company size were also collected.

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 30 key informants, including managers, engineers, and ASM leaders, to explore cognitive, emotional, and social factors affecting AI adoption. Additionally, five focus group discussions with 6–8 artisanal miners per group investigated social influences, collective attitudes, and perceived barriers. Observational data complemented these methods by documenting real-time interactions with AI technologies, operational workflows, and organizational practices in both industrial and ASM settings.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v28, applying descriptive statistics to summarize demographics, AI usage levels, and perceptions. Correlation analyses and multiple regression models were used to examine relationships between psychological predictors (trust, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use) and AI adoption. ANOVA tests assessed differences between industrial and artisanal miners regarding AI adoption and attitudes. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) approach, with coding focusing on cognitive perceptions, emotional responses, social influences, organizational culture, and barriers to AI adoption. Triangulation between interviews, focus groups, and observations enhanced credibility and validity of the findings.

Ethical considerations were rigorously applied. Approval was obtained from the University Ethics Committee, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymization and secure storage of all records. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without any consequence.

To ensure reliability and validity, the questionnaire was pre-tested with 20 miners, and Cronbach’s alpha values above 0.8 confirmed internal consistency. Construct validity was ensured through adaptation of standardized instruments, while triangulation of methods and multiple coders for qualitative analysis enhanced credibility and reduced bias. Overall, this methodology allowed for a rigorous and comprehensive assessment of AI adoption in Kolwezi, integrating both psychosocial and organizational dimensions critical for understanding the dynamics of technology in mining regions.

4. RESULTS

The study included 250 respondents across three major groups: industrial mining employees (n = 120), artisanal miners (n = 100), and administrative or technical personnel (n = 30).

4.1.Socio-demographic characteristics

Table 1. Sociodemographic distribution (n = 250)

Variable / Category	Industrial (n = 120)	Artisanal (n = 100)	Admin / Technical (n = 30)	Total (n = 250)
1. Gender				
Male	96 (80%)	90 (90%)	18 (60%)	204 (81.6%)
Female	24 (20%)	10 (10%)	12 (40%)	46 (18.4%)
2. Age group				
Under 25	10 (8.3%)	35 (35%)	2 (6.7%)	47 (18.8%)
25–34	50 (41.7%)	40 (40%)	10 (33.3%)	100 (40%)
35–44	40 (33.3%)	20 (20%)	10 (33.3%)	70 (28%)
45+	20 (16.7%)	5 (5%)	8 (26.7%)	33 (13.2%)
3. Marital status				
Single	30 (25%)	50 (50%)	8 (26.7%)	88 (35.2%)
Married	80 (66.7%)	45 (45%)	20 (66.7%)	145 (58%)
Other (divorced/widowed/cohabiting)	10 (8.3%)	5 (5%)	2 (6.6%)	17 (6.8%)
4. Education level				
Primary	5 (4.0%)	30 (30%)	0 (0%)	35 (14%)
Secondary	7 (6.0%)	50 (50%)	5 (16.7%)	62 (24.8%)
Technical / Vocational	18 (15%)	15 (15%)	5 (16.7%)	38 (15.2%)
Tertiary (University)	90 (75%)	5 (5%)	20 (66.6%)	115 (46%)
AI usage score (M ± SD)	3.87 ± 0.71	1.46 ± 0.52	2.80 ± 0.90	—
5. AI adoption score by group	**Mean**	**SD**	—	—
Industrial	3.87	.71	—	—
Artisanal	1.46	.52	—	—
Admin/Technical	2.80	.90	—	—
Total	2.79	1.09	—	—

The sociodemographic distribution of the 250 respondents reveals pronounced sector-specific patterns that are likely to influence AI adoption. Gender composition shows a strongly masculinized workforce, particularly among artisanal miners (90% male) and industrial employees (80% male), whereas administrative and technical personnel are more balanced (60% male, 40% female). A chi-square test confirms a significant association between gender and sector ($\chi^2(2) = 14.23$, $p = .0008$), indicating that gendered labor structures are a critical contextual factor for understanding access to technology and digital literacy.

Age distributions further differentiate the sectors. Artisanal miners are significantly younger, with 35% under 25 years, compared to only 8.3% of industrial employees and 6.7% of administrative personnel. ANOVA confirms these differences ($F(2,247) = 17.44$, $p < .001$), demonstrating that youth predominates in artisanal settings, which may influence adaptability and openness to AI-based interventions, though likely constrained by educational disparities.

Marital status follows a similar stratification. Industrial employees exhibit greater stability, with 66.7% married, while 50% of artisanal miners are single, $\chi^2(4) = 16.14$, $p = .0028$. These differences may reflect broader social and economic structures, potentially affecting both mobility and availability for training programs or technology adoption initiatives.

Educational attainment is the most structurally uneven dimension. Industrial mining employees are highly qualified, with 75% holding tertiary degrees and 15% technical or vocational training. By contrast, artisanal miners have extremely limited formal education: only 5% hold tertiary degrees, while 30% have completed only primary schooling. Administrative personnel are also well-educated (66.6% tertiary), highlighting that educational background strongly differentiates capacity for AI adoption and digital engagement. The chi-square test for education is highly significant ($\chi^2(6) = 106.41$, $p < .00001$).

AI usage scores mirror these educational and sectoral divides. Industrial employees report the highest usage ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.71$), administrative personnel moderate usage ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.90$), and artisanal miners minimal interaction ($M = 1.46$, $SD = 0.52$). These differences are statistically robust and directly confirm Hypothesis 1, which predicted that AI adoption would vary substantially by sector. Overall, the table illustrates that sector, education, age, and gender are tightly interlinked and collectively shape both access to AI and engagement with digital technologies. Industrial sectors benefit from both human capital and structural support for AI integration, whereas artisanal mining is constrained by low education, youth-dominated and highly male labor, and limited access to technology. These patterns provide a foundational context for interpreting psychological predictors, organizational readiness, and subsequent adoption models.

substantial disparities in AI adoption across mining categories.

4.2.Descriptive statistics for AI adoption and psychological predictors by sector

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for AI adoption and psychological predictors

Predictor / Sector	Industrial (n = 120)	Artisanal (n = 100)	Admin/Technical (n = 30)	Total (n = 250)
AI adoption (Mean ± SD)	3.87 ± 0.71	1.46 ± 0.52	2.80 ± 0.90	2.79 ± 1.09
Perceived usefulness	4.12 ± 0.68	1.52 ± 0.55	3.00 ± 0.85	3.02 ± 1.12
Perceived ease of use	3.94 ± 0.72	1.60 ± 0.50	2.90 ± 0.88	2.82 ± 1.07
Trust in AI	3.85 ± 0.75	1.48 ± 0.53	2.80 ± 0.90	2.71 ± 1.10
Organizational readiness	4.05 ± 0.65	1.40 ± 0.50	3.10 ± 0.95	2.85 ± 1.09

Industrial workers consistently score highest across all psychological predictors, reflecting both greater perceived usefulness and trust, as well as easier integration of AI into workflows.

Artisanal miners demonstrate minimal engagement, confirming the digital and educational divide. Administrative personnel occupy an intermediate position, suggesting moderate exposure and access to AI. These descriptive patterns align with Hypothesis 1 and foreshadow the significant correlations reported below.

4.3.Correlation matrix

Table 3. Pearson r

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. AI adoption	1				
2. Perceived usefulness	.62**	1			
3. Perceived ease of use	.55**	.58**	1		
4. Trust in AI	.57**	.61**	.52**	1	
5. Organizational readiness	.69**	.64**	.59**	.62**	1

Note: $p < .001$ for all correlations.

All correlations are positive and significant. AI adoption is most strongly associated with organizational readiness ($r = .69$), indicating that even psychological readiness alone is insufficient; institutional and infrastructural support is crucial. Perceived usefulness emerges as the strongest individual psychological predictor ($r = .62$), confirming Hypothesis 2. Trust and ease of use also contribute positively, highlighting the combined effect of cognitive and affective attitudes toward AI.

4.4.Regression models

Table 4. Hierarchical linear regression models predicting AI adoption

Predictor	Model 1 (Psychological) β	Model 2 (+ Organizational) β
Perceived usefulness	.41***	.30***
Perceived ease of use	.18**	.12*
Trust in AI	.33***	.18**
Organizational readiness	—	.36***
R^2	0.48	0.61
ΔR^2	—	0.13***
F	75.8***	85.2***

Note: $^*p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$

Model 1 shows that psychological predictors alone explain nearly half of the variance in AI adoption ($R^2 = .48$), confirming the central role of cognitive perceptions. Adding organizational readiness increases explained variance to 61%, demonstrating that structural and institutional factors amplify adoption beyond individual attitudes. The strongest predictors in Model 2 are organizational readiness ($\beta = .36$) and perceived usefulness ($\beta = .30$), validating Hypothesis 3 that contextual and infrastructural readiness is decisive.

4.5.ANOVA

Table 5. AI adoption by sector

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between groups	875.42	2	437.71	389.90	<.0001
Within groups	277.50	247	1.12		
Total	1152.92	249			

The ANOVA confirms substantial differences between sectors. Tukey post-hoc comparisons indicate industrial > admin > artisanal, with all pairwise differences significant ($p < .001$). These results directly validate Hypothesis 1, confirming the existence of a sectoral digital divide. The findings also suggest that training, exposure, and institutional support are necessary to bridge this gap for artisanal miners.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study examined the level, determinants, and perceived effects of AI use across industrial mining workers, artisanal miners, and local administrative/technical staff in Kolwezi. Taken together, the findings reveal that although AI awareness is relatively widespread, actual adoption remains uneven, stratified by education, sectoral role, and digital exposure, confirming patterns reported in global low-income industrial settings (Hilson, 2020; Manyika et al., 2017; Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). The strong educational gradients—where 75% of industrial workers reached tertiary education compared with 32% among artisanal miners—mirror previous evidence that educational attainment is the strongest enabling factor for AI readiness (Aker & Mbiti, 2010; van Dijk, 2020). This reinforces the theoretical expectation that human capital moderates digital uptake (Rogers, 2003; Davis, 1989), thereby confirming the first hypothesis: higher education significantly predicts AI acceptance and use in Kolwezi's mining ecosystem.

Consistent with socio-technical systems theory, respondents with greater digital experience (e.g., exposure to mining software, tablets, or safety sensors) demonstrated higher behavioral intention toward AI tools, corroborating findings from Zhou (2021) and Venkatesh et al. (2003). Earlier studies in African extractive regions have similarly shown that technological familiarity shapes willingness to integrate automation (Diallo et al., 2022; Kitula, 2006). Our results therefore align with the Technology Acceptance Model and UTAUT, giving strong support to Hypothesis 2: digital familiarity strongly predicts AI intention and usage.

The large gap between industrial mine employees and artisanal miners is noteworthy. Industrial workers reported significantly higher perceptions of AI usefulness—particularly for safety monitoring, predictive maintenance, and production optimization—echoing research by Bessière et al. (2019) and Korinek & Stiglitz (2021) on structured industrial systems. Artisanal miners, by contrast, expressed concerns about job displacement and surveillance. These concerns reflect earlier ethnographies of mining communities in the DRC and Ghana, where technological upgrades were interpreted as threats to autonomy (Geenen, 2012; Cuvelier, 2011; Tschakert & Singha, 2007). Focus-group participants in our sample similarly described AI as "useful but dangerous," revealing ambivalent attitudes comparable to those observed by Smith and Neupane (2020) in low-literacy environments. Gender and age effects were weaker than anticipated but still meaningful. Younger respondents (18–30) demonstrated significantly higher adaptability, supporting prior research documenting age-based digital divides (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015; Friemel, 2016). However, gender differences in Kolwezi were minimal, in line with emerging studies showing narrowing digital gender gaps in urban African areas (Wyche & Olson, 2018; Gillwald et al., 2022). This nuanced trend partially supports Hypothesis 3: younger adults engage more readily with AI, though gender did not operate as a strong predictor.

The correlation analysis revealed positive associations between AI use, perceived usefulness, and job performance expectations. These findings mirror meta-analytic evidence that AI acceptance is strongly driven by expectancy beliefs (Holden & Karsh, 2010; King & He, 2006; Marangunić & Granić, 2015). However, the negative correlations between AI intention and fear of automation highlight persistent concerns reported across global mining automation studies (McNab et al., 2021; Parreira et al., 2020; Johnstone et al., 2022). Such ambivalence suggests that even in technologically advancing regions like Kolwezi, AI optimism coexists with automation anxiety, a duality emphasized by Sadowski (2020) and Crawford (2021).

The focus-group analysis deepened these quantitative insights. Industrial workers articulated that AI "reduces accidents" and "improves planning," consistent with safety engineering literature (Reiman & Rollenhagen, 2014; Biloslavo et al., 2020). Meanwhile, artisanal miners stressed that AI tools—drones, geo-mapping, or machine-vision systems—may accelerate dispossession or exclusion, aligning with critical resource governance perspectives (Ferguson, 2006; Rajak, 2011). Local administrators, for their part, viewed AI as a necessary modernization trajectory but stressed regulatory delays, echoing national capacity challenges described by UNECA (2021) and Avle et al. (2018). These narrative contrasts underscore that Kolwezi is a multi-speed technological landscape where adoption is shaped as much by economic structure as by sociocultural perceptions. Overall, the study demonstrates that AI adoption in Kolwezi is neither uniformly embraced nor systematically rejected, but rather negotiated through existing social, economic, and institutional architectures. The evidence confirms two of the three hypotheses and partially supports the third, illustrating that AI integration in mining areas remains conditional on education, digital literacy, institutional environment, and trust in technological change. As such, these findings contribute to the growing literature on AI in resource-dependent regions, and they offer actionable insights for policymakers seeking to ensure equitable technological transitions in African mining cities.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that AI adoption in Kolwezi follows a differentiated pattern strongly shaped by education level, digital exposure, and institutional context, confirming most of the theoretical expectations. The first hypothesis that higher education predicts AI acceptance was clearly supported, as industrial workers with predominantly tertiary education exhibited significantly higher AI familiarity and usage intentions than artisanal miners. The second hypothesis that digital experience predicts stronger behavioral intention was also fully validated through strong positive correlations and convergent qualitative evidence, showing that respondents with exposure to digital tools and mining software were more open to AI integration. The third hypothesis that demographic variables such as age and gender significantly shape AI adoption was only partially confirmed. While younger respondents demonstrated higher adaptability, gender differences remained limited, suggesting evolving digital patterns in urban mining areas. Overall, the findings show that AI adoption is emerging but structurally uneven, with industrial mining systems progressing faster than artisanal environments. This unevenness reflects not only material constraints but also perceptions of risk, fears of displacement, and gaps in institutional regulation.

Based on these results, several recommendations emerge. First, targeted digital literacy programs should focus on artisanal miners and lower-education groups, ensuring that AI does not exacerbate socioeconomic inequalities. Second, mining companies and local authorities should invest in participatory communication strategies to address misinformation and automation anxieties. Third, regulatory frameworks must be strengthened to ensure data protection, ethical deployment, and community-centered technological transitions. Fourth, partnerships between universities, mining firms, and local government should support adaptive training centers capable of delivering AI-related competencies relevant to safety, production, and environmental monitoring. Ultimately, equitable AI deployment in Kolwezi requires blending technological capability with social inclusion, transparent governance, and long-term capacity building.

7. FUTURE SCOPE

Given that the study was conducted from February to May 2025, future research should extend the temporal horizon to capture evolving AI trends in the mining sector as new technologies enter industrial sites and pilot initiatives reach artisanal communities. Longitudinal designs would allow researchers to observe behavioral change, shifts in attitudes, and the real performance impacts of AI systems over time. Moreover, upcoming studies should explore sector-specific applications such as predictive maintenance, accident-prevention algorithms, automated geological mapping, and AI-supported environmental compliance systems. There is also a need for deeper ethnographic work to understand cultural interpretations of automation within artisanal mining communities, where perceptions of risk, autonomy, and livelihood security strongly influence adoption outcomes. Additionally, future research should investigate governance arrangements, including data sovereignty, regulatory preparedness, and the role of provincial and national institutions in guiding ethical AI deployment. Comparative studies between Kolwezi and other African mining cities—such as Lubumbashi, Obuasi, and Rustenburg—would help assess whether adoption patterns reflect local particularities or broader continental trends. Finally, interdisciplinary collaborations integrating psychology, computer science, economics, and anthropology will be essential to build a comprehensive understanding of responsible and inclusive AI integration in resource-dependent regions.

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