

AI-Empowered Government Workforce: Perceptions, Barriers, and Opportunities in Thailand

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Abstract

This study investigates the usage patterns, perceptions, barriers, and opportunities regarding the adoption of Generative AI technology among first-line managers and non-managerial staff within Thailand's public sector organizations. This study employed a quantitative survey research design. Data were collected from a total sample of 87 participants, comprising 52 first-line managers and 35 non-managerial staff, selected via purposive sampling. The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire survey examining Generative AI usage patterns, expectations, and barriers associated with its implementation. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The findings reveal that ChatGPT is the most widely adopted tool. Both groups share a primary expectation of utilizing AI to enhance efficiency in administrative and documentation tasks; however, non-managerial staff placed a significantly higher emphasis on employing AI to support data analysis and research activities. Furthermore, five key barriers to AI adoption were identified including lack of personnel knowledge, budgetary constraints, infrastructure issues, lack of continuous learning, and challenges related to organizational management and acceptance.

Keywords: generative AI, government workforce, first-line managers, non-managerial staff, Thailand

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Introduction

Under the National AI Strategy, Thailand's public sector administration is increasingly integrating Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) technologies. These encompass global platforms, such as ChatGPT and Claude, as well as localized large language models, including OpenThaiGPT and Pathumma LLM. (UNESCO, 2025). Empirical evidence indicates that full-scale deployment remains in the developmental stages. The current surveys reveal that only 18% of Thai organizations have formally implemented AI technologies, whereas 74% are actively engaged in preparation phases (ETDA, 2024).

Nevertheless, government agencies recognize GenAI as a highly accessible and efficient mechanism for optimizing administrative workflows. These tools actively assist public administrators in managing time-intensive tasks, such as drafting official documents, synthesizing large volumes of public service data, and executing advanced policy analytics to support evidence-based decision-making (Loukis et al., 2020; Nirala et al., 2022).

In Thailand, The Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA, 2021) has outlined four key benefits of integrating AI into public service including enhancing operational efficiency, elevating service quality, fostering stakeholder engagement, and achieving superior outcomes under resource constraints. Nevertheless, the deployment of AI presents significant challenges, particularly regarding data security, the accuracy of generated information (e.g., AI hallucinations), and the ethical implications associated with its use (ETDA, 2021; Ji et al., 2023).

The Thai government has designated AI as a core strategy for modernizing public sector workflows. Specifically, the Thailand National Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2027) was formulated through a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES) (UNESCO, 2025). The primary objective of this strategic framework is to elevate the domestic economy and quality of life for citizens through AI by 2027. To achieve this, the initiative is driven by three strategic goals namely, building human capacity and technology, driving economic growth, and creating positive social and environmental impacts (NSTDA, 2023).

Although Thailand has established a national strategic foundation for the adoption of AI, translating these policies into practice continues to face several structural impediments. According to the Thailand Artificial Intelligence Readiness Assessment Report by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2025), Thailand exhibits significant gaps in policy coherence and regulatory clarity. In practice, limited inter-institutional coordination has hindered the public sector's ability to translate high-level strategies into concrete implementation. Furthermore, technological infrastructure remains a primary constraint, characterized particularly by inconsistent data quality across ministries and the geographic concentration of certified data centers, which are predominantly located within Bangkok and a few main provinces. Collectively, these factors undermine the public sector's capacity to deploy AI systems in a manner that is both secure and highly scalable on a sustainable basis (UNESCO, 2025).

Furthermore, Thailand encounters significant macroeconomic and labor market constraints, primarily characterized by a deficit in personnel possessing advanced digital competencies (UNESCO, 2025). Consequently, there is an urgent need for reskilling, upskilling, and new-skilling within both the education and industrial sectors to optimize value creation (UNESCO,

2025). Socio-ethical challenges present complex dimensions, specifically regarding significant vulnerabilities in data confidentiality, infrastructural security, and inequitable access (ETDA, 2021; Karam et al., 2025).

In 2023, a survey conducted by the ETDA involving 3,529 public and private organizations in Thailand revealed that only 15.2% had reached the stage of “Already Adoption”. Conversely, the majority (56.65%) remained in the planning phase (“Under Consideration”), with 45.3% possessing a readiness status of merely “Aware”. This constrained integration is primarily attributable to three major obstacles: 1) a lack of clear AI usage policies, leaving organizations unsure of how to implement the technology; 2) a critical shortage of AI-skilled personnel and infrastructure readiness; and 3) issues regarding AI Governance, which is identified as the most significant vulnerability (ETDA, 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to bridge these gaps by examining the acceptance of Artificial Intelligence among executives and non-managerial staff within the Thai government. It seeks to identify usage patterns, expectations, and barriers. The findings will be synthesized with the ETDA's framework for AI in public service and guidelines on data governance for AI application in Thailand's public sector.

Literature Review

AI in Public Administration

Damar et al. (2024) categorized AI within the context of the public sector into distinct classifications, including Super AI, Generative AI, Narrow AI, and Chatbots. Each category possesses distinct potential for application across various public services, such as national security and defense, healthcare, education, transportation and infrastructure, environmental and natural resource management, and legal and judicial systems (Damar et al., 2024). Over the past two decades, governments worldwide have leveraged Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to integrate internal operations and enhance service delivery to citizens, giving rise to the concept of “e-government” (Frinaldi et al., 2024). This paradigm has been promoted in the public sector. More citizens now rely on the internet and mobile technologies in their daily lives. Therefore, governments are under growing pressure to improve their services. They must keep up with new technologies and meet public expectations for speed, convenience, and security (Frinaldi et al., 2024). The use of AI in the public sector has drawn growing attention worldwide. Many governments already manage large volumes of demographic, economic, and social data. AI offers new ways to use these data to improve the efficiency and quality of public services (Loukis et al., 2020; Pencheva et al., 2020).

Integration of AI and IoT in the Public Sector

In recent years, the 3Es principle of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness has increasingly been embraced by governments around the world as a framework for delivering public services (Hwang & Brewer, 2021). Alshaer (2023) noted that AI is being integrated into e-government organizations worldwide to support innovation management. These applications include data-driven decision-making, AI-powered chatbots for handling citizen inquiries and service delivery, and sentiment analysis of citizen feedback to forecast trends and inform service improvements (Nirala et al., 2022; Pislaru et al., 2024). Pislaru et al. (2024) indicated that chatbot systems increase citizen satisfaction with public services by reducing wait times,

extending access to information beyond standard office hours, and improving the overall speed of service delivery.

The Role of AI in Supporting Data-Driven Decision-Making in the Public Sector

A study by Loukis et al. (2020) discovered that governments tend to collect large volumes of data but often leave much of it underused. Applying AI to big data analytics can help the public sector detect patterns and trends in existing datasets, which in turn informs better policy decisions (Pencheva et al., 2020). In a national economic crisis, for example, AI can support public sector executives by analysing economic data in real time, pinpointing the hardest-hit areas, and shaping relief measures that fit each situation (Loukis et al., 2020). The application of AI-driven predictive analytics allows governments to prepare for and future crises. As demonstrated by Nirala et al.(2022), AI can accurately forecast unemployment rates to guide public administration, whereas Karam et al. (2025) emphasized its critical function in pandemic management and the prevention of public health risks

Generative AI Characteristics

Generative AI has emerged as a highly influential technology across a wide range of disciplines. (Kunze, 2025; Sengar et al., 2024), owing to its multifaceted capabilities, which range from generating novel text and images to producing audio and video. Three core characteristics are described below.

1) Capability to Generate Novel Content

Generative AI is viewed as a disruptive force characterized by its ability to generate coherent and contextually appropriate responses to complex prompts (Ahmad et al., 2023), which consequently enhances users' ability to generate new ideas, increase speed, and improve the overall quality of their work tasks (Deloitte, 2024). It learns from large training datasets (Training Data) and can produce creative and original content (Gupta & Yang, 2024). For example, ChatGPT can rapidly generate text that is coherent and contextually appropriate based on user instructions (Ahmad et al., 2023; Pavlik, 2023).

2) Capability for Large-Scale Learning

Generative AI is capable of large-scale learning (Kunze, 2025; Sengar et al., 2024). AI utilizes Deep Learning techniques to discern complex patterns from data (Sengar et al., 2024). This capability enables the technology to generate diverse and high-quality content to meet user requirements (Kunze, 2025).

3) Conversational Interaction Capability

Generative AI models, such as ChatGPT, feature conversational interaction capabilities with users (Ahmad et al., 2023; Pavlik, 2023). Users can input text, referred to as “Prompts” whereupon the Generative AI generates an appropriate textual response. This capability renders Generative AI an easy-to-use and accessible tool for general users (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Pavlik, 2023).

Despite this potential, a notable limitation concerns the generation of inaccurate information, commonly termed hallucination (Ji et al., 2023). Generative AI may generate information that

seems credible but is factually inaccurate. This issue presents a critical challenge for adopting Generative AI in organizations requiring high accuracy, such as healthcare and education sectors (Ahmad et al., 2023; Damar et al., 2024).

ETDA's AI Framework

The Electronic Transactions Development Agency (ETDA, 2023), a Thai government agency under the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, has established an AI Framework outlining four fundamental benefits of implementing AI in the public sector, covering key dimensions as follows: 1) **Operational efficiency**, by reducing redundant processes and accelerating decision-making (e.g., utilizing AI for automated document processing); 2) **Service quality enhancement**, by ensuring that citizens receive fast, accurate, and personalized services tailored to their needs (e.g., deploying 24/7 chatbots to answer public inquiries); 3) **Stakeholder engagement**, through new interaction channels and the use of feedback to improve policy (e.g., employing sentiment analysis on social media to gather public feedback for policy refinement); and 4) **Achieving superior outcomes with Resource Constraints**, by applying data and algorithms to optimize resource allocation (e.g., employing predictive analytics to forecast epidemics or optimally allocate public health budgets).

Thailand's AI Readiness

AI has become a key force determining the competitive capabilities of nations. In Thailand, the public sector has responded with policy, most notably the National AI Action Plan, which sets out a development direction and vision. However, the most recent survey and readiness assessment, conducted in 2023 by the Electronic Transactions Development Agency in collaboration with partner organizations, found that the rate of AI application in Thai organizations remains low at only 15.2 percent. Most organizations are positioned at the “Aware” level of readiness (ETDA, 2023). This circumstance reflects that macro-level policies have not yet been effectively translated into micro-level implementation.

This slow adoption is rooted in several interrelated structural barriers. Firstly, the absence of a unified vision and cross-agency coordination has resulted in the fragmented development of digital infrastructure. Secondly, a persistent shortage of highly skilled personnel (Talent Shortage) serves as a chronic issue hindering innovation creation. However, the biggest problem is the weak control over AI governance. Even though Thailand has some basic digital laws, it still does not have clear rules specifically for AI. Because of this missing law, companies face ethical, privacy, and cybersecurity risks, especially when computers make decisions automatically and no one knows who is responsible (UNESCO, 2025).

Therefore, this research focuses on exploring and analyzing in-depth factors hindering the elevation of AI readiness, particularly in dimensions of governance and human capital development, to propose appropriate approaches to bridge these gaps and drive Thailand's innovation ecosystem to match international standards.

Expectancy Theory

Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory provides a conceptual framework for explaining how individuals decide to act, based on the expectation that a given action will lead to a desired outcome. This theory comprises three main components. *Valence* refers to the level of an individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the outcome. *Instrumentality* refers to the

perceived strength of the relationship between behavioral performance and the desired outcome (for example, “If I complete the assigned quantity of work, I will be promoted”). *Expectancy* refers to the perceived strength of the relationship between effort and performance (for example, “If I exert greater effort, I can accomplish more”). These components offer a useful basis for designing systems that motivate employees within organizations.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative survey research design. The objective is to examine the status of Generative AI usage, as well as the perceptions, attitudes, and adoption trends regarding the implementation of Generative AI technology in operational contexts among first-line managers and non-managerial staff within government agencies. The population and sample consist of first-line managers and operational officers in public sector organizations. The sample comprises a total of 87 participants, divided into 52 first-line managers (responsible for planning and administration) and 35 non-managerial staff members (responsible for operations and general services). Purposive sampling was utilized for participant selection. The research instrument consisted of a survey regarding Generative AI usage patterns, expectations, and barriers associated with its application. Data collection was conducted between June and August 2025. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics for quantitative data, while content analysis was applied to qualitative data through the categorization of opinion themes.

Results

Generative AI Tool Usage in Thai Public Sectors

A survey regarding the adoption behaviors of AI tools among 52 first-line managers in public sector agencies showed that ChatGPT was the most widely used tool. Most managers reported prior usage (73.1%), indicating that the platform is both popular and familiar. The next most frequently used tools were Gemini and Canva AI, each used by 40.4% of respondents, followed by Microsoft Copilot (25.0%) and Claude (17.3%).

However, adoption was lower for Perplexity (5.8%) and NotebookLM (3.8%), while the specialized research tools SciSpace and Research Rabbit recorded the lowest rates, each at 1.9%. A further 11.5% of first-line managers reported never having used any AI tool. In summary, empirical evidence suggests that Generative AI use among first-line managers remains primarily concentrated on general purpose AI platforms (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini) and design-oriented tools (Canva AI), whereas specialized tools for in-depth analysis or research remain at an early stage of adoption.

A parallel survey covered 35 non-managerial staff in government agencies. ChatGPT was again the most widely used tool, with 91.4% reporting prior use. Canva AI ranked second at 57.1%, and staff used it mainly to support operational tasks. Gemini followed at 42.9%. Claude, Microsoft Copilot, and NotebookLM each reached 8.6%. Perplexity and SciSpace each reached 5.7%. Only 5.7% of respondents reported never having used any AI tool. These results indicate that AI adoption is already widespread at the operational level.

Expectations for Utilizing Generative AI to Support Operational Work

Regarding the expectations of first-line managers in public sector agencies, survey results indicated that the majority of respondents ranked Administrative and Documentation Tasks as

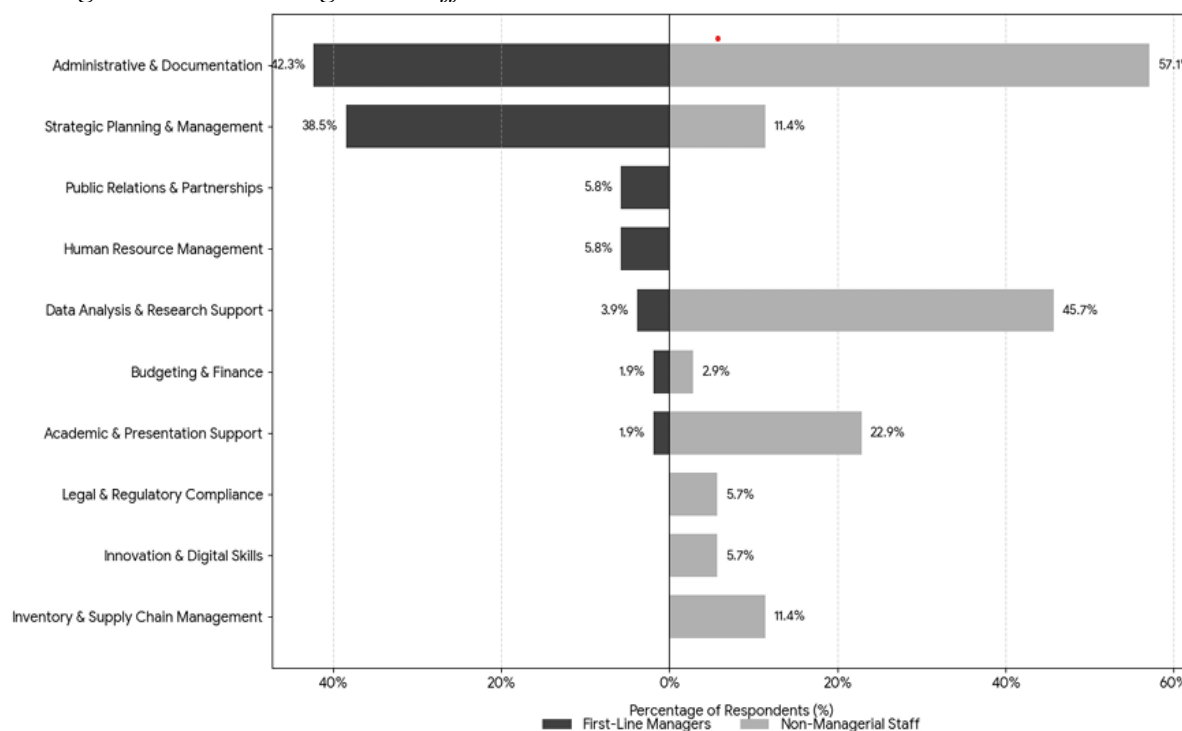
their top priority (42.3%), closely followed by Planning and Administration (38.5%). Human Resource Management accounted for 5.8%, and Stakeholder Relations similarly accounted for 5.8%. Data Analysis and Research Support represented 3.9%. The areas receiving the lowest prioritization were Budget Allocation and Finance and Instructional Management and Presentation, each accounting for only 1.9%.

Regarding the expectations of non-managerial staff, the survey results revealed that the majority held the highest expectations for utilizing AI in Administrative and Documentation Tasks (57.1%). The focus was on reducing redundant workflows, developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), summarizing meeting minutes, and verifying document accuracy to enhance efficiency and speed. The second highest category was Data Analysis and Research Support (45.7%), emphasizing the use of tools for in-depth information retrieval, literature reviews, and citing credible sources. Ranking third was Instructional Management and Presentation (22.9%), with expectations for AI to assist in creating novel media formats such as video clips and infographics, as well as summarizing lecture content. The fourth rank included Planning and Administration along with Inventory and Supply Management, each accounting for 11.4%. The administration aspect focused on project proposal writing and decision support, while the supply aspect emphasized accuracy in pharmaceutical stock management and reorder point notification systems. The fifth rank comprised two categories with equal proportions: Innovation and Digital Skills, as well as Laws and Regulations (5.7%) each, with expectations that AI would assist in upskilling (e.g., coding) and legal interpretation. The final category was Budget Allocation and Finance (2.9%), which focused on assistance with accounting disbursement regulations.

In conclusion, the results suggest that the primary expectation of non-managerial staff in government agencies remains focused on improving efficiency in routine tasks. However, there is an emerging trend toward applying AI in more specialized areas, such as research, accounting, inventory and supply management, and legal affairs. Figure 1 compares the expectations of first-line managers and non-managerial staff regarding the use of Generative AI to support operational work.

Figure 1

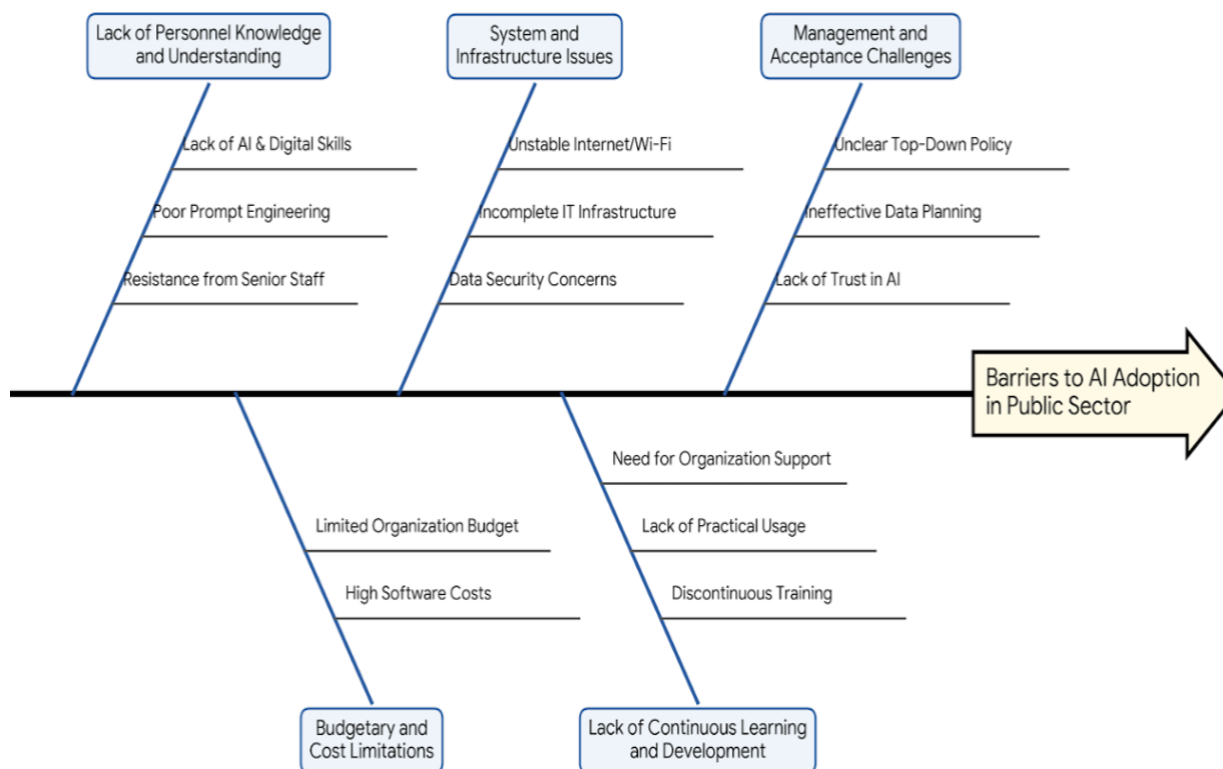
Comparative Expectations of Using Generative AI to Support Work Tasks: First-Line Managers vs. Non-managerial Staff



Barriers to AI Adoption in Government Agencies

A synthesis of the barriers to AI adoption reported by first-line managers and non-managerial staff in the public sector identified five key dimensions.

1. **Lack of Personnel Knowledge and Understanding:** The respondents indicated a deficiency in knowledge, understanding, and expertise regarding the utilization of AI and digital technologies. This includes difficulties in crafting prompts to generate desired AI outputs. Additionally, many older personnel also tend to avoid using AI.
2. **Budgetary and Cost Limitations:** Subscription costs for AI software and limited organizational budgets for AI technologies were major factors restricting comprehensive access to AI tools among public sector personnel.
3. **System and Infrastructure Issues:** Many agencies continue to experience problems with unstable internet/Wi-Fi systems and poor connectivity. Furthermore, there is a lack of IT infrastructure readiness, which diminishes user confidence regarding security.
4. **Lack of Continuous Learning and Development:** Public sector personnel face challenges related to discontinuous AI learning, hindering the development of expertise required to leverage AI capabilities for enhancing routine operational efficiency. There is a demonstrated demand among personnel for additional knowledge support from their respective agencies.
5. **Management and Acceptance Challenges:** Administration and acceptance of AI adoption remained critical concerns in many agencies. These include doubts about AI reliability, a lack of rigorous administrative planning and information management, and unclear policy implementation from top management to lower levels (Top-Down Approach). Figure 2 presents a fishbone diagram analyzing the barriers to AI adoption in the public sector.

Figure 2*Fishbone Diagram Analyzing Barriers to AI Adoption in the Public Sector*

Discussion

Based on the study of generative AI tool usage in Thai public sectors among first-line managers and non-managerial staff, several key points emerge that reflect the dynamics of AI adaptation within the public sector, as follows:

The study results clearly indicate that ChatGPT is the primary tool achieving the highest acceptance across all levels, with a usage proportion of 73.1% among first-line managers and an even higher 91.4% among non-managerial staff in government agencies. This aligns with trends in Singapore, a leader in AI within the Southeast Asian region. A report by Deloitte (2024) indicated that Singaporean employees demonstrate a high adoption rate of Generative AI, reaching 67%, and hold positive attitudes toward the technology. The diffusion of GenAI among users in government agencies may be explained by its accessibility and ability to meet performance expectancy. This aligns with Dwivedi et al. (2023), who stated that GenAI is an easily learnable and applicable tool for generating productivity. Moreover, the adoption of GenAI as a primary tool by non-managerial staff indicates that this technology effectively reduces usability barriers. This factor facilitates adoption and enables the concrete utilization of Generative AI to generate work productivity.

However, Noy and Zhang (2023) conducted an experiment with 453 workers in the United States across six occupational groups, namely marketer, grant writer, consultant, data analyst, human resource professional, and manager. They found that ChatGPT reduced the average time spent on professional writing tasks by 40% and improved output quality. Notably, ChatGPT tended to substitute for worker effort rather than complement workers' skills, shifting tasks toward idea generation and editing rather than advanced analysis. In line with this pattern, the

present study found that AI tool selection among first-line managers and non-managerial staff in government agencies reflects a relative readiness in terms of “access to AI technology”, yet a gap may remain in “using AI to drive strategic work”.

Furthermore, the data demonstrates that both groups prioritized administrative and documentation tasks (42.3% for first-line managers and 57.1% for non-managerial staff). This suggests that the primary expectation for Generative AI is to enhance productivity in routine tasks, consistent with the research of Noy and Zhang (2023), who found that Generative AI reduced the time required for business writing by 40% and improved work quality by 18%. These gains could help reform public sector work processes and improve efficiency.

While first-line managers focused on strategic planning and management (38.5%), non-managerial staff conversely held high expectations for using AI to support research and data analysis (45.7%). This difference can be explained by the Task-Technology Fit (TTF) model (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995), which describes the relationship between task characteristics and technology characteristics in order to predict how well a technology supports a given task. Non-managerial staff recognize the potential of AI in managing complex technical tasks and supporting research and data analysis. This is consistent with studies reporting that non-managerial staff often view AI as a tool that can improve efficiency in work processes (Aleem et al., 2023; Zahoor et al., 2024). However, the effective implementation of AI within an organization requires substantial organizational support. Organizations can reduce anxiety about AI adoption by establishing clear AI policies and regulations and by developing plans to promote its acceptance and utilization (Soomro et al., 2026).

Conclusion

This study examined the usage patterns, expectations, and barriers related to Generative AI adoption among first-line managers and non-managerial staff in Thailand's public sector. The findings demonstrate that ChatGPT is the most widely adopted tool in both groups, that both groups primarily expect AI to improve efficiency in administrative and documentation tasks, and that non-managerial staff place notably higher expectations on AI for data analysis and research support. Five key barriers were identified: lack of personnel knowledge, budgetary constraints, infrastructure issues, lack of continuous learning, and management and acceptance challenges. In the context of Thailand's digital government transformation, the public sector must pivot from supporting generic AI implementation to developing mission-centric strategic AI competencies. The proposed policy guidelines for the Thai government are as follows.

First, Thai government agencies should elevate personnel capabilities by shifting from using AI for basic administrative support to developing expertise in specialized AI application, such as employing AI for evidence-based policy analysis and in-depth data retrieval. This transition could help narrow usage gaps and enable non-managerial staff to take on stronger roles in supporting executive decision-making.

Second, public sectors must embed data security and personal data protection as a core competency of their personnel. Explicit operational guidelines must be defined to serve as a standard framework for secure and socially responsible practices, aligning with international standards for AI readiness.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors declare that AI-assisted writing software was used in proofreading and refining the language used in the manuscript. The usage was limited to correcting grammatical and spelling errors and rephrasing statements for accuracy and clarity. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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