

## Ethical, Legal, and Governance Challenges of Project Management Using Artificial Intelligence

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### التحديات الأخلاقية والقانونية والحوكمة لإدارة المشاريع باستخدام الذكاء الاصطناعي

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#### Abstract:

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping project management by enabling predictive, prescriptive, and adaptive capabilities that address the limitations of traditional, static methodologies in complex and uncertain project environments. This manuscript examines the ethical, legal, and governance challenges that emerge as AI increasingly influences high-impact project decisions across planning and scheduling, risk management, and financial control. The study synthesizes key AI paradigms relevant to project management, machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, and reinforcement learning, while emphasizing that organizational AI maturity, readiness, and robust data governance are critical prerequisites for reliable and defensible AI deployment. In AI-enabled planning and scheduling, continuous optimization and dynamic resource allocation improve responsiveness but raise concerns related to transparency, explainability, and baseline control. In risk management, AI-driven identification, prioritization, and early-warning systems enhance foresight yet require safeguards against bias, false alarms, and overreliance on automated signals. In project finance, AI-supported cost estimation, budget monitoring, cash-flow forecasting, and earned value management improve financial discipline but intensify requirements for auditability, accountability, and regulatory compliance. Overall, the manuscript concludes that responsible AI adoption in project management depends on embedded governance frameworks that ensure fairness, security, transparency, and clear human accountability across the AI life cycle, positioning AI as a decision-augmentation capability rather than an autonomous authority.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, Project management, Ethics and governance, Decision support, Digital transformation.

## المخلص

يعيد الذكاء الاصطناعي (AI) تشكيل إدارة المشاريع من خلال إتاحة قدرات تنبؤية وتوجيهية وتكيفية تسهم في معالجة أوجه القصور في المنهجيات التقليدية الثابتة، خاصة في بيئات المشاريع المعقدة وعالية عدم اليقين. تتناول هذه الدراسة التحديات الأخلاقية والقانونية والحوكومية التي تنشأ مع تزايد اعتماد الذكاء الاصطناعي في دعم القرارات ذات الأثر العالي عبر مجالات تخطيط وجدولة المشاريع، وإدارة المخاطر، والرقابة المالية. وتستعرض الدراسة أهم نماذج الذكاء الاصطناعي ذات الصلة بإدارة المشاريع، بما في ذلك تعلم الآلة، والتعلم العميق، ومعالجة اللغة الطبيعية، والتعلم المعزز، مع التأكيد على أن نضج المؤسسات في تبني الذكاء الاصطناعي، وجاهزيتها التنظيمية، وحوكمة البيانات القوية تُعد متطلبات أساسية لضمان تطبيق موثوق وقابل للدفاع عنه. وفي مجال التخطيط والجدولة المدعومة بالذكاء الاصطناعي، تسهم تقنيات التحسين المستمر والتخصيص الديناميكي للموارد في تعزيز الاستجابة والمرونة، إلا أنها تثير في المقابل قضايا تتعلق بالشفافية وقابلية التفسير والتحكم في الخطط الأساسية. أما في إدارة المخاطر، فإن آليات التحديد والتصنيف وأنظمة الإنذار المبكر المعتمدة على الذكاء الاصطناعي تعزز القدرة الاستباقية، لكنها تتطلب ضوابط للحد من التحيز، والإنذارات الكاذبة، والاعتماد المفرط على القرارات الآلية. وفي الإدارة المالية للمشاريع، تسهم نماذج التقدير الدقيق للتكاليف، ومراقبة الميزانيات، والتنبؤ بالتدفقات النقدية، ودعم أسلوب القيمة المكتسبة باستخدام الذكاء الاصطناعي في تعزيز الانضباط المالي، مع زيادة الحاجة إلى قابلية التدقيق والمساءلة والامتثال التنظيمي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن التطبيق المسؤول للذكاء الاصطناعي في إدارة المشاريع يتطلب أطر حوكمة متكاملة تضمن العدالة والأمن والشفافية وتحديد واضح للمساءلة البشرية عبر دورة حياة الذكاء الاصطناعي، بما يرسخ دور الذكاء الاصطناعي كأداة داعمة للقرار وليس بديلاً عن السلطة البشرية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الذكاء الاصطناعي، إدارة المشاريع، الحوكمة والأخلاقيات، دعم اتخاذ القرار، التحول الرقمي.

## Introduction

Project management has long served as a foundational discipline for planning, executing, and controlling complex organizational initiatives. Conventional project management methodologies, such as waterfall, critical path method (CPM), and even structured extensions within Agile and hybrid frameworks, have provided standardized tools for scope definition, scheduling, cost control, and performance monitoring [1,2]. However, the growing complexity, scale, and uncertainty of contemporary projects have exposed fundamental limitations in these traditional approaches, necessitating a paradigm shift toward more intelligent, adaptive, and data-driven project management practices.

Traditional project management methodologies are largely rule-based, deterministic, and dependent on static assumptions established during the planning phase. These methods typically rely on historical averages, linear task dependencies, and human judgment for decision-making, which limits their ability to respond effectively to dynamic project environments. As a result, they often struggle with real-time risk identification, rapid changes in scope or resource availability, and the nonlinear interactions among project variables [3,4]. Moreover, conventional tools provide limited predictive capabilities, offering retrospective performance reporting rather than proactive insights. This reactive nature contributes to persistent challenges such as schedule delays, cost overruns, suboptimal resource utilization, and inadequate risk mitigation, particularly in large-scale, multi-stakeholder, and technologically intensive projects.

Artificial intelligence (AI) offers a transformative opportunity to address the structural limitations of traditional project management while aligning with the imperatives of digital transformation. By leveraging machine learning, natural language processing, and advanced optimization techniques, AI enables predictive and prescriptive project management capabilities. AI-driven systems can analyze historical and real-time data to forecast schedule deviations, cost overruns, and risk propagation, thereby supporting proactive decision-making [5,6]. Furthermore, AI facilitates dynamic resource allocation, adaptive scheduling, and intelligent decision support, augmenting human expertise rather than replacing it. The integration of AI into project management thus represents a strategic evolution from experience-driven and reactive practices toward intelligent, adaptive, and resilient project ecosystems capable of operating effectively under uncertainty and complexity.

Several prior studies have addressed the ethical, legal, and governance challenges associated with integrating artificial intelligence into project management. This body of literature generally emphasizes that AI-enabled decision support can improve forecasting and operational control, yet it also introduces risks related to algorithmic bias, limited transparency and explainability, and potential misuse of sensitive project and personal data. According to [7], UNESCO has underscored the critical ethical implications of artificial intelligence through its Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, a global standard adopted in November 2021 that emphasizes the protection of human rights and dignity, alongside principles such as transparency, fairness, and the necessity of human oversight of AI systems. In parallel, the ethical dimension of AI is increasingly salient within project management, as AI-enabled tools begin to influence core managerial decisions related to planning, risk, resource allocation, and performance control. Evidence from the Project Management Institute (PMI) indicates that AI is already reshaping project practice, with 81% of project professionals reporting that their organizations are being impacted by AI technologies. Moreover, Gartner projects a substantial shift in

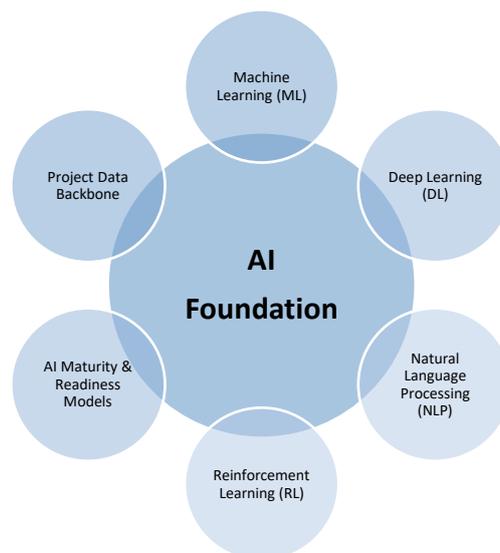
the discipline's operating model, predicting that by 2030, 80% of the work associated with today's project management discipline will be eliminated as AI assumes traditional functions such as data collection, tracking, and reporting.

According to [8], ethical problems in AI can be systematically understood across four interconnected systems, technology, values, innovation, and social order, within which recurring ethical risk patterns may emerge as uncontrolled risks, behavioral disorders, and ethical disorders. From a pathway-selection perspective, it argues that effective AI governance requires embedding ethics throughout the technology life cycle via differentiated strategies aligned with each stage: ethical embedding during research and development, ethical assessment during design and manufacturing, ethical adaptation during experimental promotion, and ethical construction during deployment and application. Furthermore, from a role-configuration perspective, emphasizes that AI governance should be multi-actor and role-differentiated, where various stakeholders assume complementary responsibilities, such as supplying ethically relevant factual information, providing expertise and analysis, articulating ethical concerns and social sentiments, and delivering practical regulatory instruments, depending on the governance strategy and the stage of the life cycle.

This study makes several significant contributions to the emerging body of knowledge on artificial intelligence-enabled project management by systematically integrating technical advancements with ethical, legal, and governance considerations. First, it provides a holistic framework that contextualizes AI adoption within the paradigm shift from traditional, static project management methodologies toward adaptive, data-driven project ecosystems, thereby clarifying the structural and managerial drivers behind this transition. Second, the study synthesizes key AI paradigms and maps their applications across core project management functions, planning and scheduling, risk and uncertainty handling, and cost estimation and financial control, while explicitly identifying the governance challenges associated with each application domain. Third, the manuscript advances the literature by highlighting data governance and organizational AI maturity as central enablers of trustworthy and defensible AI-driven project decisions, rather than treating them as peripheral implementation concerns. Fourth, it contributes a governance-oriented perspective that emphasizes explainability, accountability, and human oversight as essential design principles for AI-assisted project management systems, addressing a critical gap in predominantly technology-focused studies.

#### **Artificial Intelligence Foundations Relevant to Project Management**

The effective application of artificial intelligence in project management requires a solid understanding of the core AI paradigms, organizational readiness for AI adoption, and the central role of data in enabling intelligent project systems. Rather than functioning as isolated tools, AI technologies operate as integrated socio-technical systems that augment managerial decision-making, enhance predictive capabilities, and enable adaptive control across the project life cycle [9,10]. Figure 1 shows AI foundation. Table 1 highlights artificial intelligence foundations relevant to project management.



**Figure (1): AI Foundation**

In general, Table 1 demonstrate that AI-driven project management is significant understood as an ecosystem comprising advanced analytics, robust data infrastructures, and human-centered governance frameworks. This integrated perspective provides a practical foundation for both

researchers and practitioners seeking to design, implement, and scale intelligent project management systems in complex and uncertain environments.

**Table (1):** Artificial Intelligence Foundations Relevant to Project Management [11-14].

AI Foundation	Definition (PM Context)	Typical PM Use Cases	Common Data Inputs	Primary Value Delivered	Key Considerations
Machine Learning (ML)	Data-driven models that learn patterns from historical and operational project data	Schedule delay prediction, cost overrun forecasting, risk scoring	Baselines, progress logs, EVM metrics, timesheets	Predictive analytics and early warning capability	Data bias, model retraining, generalization limits
Deep Learning (DL)	Neural networks for complex and nonlinear project data	Image/video-based progress tracking, safety monitoring	Images, videos, IoT sensor data, BIM telemetry	High accuracy for complex and unstructured data	High data and computing requirements, explainability
Natural Language Processing (NLP)	Techniques for analyzing textual and verbal project information	Automated reporting, contract analysis, sentiment analysis	Emails, reports, contracts, meeting minutes	Improved communication and knowledge management	Privacy, domain adaptation, need for validation
Reinforcement Learning (RL)	Learning optimal actions via feedback from dynamic environments	Adaptive scheduling, dynamic resource allocation	Progress states, constraints, KPIs, simulation data	Continuous optimization and adaptive control	Reward design complexity, safety, governance
AI Maturity & Readiness Models	Frameworks assessing organizational AI capability	AI roadmap development, pilot selection	Data infrastructure, skills, governance processes	Reduced adoption risk and structured scaling	Requires leadership support and change management
Project Data Backbone	Integrated project data ecosystem enabling AI	Real-time monitoring, analytics, model training	PMIS, ERP, BIM, IoT, collaboration platforms	Reliable and transparent AI decision support	Data silos, interoperability, cybersecurity

### A. Overview of AI Paradigms Relevant to Project Management

Artificial intelligence encompasses a set of computational paradigms that enable systems to learn from data, recognize patterns, and make decisions under uncertainty. Machine learning (ML) forms the foundation of most AI-driven project management applications, enabling predictive analytics for cost estimation, schedule forecasting, risk identification, and resource optimization based on historical project data. Supervised, unsupervised, and ensemble learning techniques are commonly employed to uncover hidden relationships among project variables and improve forecasting accuracy [15-19].

- Natural language processing (NLP) enables AI systems to interpret and analyze textual and verbal project information, including reports, emails, meeting minutes, contracts, and stakeholder communications. NLP techniques facilitate automated documentation, sentiment analysis, requirement extraction, and knowledge management, thereby improving communication efficiency and stakeholder engagement. This paradigm is especially valuable in large and distributed projects where qualitative information plays a critical role in decision-making
- Machine learning emerges as the foundational enabler for predictive project management, offering measurable improvements in schedule forecasting, cost estimation, and risk assessment. Its value lies in transforming historical project records into actionable foresight; however, the table also emphasizes that the reliability of these predictions is highly sensitive to data quality, representativeness, and continuous model updating. This underscores the importance of robust data governance and systematic feedback loops to prevent model drift and biased decision support.

- Natural language processing plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between quantitative project metrics and qualitative managerial information. By structuring insights from textual data, such as reports, emails, and contracts, NLP enhances stakeholder communication, documentation efficiency, and organizational learning. The discussion in the table highlights that while NLP can significantly reduce administrative burdens, it must be deployed with strict controls on data privacy, confidentiality, and human validation to maintain trust and accuracy.
- Reinforcement learning represents a more advanced and prescriptive layer of AI, enabling adaptive control through continuous interaction with dynamic project environments. Its application to scheduling and resource allocation illustrates a shift from static planning toward learning-based optimization. However, as noted in the table, reinforcement learning requires carefully designed reward structures and governance mechanisms to ensure safe and aligned decision-making, particularly when systems approach semi-autonomous operation.
- Beyond algorithmic techniques, the table appropriately elevates organizational AI maturity and readiness as critical determinants of successful implementation. AI maturity models and readiness assessments provide a pragmatic lens through which project-based organizations can align technological ambitions with actual capabilities in data, skills, governance, and culture. This perspective reinforces that AI adoption is as much an organizational transformation challenge as it is a technical one.

### **B. AI Maturity Models and Readiness Assessment for Project Environments**

The successful integration of AI into project management depends not only on technological availability but also on organizational readiness and maturity. AI maturity models provide structured frameworks to assess an organization's current capabilities across dimensions such as data infrastructure, analytics sophistication, governance, skills, and cultural readiness. At lower maturity levels, organizations rely on descriptive analytics and rule-based automation, while higher levels are characterized by predictive, prescriptive, and autonomous decision-support systems [20-22].

Readiness assessment in project environments involves evaluating data quality and availability, digital tool integration, project governance structures, and the competencies of project teams. Organizational culture, leadership commitment, and ethical governance frameworks are equally critical in determining AI adoption success. Without adequate maturity and readiness, AI initiatives risk underperformance, limited scalability, or resistance from project stakeholders.

### **C. Data as the Backbone of AI-Driven Project Systems**

Data constitutes the fundamental enabler of AI-driven project management systems. High-quality, timely, and well-structured data across the project life cycle covering scope, schedule, cost, risk, quality, and stakeholder interactions are essential for training, validating, and deploying AI models. Project data sources increasingly extend beyond traditional project management information systems to include real-time data from sensors, digital collaboration platforms, enterprise systems, and external data streams. Moreover, effective data governance, including data integration, standardization, security, and privacy management, is crucial for ensuring the reliability and trustworthiness of AI outputs. Moreover, the transition from data silos to interoperable and analytics-ready project data ecosystems enhances transparency and enables continuous learning [23,24].

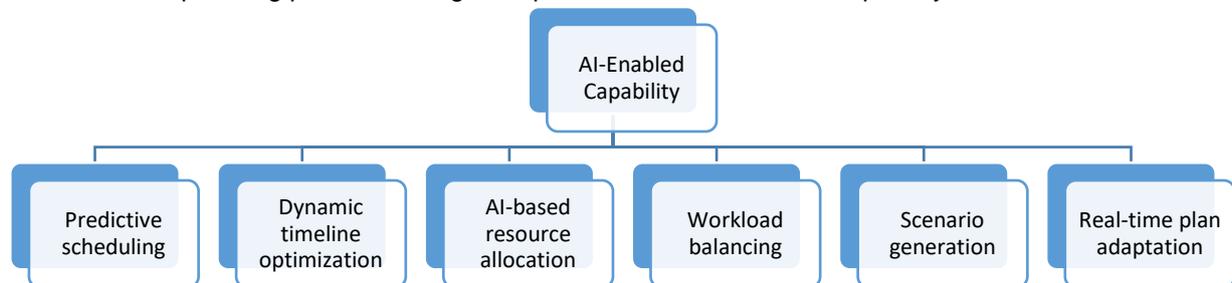
The integration of artificial intelligence into project management represents a fundamental shift from traditional, experience-driven practices toward intelligent, data-driven, and adaptive project ecosystems. As demonstrated throughout this study, conventional project management methodologies, while effective in stable and predictable environments, are increasingly constrained by their reliance on static planning assumptions, limited predictive capabilities, and reactive control mechanisms. In contrast, AI-enabled project management offers the capacity to anticipate risks, optimize resources dynamically, and support timely, evidence-based decision-making in the face of growing complexity and uncertainty [25-27].

The evolution of AI-driven project management is expected to accelerate with advances in generative AI, digital twins, and autonomous decision-support systems. These developments will further blur the boundaries between planning and execution, enabling continuous learning and real-time project optimization. From a managerial and policy perspective, the findings highlight the need for investment in digital capabilities, ethical AI governance, and skills development to ensure responsible and effective adoption. Ultimately, artificial intelligence is poised to become a strategic enabler of project success, resilience, and sustainability, redefining the role of the project manager and shaping the future of project-based organizations.

### **AI-Enabled Project Planning and Scheduling**

Project planning and scheduling constitute the core of project management, providing the structural framework through which scope, time, cost, and resources are coordinated to achieve project

objectives. Traditional planning and scheduling techniques, such as Gantt charts, Critical Path Method (CPM), and Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT), have historically offered deterministic and static representations of project execution. While these approaches remain valuable, their effectiveness is increasingly constrained by the dynamic, uncertain, and data-intensive nature of modern projects [28,29]. Frequent scope changes, resource volatility, supply-chain disruptions, and interdependencies across multi-project environments have exposed the limitations of static schedules and manual replanning processes. Figure 2 presents the AI-Enabled Capability.



**Figure (2):** The AI-Enabled Capability.

Artificial intelligence (AI) introduces a transformative shift in project planning and scheduling by enabling predictive, adaptive, and optimization-driven capabilities. By leveraging historical and real-time project data, AI-enabled systems move beyond descriptive planning toward intelligent foresight and continuous control. Rather than relying solely on predefined baselines, AI-driven planning frameworks support dynamic schedule optimization, proactive risk anticipation, and real-time response to emerging deviations. Consequently, AI-enabled project planning and scheduling represent a transition from plan-centric management to learning-based and data-informed orchestration of project activities [30]. Table 2 shows AI-Enabled Project Planning and Scheduling.

**Table (2):** AI-Enabled Project Planning and Scheduling [31-36]

AI-Enabled Capability	Core AI Methods	Functional Description	Key Outputs	Practical Benefits	Implementation Challenges
Predictive scheduling	Machine learning, time-series forecasting	Predicts task durations and delay likelihood based on historical data	Delay probabilities, forecasted completion dates	Early warning and proactive control	Data quality, model transferability
Dynamic timeline optimization	Optimization, reinforcement learning	Continuously re-optimizes schedules under constraints	Updated schedules, optimized sequencing	Resilient and adaptive planning	Computational complexity, stakeholder acceptance
AI-based resource allocation	ML forecasting, optimization	Allocates resources to minimize bottlenecks and idle time	Allocation plans, utilization metrics	Improved productivity and cost control	Incomplete data, HR constraints
Workload balancing	Optimization, heuristics	Smooths workload peaks while respecting deadlines	Balanced workload profiles	Reduced burnout and higher quality	Conflicts with tight schedules
Scenario generation	Simulation, probabilistic models	Generates and evaluates alternative project scenarios	Scenario outcomes, P50/P80 dates	Robust contingency planning	Uncertainty calibration, interpretation
Real-time plan adaptation	Streaming analytics, RL	Adapts plans continuously based on live data	Rolling forecasts, corrective actions	High agility and responsiveness	System integration and governance

### A. Predictive Scheduling and Dynamic Timeline Optimization

Predictive scheduling represents a foundational capability of AI-enabled planning systems. Through machine learning and time-series forecasting, predictive models analyze historical project data to estimate task durations, identify activities prone to delays, and quantify the probability of schedule

slippage. Unlike traditional methods that assume fixed activity durations, predictive scheduling captures variability arising from productivity fluctuations, environmental conditions, and organizational constraints. This enables project managers to identify high-risk activities early and allocate buffers strategically rather than uniformly.

Dynamic timeline optimization builds upon predictive insights by continuously recalibrating project schedules in response to new information. Optimization algorithms and reinforcement learning techniques re-sequence tasks, adjust dependencies, and revise timelines while respecting contractual, technical, and resource constraints. This capability is particularly valuable in environments characterized by frequent change, where maintaining a static baseline is neither realistic nor efficient. Dynamic optimization enhances schedule resilience by enabling rapid recovery from disruptions and supporting informed trade-offs between time, cost, and quality objectives.

### **B. AI-Based Resource Allocation and Workload Balancing**

Resource constraints remain a primary source of schedule inefficiency in complex projects. AI-based resource allocation addresses this challenge by forecasting resource demand and matching it dynamically with available capacities. Machine learning models predict labor, equipment, and material requirements across the project timeline, while optimization techniques allocate resources to tasks in a manner that minimizes bottlenecks and idle time. This data-driven allocation process improves utilization rates and reduces the likelihood of critical-path delays caused by resource shortages.

Workload balancing extends resource allocation by focusing on the temporal distribution of effort. AI-enabled workload leveling, and smoothing algorithms identify peaks and troughs in resource demand and recommend adjustments that stabilize workloads without compromising key milestones. Beyond productivity gains, this capability has important human-centric implications, as balanced workloads contribute to reduced fatigue, improved safety, and higher-quality outcomes. However, effective workload balancing requires accurate effort estimation and alignment with organizational labor policies, highlighting the need for integrated human-resource data and governance.

### **C. Scenario Generation and Real-Time Plan Adaptation**

Scenario generation, often referred to as “what-if” analysis, is a critical component of robust project planning under uncertainty. AI-driven simulation and probabilistic modeling techniques generate alternative execution scenarios by varying assumptions related to risks, productivity, resource availability, and external disruptions. These scenarios provide quantitative insights into schedule robustness, enabling the evaluation of contingency strategies and the identification of dominant risk drivers. By moving beyond single-point estimates, scenario generation supports more realistic commitments and evidence-based stakeholder communication.

Real-time plan adaptation represents the most advanced stage of AI-enabled planning and scheduling. By integrating streaming project data, anomaly detection, and reinforcement learning, AI systems can continuously monitor execution performance and recommend corrective actions as deviations emerge. This includes rescheduling activities, reallocating resources, or adjusting priorities in near real time. Such adaptive control transforms planning from a periodic activity into a continuous process, significantly reducing response latency and enhancing managerial agility. Nevertheless, real-time adaptation raises governance and accountability considerations, particularly regarding the degree of automation permitted and the role of human oversight in final decision-making.

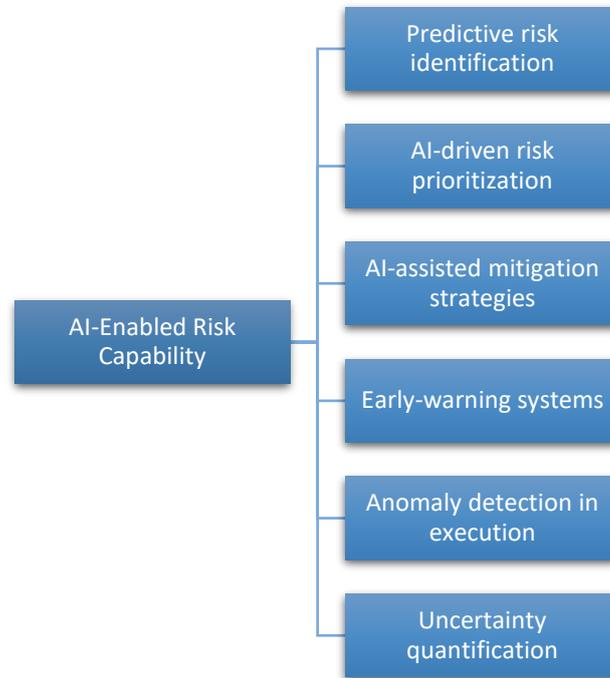
In summary, AI-enabled project planning and scheduling redefine how projects are conceived, executed, and controlled. Through predictive scheduling, dynamic optimization, intelligent resource management, and real-time adaptation, AI enhances the robustness, flexibility, and performance of project plans. However, the realization of these benefits depends on data quality, organizational readiness, and well-defined governance frameworks. When implemented responsibly, AI-driven planning and scheduling serve as a strategic enabler for delivering complex projects reliably in increasingly uncertain and fast-changing environments.

### **Intelligent Risk Management and Uncertainty Handling**

Risk and uncertainty are inherent characteristics of project-based environments, arising from technical complexity, organizational interdependencies, market volatility, and external disruptions. Traditional project risk management approaches, typically based on qualitative risk registers, periodic reviews, and subjective scoring matrices, provide a structured foundation for identifying and responding to risks. However, these approaches are largely static and reactive, relying heavily on expert judgment and limited historical analysis [37,38]. As projects increase in scale, speed, and interconnectedness, such methods struggle to capture emerging risks, cascading effects, and dynamic uncertainty in a timely and systematic manner. Figure 3 outlines AI-Enabled Risk Capability.

Artificial intelligence (AI) enables a paradigm shift in project risk management by transforming risk handling from a periodic and judgment-driven activity into a continuous, data-driven, and predictive

process. By integrating historical project data with real-time execution signals, AI-driven risk management systems enhance the early identification, prioritization, and mitigation of risks under uncertainty. Intelligent risk management thus supports proactive control, improved resilience, and more reliable project outcomes in complex and volatile environments. Table 3 illustrates intelligent risk management and uncertainty handling.



**Figure (3):** AI-Enabled Risk Capability

**Table (3):** Intelligent Risk Management and Uncertainty Handling [39-42]

AI-Enabled Risk Capability	Core AI Methods	Functional Description	Typical Inputs	Key Outputs	Practical Benefits
Predictive risk identification	Machine learning, time-series analysis	Identifies emerging risks using historical and real-time project data	Risk registers, EVM data, progress reports, issue logs	Risk probability scores, updated risk registers	Early detection of risks and proactive response
AI-driven risk prioritization	Multi-criteria decision models, Bayesian networks	Ranks risks based on likelihood, impact, and interdependencies	Risk attributes, dependency networks, cost and schedule exposure	Ranked risk list and exposure indices	Improved focus on critical risks
AI-assisted mitigation strategies	Optimization, reinforcement learning	Recommends optimal mitigation actions under constraints	Mitigation libraries, resource limits	Mitigation plans and residual risk forecasts	More effective and consistent risk responses
Early-warning systems	Anomaly detection, predictive indicators	Detects early signs of deviation before failure occurs	Productivity trends, approval delays, QA/QC metrics	Alerts and trigger thresholds	Reduced recovery cost and delays
Anomaly detection in execution	Unsupervised learning, statistical process control	Flags abnormal execution patterns and inconsistencies	Timesheets, invoices, sensor data, progress logs	Anomaly reports and investigation flags	Improved control and transparency
Uncertainty quantification	Monte Carlo simulation, probabilistic models	Quantifies schedule and cost uncertainty ranges	Duration distributions, cost estimates, correlations	P50/P80 forecasts and confidence intervals	More realistic commitments

### **A. Predictive Risk Identification Using Historical and Real-Time Data**

Predictive risk identification represents a foundational capability of AI-enabled risk management. Machine learning, and time-series analysis techniques analyze patterns in historical project data, such as past delays, cost overruns, change requests, and issue logs, to infer conditions under which risks are likely to materialize. When combined with real-time data streams from project execution, these models continuously update risk likelihood estimates as conditions evolve. This dual reliance on historical and live data allows project teams to detect emerging risks earlier than traditional review-based methods, thereby reducing exposure to unforeseen disruptions and enabling timely preventive actions.

### **B. AI-Driven Risk Prioritization and Mitigation Strategies**

Once risks are identified, effective prioritization is critical for allocating limited managerial attention and resources. AI-driven risk prioritization extends beyond simple likelihood–impact matrices by incorporating multi-criteria decision models, dependency structures, and probabilistic aggregation of risk exposure. These techniques account for interdependencies among risks and their potential propagation across tasks, resources, and project phases. Building on prioritized risk profiles, AI-assisted mitigation strategies recommend response actions, such as avoidance, mitigation, transfer, or acceptance, while optimizing trade-offs among cost, schedule, and performance constraints. This prescriptive capability supports more consistent, evidence-based risk responses and reduces reliance on ad hoc decision-making.

### **C. Early-Warning Systems and Anomaly Detection in Project Execution**

Early-warning systems represent a critical mechanism for operationalizing intelligent risk management during project execution. By monitoring leading indicators, such as declining productivity trends, repeated rework, approval delays, or abnormal cost growth, AI-based anomaly detection algorithms identify subtle deviations that precede major failures. These systems generate alerts when patterns diverge from expected behavior, enabling intervention before risks escalate into schedule slippage or budget overruns. Anomaly detection further enhances transparency and control by uncovering hidden issues, data inconsistencies, or process breakdowns that may not be visible through conventional reporting mechanisms. However, careful calibration of alert thresholds and escalation protocols is essential to avoid false alarms and decision fatigue.

In summary, intelligent risk management and uncertainty handling leverage artificial intelligence to elevate risk practices from static documentation exercises to continuous, predictive, and prescriptive control systems. Through predictive risk identification, AI-driven prioritization and mitigation, and early-warning mechanisms, project managers gain enhanced visibility into emerging threats and improved capability to manage uncertainty proactively. While challenges related to data quality, explainability, and governance remain, the strategic integration of AI into risk management significantly strengthens project resilience and supports more reliable delivery in increasingly complex and uncertain project environments.

### **Cost Estimation, Budget Control, and Financial Forecasting**

Cost estimation, budget control, and financial forecasting are critical pillars of effective project management, directly influencing project feasibility, stakeholder confidence, and overall delivery success. Accurate cost estimates and robust financial control mechanisms enable informed decision-making, resource optimization, and risk mitigation throughout the project life cycle. However, traditional cost management practices are often constrained by deterministic assumptions, fragmented data, and reliance on static baselines established under uncertainty [43,44]. As projects grow in complexity, scale, and exposure to external volatility, these limitations increasingly manifest as cost overruns, cash-flow instability, and weakened financial governance as demonstrated in Figure 4.

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) offers a transformative opportunity to modernize project cost management by introducing predictive, adaptive, and data-driven capabilities. By leveraging machine learning, advanced analytics, and probabilistic modeling, AI enables more accurate cost estimation, continuous budget monitoring, and forward-looking financial forecasting. Rather than replacing established financial control frameworks, AI augments them by enhancing visibility into cost dynamics, quantifying uncertainty, and supporting proactive financial decision-making. Consequently, AI-enabled cost estimation and financial management represent a strategic evolution toward more resilient, transparent, and performance-oriented project delivery [43-46].



**Figure (4):** Cost Estimation, Budget Control, and Financial Forecasting

### A. Limitations of Traditional Cost Estimation and Budgeting Methods

Traditional cost estimation and budgeting methods in project management are predominantly deterministic and rely heavily on expert judgment, historical averages, and linear assumptions. While these approaches provide a structured baseline, they are often vulnerable to optimism bias, scope uncertainty, and incomplete information during early project phases. Static budgets established at the planning stage tend to lose relevance as projects evolve, particularly in complex and fast-changing environments. Consequently, traditional methods frequently fail to capture nonlinear cost drivers, dynamic interactions among project variables, and emerging risks, leading to systematic underestimation, budget overruns, and reduced financial control effectiveness.

### B. AI-Driven Cost Estimation Models

Artificial intelligence introduces advanced cost estimation models capable of learning from large and heterogeneous project datasets. Machine learning, and deep learning techniques analyze complex relationships among design attributes, resource utilization, productivity rates, and external factors to generate more accurate and adaptive cost estimates. Unlike conventional parametric models, AI-driven estimators can continuously refine predictions as new data become available, improving accuracy across different project phases. This capability enhances decision-making during feasibility analysis, bidding, and execution by providing probabilistic cost ranges rather than single-point estimates.

### C. Dynamic Budget Control and Cost Monitoring

AI-enabled budget control shifts cost management from periodic reporting to continuous monitoring and predictive oversight. By integrating real-time cost data with performance indicators, AI systems detect deviations between planned and actual expenditures at an early stage. When combined with earned value management metrics, AI-based analytics provide forward-looking insights into cost performance trends and forecast potential overruns before they materialize. This proactive approach enables timely corrective actions, supports adaptive reallocation of resources, and enhances financial transparency throughout the project life cycle.

### D. Financial Forecasting and Cash-Flow Prediction

Financial forecasting is critical for ensuring project liquidity and maintaining alignment between expenditures and funding availability. AI-based forecasting models leverage historical financial records, execution progress, and external economic indicators to predict future cash flows and funding requirements with greater accuracy. Scenario-based forecasting further allows project managers to assess the financial implications of schedule changes, risk events, and market volatility. By identifying potential cash-flow gaps and liquidity risks in advance, AI-driven forecasting supports more robust financial planning and stakeholder confidence.

### E. Cost Risk Analysis and Contingency Optimization

Managing cost uncertainty requires systematic analysis of risk exposure and appropriate contingency planning. AI-supported cost risk analysis employs probabilistic modeling and simulation techniques to quantify uncertainty ranges and identify dominant cost drivers. These insights enable data-driven determination of contingency reserves that balance risk coverage against budget efficiency. Furthermore, AI-based optimization techniques evaluate trade-offs between contingency levels, schedule pressure, and performance objectives, supporting more rational and transparent reserve management decisions.

### F. Managerial Implications, Governance, and Ethical Considerations

The adoption of AI in cost estimation and financial control has significant managerial and governance implications. While AI enhances predictive accuracy and decision support, it also raises

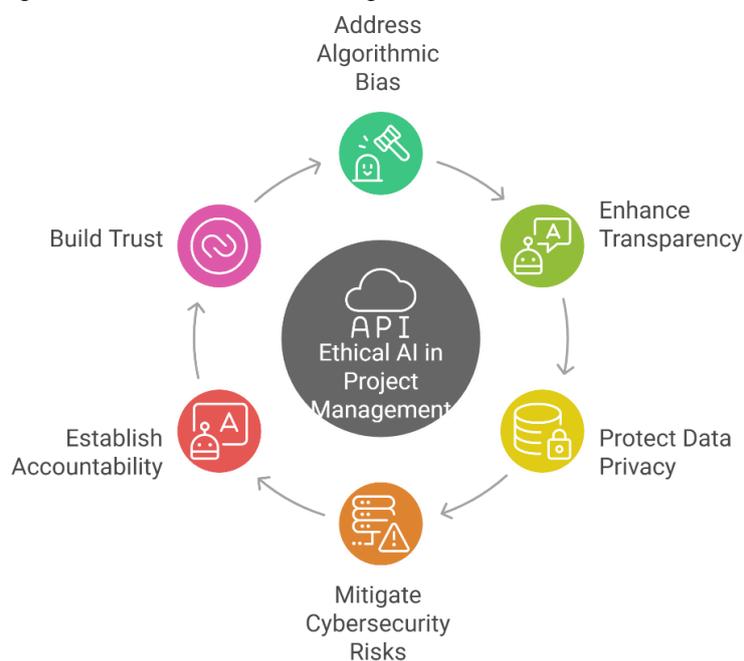
concerns related to transparency, explainability, and accountability in financial decision-making. Effective governance frameworks are required to ensure data integrity, auditability, and compliance with regulatory standards. Additionally, human oversight remains essential to validate AI outputs and manage ethical risks, reinforcing the role of project managers as informed decision-makers who leverage AI as an enabling, rather than substitutive, technology.

The integration of artificial intelligence into cost estimation, budget control, and financial forecasting fundamentally reshapes how project finances are planned, monitored, and governed. AI-driven cost estimation models improve accuracy by capturing complex and nonlinear cost drivers, while dynamic budget control systems enable continuous oversight and early detection of deviations. Advanced financial forecasting and cost risk analysis further enhance the ability of project organizations to manage liquidity, uncertainty, and contingency reserves in an increasingly volatile environment.

Despite these benefits, the effective deployment of AI in project financial management depends on high-quality data, organizational readiness, and well-defined governance structures. Transparency, explainability, and ethical accountability remain essential to maintaining trust in AI-assisted financial decisions. When implemented responsibly and aligned with managerial expertise, AI serves as a powerful enabler that strengthens financial discipline, reduces cost-related risks, and supports more reliable project outcomes. Ultimately, AI-enabled cost management contributes to improved project sustainability and long-term organizational value by fostering informed, adaptive, and resilient financial decision-making.

### Ethical, Legal, and Governance Challenges

The adoption of artificial intelligence in project management introduces transformative capabilities in planning, risk management, cost control, and decision support. However, as AI systems increasingly influence high-impact project decisions, they also raise critical ethical, legal, and governance (ELG) challenges that must be addressed to ensure responsible and sustainable deployment. Project environments are inherently multi-stakeholder, contract-driven, and accountability-sensitive, which amplifies the consequences of biased algorithms, opaque decision logic, data misuse, and unclear responsibility structures. Without appropriate governance, the very systems designed to enhance project performance may undermine trust, compliance, and decision legitimacy [47,48]. Figure 5 highlights Ethical, Legal, and Governance Challenges.



**Figure (5):** Ethical, Legal, and Governance Challenges

Ethical, legal, and governance considerations therefore constitute a foundational layer of AI-enabled project management rather than a peripheral concern. Addressing issues such as algorithmic fairness, transparency, data protection, cybersecurity, and accountability is essential to aligning AI technologies with organizational values, regulatory requirements, and professional project management standards. A structured ELG framework ensures that AI augments human judgment responsibly, protects stakeholder interests, and supports defensible decision-making throughout the project life cycle [49-52].

### **A. Algorithmic Bias and Fairness in AI-Assisted Project Decisions**

Algorithmic bias occurs when AI models produce systematically skewed outputs due to biased historical data, incomplete datasets, or modeling choices that inadvertently encode inequities. In project management, bias can affect high-impact decisions such as resource allocation, contractor risk scoring, task prioritization, and performance evaluation, potentially disadvantaging certain teams, roles, or vendors. These distortions can reduce both ethical legitimacy and operational effectiveness by reinforcing suboptimal historical practices rather than identifying the true drivers of performance and risk. Addressing fairness therefore requires standardized risk taxonomies, representative training data across project types, bias testing across protected or sensitive attributes (where applicable and lawful), and ongoing monitoring to ensure that model recommendations remain equitable as the project context changes.

### **B. Transparency and Explainability of AI Models in Project Management**

Transparency and explainability are essential for decision legitimacy in project environments where accountability, contractual scrutiny, and stakeholder alignment are critical. AI-driven recommendations, such as schedule re-optimization, risk prioritization, or budget forecasts, must be interpretable so that project leaders can understand the rationale, assess assumptions, and justify decisions to sponsors, auditors, and partners. Explainable AI techniques, model documentation, and decision traceability mechanisms improve trust by clarifying which data features drove the output and how sensitive results are to key inputs. Without explainability, AI tools may be treated as “black boxes,” increasing resistance from stakeholders, limiting adoption, and escalating disputes when recommendations lead to adverse outcomes.

### **C. Data Privacy and Protection in AI-Enabled Project Systems**

AI-enabled project management depends on extensive data aggregation from project management information systems, collaboration tools, enterprise platforms, and sometimes real-time operational sources such as sensors. This creates substantial privacy and confidentiality risks, especially when datasets include personal information (e.g., employee performance data, communications), proprietary commercial terms (e.g., procurement pricing), or sensitive contractual documents. Effective privacy protection requires clear data governance policies covering lawful basis for processing, consent (where required), data minimization, anonymization or pseudonymization, retention controls, and access management. In addition, organizations must ensure that AI workflows do not inadvertently expose sensitive information through reporting outputs, model prompts, or external integrations, particularly when third-party vendors or cloud services are involved.

### **D. Cybersecurity Risks and Regulatory Compliance**

Cybersecurity is a fundamental governance concern because AI systems expand the attack surface of project operations by connecting multiple data sources and automating decision pipelines. Threats include data breaches, ransomware, model theft, and manipulation of inputs that can distort forecasts and recommendations. In project settings, such incidents can lead to financial losses, schedule disruption, contractual penalties, and reputational damage. Regulatory compliance compounds this challenge, as organizations must align AI-enabled systems with applicable data protection laws, sector-specific regulations, and contractual obligations often across multiple jurisdictions in international projects. Robust controls therefore include encryption, role-based access, secure logging, incident response plans, supplier security assessments, and continuous monitoring for data integrity and abnormal usage patterns.

### **E. Accountability and Human Oversight in AI-Assisted Decisions**

A central governance question is how accountability is assigned when AI influences decisions that affect time, cost, quality, safety, or stakeholder outcomes. If an AI system recommends a resource reallocation that triggers delays, or a risk scoring model leads to an unfair vendor decision, responsibility must remain clear and enforceable. Effective governance typically requires human-in-the-loop oversight where AI provides recommendations, while accountable decision rights remain assigned to designated project roles. This includes defining approval thresholds for high-impact decisions, establishing escalation workflows for exceptions, documenting model limitations, and maintaining audit trails to reconstruct decision pathways. Clear accountability reduces legal ambiguity and improves the defensibility of project decisions under scrutiny.

### **F. Trust, Organizational Governance, and Ethical Adoption Frameworks**

Trust is a prerequisite for sustained AI adoption in project management, and it is built through consistent evidence that AI systems are reliable, fair, secure, and aligned with organizational values. Establishing trust requires more than technical performance; it depends on governance frameworks that include policies for model validation, periodic audits, performance monitoring, bias assessment, and change control for model updates. Organizational readiness also matters: project teams must be trained to interpret AI outputs, challenge recommendations appropriately, and understand when human

judgment should override algorithmic suggestions. Ethical adoption frameworks, supported by leadership commitment, help ensure that AI improves project outcomes without compromising stakeholder rights, transparency, or accountability, thereby enabling responsible scaling from pilots to enterprise-wide deployment.

Ethical, legal, and governance challenges play a decisive role in determining the success or failure of AI-assisted project management initiatives. While AI offers significant potential to enhance efficiency, foresight, and control, its benefits cannot be fully realized without safeguards that ensure fairness, transparency, security, and clear accountability. Algorithmic bias, lack of explainability, data privacy risks, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities pose tangible threats to both project outcomes and organizational credibility if left unmanaged. Effective governance frameworks, characterized by human oversight, explainable decision support, robust data protection, and compliance-oriented controls are essential for building and sustaining trust in AI-enabled project management systems. By embedding ethical principles and legal accountability into AI design and deployment processes, organizations can mitigate risk while preserving the strategic advantages of intelligent technologies. Ultimately, responsible AI governance transforms AI from a potential liability into a trusted enabler of resilient, transparent, and ethically grounded project delivery.

### **Conclusion**

This manuscript discusses the ethical, legal, and governance challenges associated with the integration of artificial intelligence into project management, situating these challenges within the broader paradigm shift from traditional, rule-based methodologies toward intelligent, data-driven project ecosystems. The analysis demonstrates that conventional project management approaches, while foundational are increasingly inadequate in addressing the complexity, uncertainty, and speed demanded by modern project-based organizations. Digital transformation, driven by data availability, advanced analytics, and organizational agility requirements, has created both the necessity and the opportunity for AI-enabled project management, while simultaneously amplifying the consequences of governance failures.

By investigating the foundational AI paradigms relevant to project management, including machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, and reinforcement learning, the study highlights that AI is not a monolithic technology but a portfolio of complementary methods that enhance predictive, prescriptive, and adaptive capabilities. However, the effectiveness of these methods is fundamentally contingent upon organizational AI maturity, readiness, and, most critically, the availability of high-quality, well-governed data. Data has emerged not merely as a technical input, but as a strategic asset whose governance directly shapes the ethical integrity and reliability of AI-driven project decisions.

The examination of AI-enabled project planning and scheduling illustrates how predictive scheduling, dynamic timeline optimization, intelligent resource allocation, and real-time plan adaptation can significantly improve responsiveness and resilience in project execution. Yet, these capabilities also introduce governance challenges related to transparency, explainability, and baseline control, particularly when schedules and resource decisions are continuously adjusted by algorithmic systems. Similar tensions arise in intelligent risk management, where AI-driven risk identification, prioritization, and early-warning systems enhance foresight but demand careful oversight to avoid bias, false alarms, and overreliance on automated signals.

In the financial domain, AI-supported cost estimation, budget control, and forecasting, including machine learning-based estimates, cash-flow risk prediction, and AI-enhanced earned value management, demonstrate clear potential to reduce cost overruns and improve financial discipline. At the same time, these applications raise ethical and legal questions concerning accountability, auditability, and the defensibility of AI-influenced financial decisions, particularly in contractual and regulatory contexts. Overall, the findings provide that the successful adoption of artificial intelligence in project management is not solely a technical challenge, but a governance imperative. Ethical safeguards, legal compliance, and clear accountability structures must be embedded throughout the AI life cycle to ensure fairness, transparency, and trust. Human oversight remains indispensable, with AI serving as a decision-support and augmentation tool rather than an autonomous authority.

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