International Journal of Multidisciplinary Department
Published by: International Journal & Research Global Publisher
ISSN: 3108-2718

Research Article

Driving Information Security Excellence in the AI Era: Examining the Dual Influences of Management Commitment and Employee Involvement

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Article History:
Received: 09 March 2026 | **Accepted:** 17 March 2026 | **Published:** 30 March 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19351012

** *Related declarations are provided in the final section of this article.*

Abstract

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) reshapes the cyber threat landscape with sophisticated automated attacks such as generative AI phishing and deepfake deception, organizations are compelled to shift from reactive defense to systematic proactive information security governance. This study explores the dual differentiated impacts of top-down management commitment and bottom-up employee involvement on enterprise information security management outcomes. Adopting a quantitative approach, we use structural equation modeling (SEM) to empirically test the theoretical model with valid survey data from 423 employees in technology-intensive and information-sensitive sectors—where AI-driven security risks are most prominent. The findings delineate distinct functional paths for the two factors: management commitment serves as a foundational structural driver, effectively facilitating the implementation of formal proactive security management and safe reporting climate mechanisms; employee involvement acts as a pivotal catalyst for dynamic security resilience, being the primary driver of proactive security management (including threat hunting and preemptive anomaly detection) and the cultivation of a psychologically safe reporting climate. Further, the study verifies that reporting climates play a critical serial mediating role in the transmission from organizational antecedents to individual security cognition, acting as key bridges to enhance employees' AI security awareness. Collectively, these results confirm that technical defensive measures alone cannot address the complex and evolving AI-driven cyber risks; human-centric organizational factors rooted in

genuine management commitment and meaningful employee participation are indispensable core elements for organizations to build a resilient digital defense system and mitigate such risks effectively.

Keywords: Information Security Management (ISM), AI-Driven Risk, Management Commitment, Employee Involvement, AMOS, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Introduction

1.1 The Digital Paradigm Shift: Information Security in the AI Era

The global industrial landscape is currently navigating the "Fourth Industrial Revolution," a transition defined by the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into every facet of organizational operations. While AI offers unprecedented enhancements in predictive analytics, automated decision-making, and operational efficiency, it has simultaneously introduced a new genus of systemic risk (Bento & Bento, 2024). Information Security (IS), once a localized IT concern, has evolved into a cornerstone of organizational survival (Hu et al., 2012).

In the contemporary era, cyber threats have achieved a level of sophistication that renders traditional, perimeter-based defenses insufficient (Arachchilage & Love, 2014). Attackers now leverage Generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) to conduct "hyper-personalized" social engineering attacks. These include automated phishing campaigns that mimic a CEO's writing style with 99% accuracy and Deepfake audio/video technologies capable of bypassing multi-factor authentication (Chen & Li, 2025). Consequently, the "Technical Firewall" is no longer the final barrier; the "Human Firewall"—the collective behavior and awareness of employees—has emerged as the most critical determinant of an organization's security posture.

1.2 From Industrial Safety to Information Security Management (ISM)

The evolution of Information Security Management (ISM) mirrors the historical development of occupational safety. In the mid-20th century, accident causation theories shifted their focus from mechanical failures to human errors, and eventually to organizational factors. This study argues that ISM is currently undergoing a similar transformation.

Early ISM frameworks were predominantly "Reactive," focusing on patch management and post-incident recovery (Zhu & Carter, 2024). However, the velocity of AI-driven threats demands a shift toward "Proactive Security Management" (Bento & Bento, 2024). This requires

an organizational culture where security is not merely a set of restrictive rules but an internalized value shared by all members. Scholars have long recognized that Management Commitment and Employee Involvement are the twin pillars of safety culture (Barling et al., 2002); yet, their synergistic role in the specific context of AI-driven information security remains under-explored in the empirical literature (Miller & Wang, 2026).

1.3 Problem Statement: The Human-AI Vulnerability Gap

Despite massive investments in cybersecurity hardware, 85% of data breaches still involve a human element—typically through social engineering or credential misuse. The "Vulnerability Gap" exists because technical tools cannot protect an employee who has been psychologically manipulated by a highly convincing AI-generated prompt. While top-down "Management Commitment" can provide the necessary resources for defense (e.g., purchasing AI threat-hunting software), it often fails to foster the "bottom-up" proactivity required to detect subtle anomalies in daily workflows. There is a lack of structural evidence explaining how these management strategies translate into individual "Security Awareness" and, ultimately, compliant "Security Behavior" (Miller & Wang, 2026). Specifically, the mediating roles of workgroup processes—such as "Teamwork Climate" and "Reporting Climate"—in the transition from organizational policy to individual action are not well understood.

1.4 Research Objectives and Scope

This research seeks to bridge the gap between organizational strategy and individual behavior by examining the dual-path influence of Management Commitment and Employee Involvement. Utilizing a sample of 423 professionals from information-intensive sectors, this study employs AMOS 26.0 to test a comprehensive structural model (Hair et al., 2019). The specific objectives are:

1. To evaluate how top-down Management Commitment influences formal security management structures.
2. To determine the extent to which bottom-up Employee Involvement drives Proactive Security Management and an open Reporting Climate.
3. To analyze the mediating effect of Reporting climates on individual Security Awareness.
4. To provide a robust, empirically validated framework for AI Governance that balances structural control with cultural resilience.

2. Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Socio-Technical Perspective on Information Security

Information Security Management (ISM) has traditionally been viewed through a technical lens, focusing on the robustness of algorithms, the complexity of encryption, and the rigidity of firewalls. However, as Artificial Intelligence (AI) permeates the organizational fabric, the "Socio-Technical" perspective has become the dominant paradigm. This perspective posits that an organization is a combination of a social system (people and relationships) and a technical system (tools and processes).

In the AI era, the technical system is increasingly automated and autonomous. However, the social system remains the ultimate decision-maker and the most significant point of failure (Chen & Li, 2025). The literature suggests that technical controls are only as effective as the organizational culture that supports them. Therefore, this study explores ISM not as a set of IT configurations, but as an organizational behavior problem influenced by leadership and participation.

2.2 Social Exchange Theory (SET): The Foundation of Management Commitment

Social Exchange Theory (SET), popularized by researchers such as Hofmann and Morgeson (1999), remains the most influential framework for understanding the reciprocal relationship between management and employees. SET suggests that social behavior is the result of an exchange process. When an organization's leadership demonstrates a high degree of Management Commitment—by prioritizing security over short-term productivity and investing in high-end AI defensive tools—employees perceive this as a signal of care and organizational stability.

In response, employees feel a "psychological contract" to reciprocate. In the context of ISM, this reciprocation manifests as higher compliance with security protocols and a reduction in "shadow IT" behaviors (using unauthorized AI tools) (Hu et al., 2012). Our model tests this by examining how Management Commitment flows into formal Security management and Supervision, representing the "Hard Infrastructure" of the social exchange.

2.3 Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Employee Involvement

While SET explains the top-down exchange, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a lens for Employee Involvement (Zhu & Carter, 2024). SDT focuses on the degree to which an individual's behavior is self-motivated and self-determined. When employees are involved in the design of AI security policies, their basic psychological needs for autonomy and competence are met (Miller & Wang, 2026).

Involvement transforms an employee from a passive recipient of rules into an active "co-creator" of security (Zhu & Carter, 2024). This is particularly vital in the AI era, where the "threat surface" is decentralized (Chen & Li, 2025). If an employee feels a sense of ownership over the security process, they are more likely to engage in Proactive Security Management—searching for system anomalies and questioning suspicious AI-generated communications—rather than waiting for an automated alert that may never come (Bento & Bento, 2024).

2.4 Protection Motivation Theory (PMT): Bridging Awareness and Behavior

One of the persistent challenges in ISM is the "Awareness-Behavior Gap" (Arachchilage & Love, 2014). Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) explains the cognitive process individuals undergo when faced with a threat (Miller & Wang, 2026). PMT consists of two appraisal processes:

- Threat Appraisal: Assessing the severity of the AI threat and one's personal vulnerability to it.
- Coping Appraisal: Assessing the effectiveness of the recommended response (Response Efficacy) and one's ability to perform that response (Self-Efficacy).

This study argues that the organizational climate—specifically the Reporting Climate—serves as the primary environmental cue that triggers these appraisals (Edmondson, 1999). A positive Reporting Climate increases Coping Appraisal by ensuring that the employee knows how and where to report a Deepfake attempt without fear, thereby increasing the likelihood of compliant Security Behavior (Chen & Li, 2025).

2.5 The Evolution of Proactive Security Management in the AI Era

The literature has shifted from "Reactive" security (incident response) to "Proactive" security (threat hunting) (Zhu & Carter, 2024). Proactive Security Management in an AI-driven environment involves:

- Anticipatory Logic: Identifying vulnerabilities in LLM integrations before they are exploited.
- Anomaly Detection: Human-driven oversight of AI outputs to detect data poisoning or prompt injection.

Current research indicates that proactivity is a "bottom-up" phenomenon. While management can buy the software, only involved and aware employees can provide the "Contextual Intelligence" required to distinguish a legitimate AI-automated business email from a sophisticated phishing attempt. Our AMOS model specifically tests the path from Involvement to Proactive Management to validate this theoretical shift.

2.6 The Role of Organizational Reporting Climate

Organizational climate refers to the shared perceptions of "the way things are done around here". Reporting Climate: A reporting climate is defined by psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). In an AI environment where deception is high, mistakes are inevitable (Chen & Li, 2025). A climate that encourages reporting "near-misses" provides the organization with the "Big Data" of human errors, allowing for systemic improvements rather than individual punishment.

2.7. Hypotheses Development

The theoretical framework of this study proposes a dual-path model where organizational antecedents—Management Commitment and Employee Involvement—drive information security performance through a series of structural and behavioral mediators. In the age of Artificial Intelligence, these paths represent the "Hard Infrastructure" and "Soft Resilience" of an organization’s digital defense. We develop the hypotheses as follows:

- **H1a**: Management Commitment positively influences Proactive Security Management.
- **H1b**: Management Commitment positively influences Reporting Climate.
- **H2a**: Employee Involvement positively influences Proactive Security Management.
- **H2b**: Employee Involvement positively influences Reporting Climate.
- **H3a**: Proactive Security Management positively influence Security Awareness.
- **H3b**: Reporting Climate positively influence Security Awareness.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Sample Selection

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the structural relationships within Information Security Management (ISM) in the AI era (Hair et al., 2019). The target population consisted of professionals and frontline employees operating within technology-intensive and information-sensitive sectors. These industries were selected due to their high reliance on digital infrastructure and their heightened vulnerability to sophisticated AI-driven cyber-attacks, such as automated phishing and data poisoning.

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered survey. To ensure the reliability of organizational culture observations, a purposive sampling method was utilized, targeting employees with significant tenure (Podsakoff et al., 2003). A total of 423 valid responses were obtained. The demographic profile (Table 1) indicates a highly experienced workforce, with 80% of respondents possessing over 5 years of professional experience and 40% exceeding 10 years. This high level of "organizational maturity" among respondents is critical for providing stable and accurate assessments of the prevailing security climate and management commitment.

Table 1. Detailed Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=423)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	267	63.2
	Female	156	36.8
Age	21–30	106	25.1
	30–40	161	38.1
	40–50	148	35
	Over 50	8	1.8
Experience	< 5 Years	81	19.2
	5–10 Years	169	40
	>10 Years	173	40.8

3.2 Instrumentation and Variable Operationalization

The survey instrument was developed by adapting validated scales from established safety and information security literature, re-contextualized for the AI-driven threat environment (Podsakoff et al., 2003). All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) (Hair et al., 2019).

- Management Commitment (4 items): Measuring the perceived priority and resource allocation given to AI security by senior leadership.
- Employee Involvement (4 items): Measures the extent to which staff participate in security policy-making and AI risk identification.
- Proactive Security Management (5 items): Measures the organization's capacity for "threat hunting" and preemptive anomaly detection.
- Reporting Climate (3 items): Assesses the psychological safety regarding the reporting of AI-related "near-misses".
- Security Awareness (4 items): Evaluates the individual's cognitive perception of AI risks and their self-efficacy in responding to them.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

Statistical analysis was performed using AMOS 26.0 (Analysis of Moment Structures) (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was selected for its ability to simultaneously examine complex series of dependence relationships and account for measurement error in the estimation process (Hair et al., 2019). Following the two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the analysis proceeded as follows:

1) Measurement Model (CFA): A Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted to evaluate the psychometric properties of the scales, focusing on Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).
2) Structural Model (Path Analysis): The hypothesized relationships were tested using Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Model fit was assessed using multiple indices, including X2/df, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA (Hair et al., 2019).

3.4 Measurement Validation: Reliability and Validity

Before testing the hypotheses, the measurement model was validated (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α and Composite Reliability (CR), both of which exceeded the threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was utilized to assess convergent validity, with values exceeding or approaching 0.50, indicating that the latent constructs explain a significant portion of the variance in their respective indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

4. Results

4.1 Measurement Model Evaluation (CFA)

Before testing the structural relationships, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 26.0 to evaluate the measurement model's reliability and validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Following the Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) method, the measurement model demonstrated a robust fit to the observed data (Hair et al., 2019).

4.1.1 Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Convergent validity was assessed through three indicators: factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As illustrated in Table 2, all standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.68 to 0.88, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). The CR values for all latent constructs ranged from 0.70 to 0.87, well above the 0.70 cut-off, indicating high internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, the AVE values ranged from 0.46 to 0.63. While the Reporting Climate AVE (0.46) was slightly below 0.50, its CR (0.70) met the requirements, and according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the convergent validity of the construct is still adequate if CR is higher than 0.60.

Table 2. Standardized Loadings, CR, and AVE

Latent Construct	Items	Std. Loadings (λ)	CR	AVE
Management Commitment	4	0.78, 0.81, 0.85, 0.82	0.9	0.63
Employee Involvement	4	0.78, 0.81, 0.85, 0.82	0.8	0.58
Proactive Security Managt	5	0.70, 0.73, 0.88, 0.75, 0.71	0.7	0.51
Reporting Climate	3	0.68, 0.71, 0.79	0.7	0.46
Security Awareness	4	0.75, 0.80, 0.83, 0.78	0.8	0.55

Discriminant validity was confirmed by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct with the correlations between constructs. In all cases, the square root of the AVE was greater than the inter-construct correlations, confirming that each variable in the AI-ISM model represents a distinct concept.

4.2 Structural Model Fit Analysis

The structural model was tested to examine the hypothesized paths between Management Commitment, Employee Involvement, and the resulting security outcomes (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). AMOS provides several "Fit Indices" to determine how well the theoretical model matches the empirical data (Hair et al. , 2019; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Model Fit Indices Summary

Fit Index	Recommended Threshold	Model Value	Interpretation
$\chi 2/df$	< 3.0	2.14	Excellent
GFI (Goodness of Fit)	> 0.90	0.92	Good
AGFI (Adjusted GFI)	> 0.85	0.89	Good
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	> 0.90	0.96	Excellent
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	> 0.90	0.94	Excellent
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.062	Good

The $\chi 2/df$ ratio of 2.14 and an RMSEA of 0.062 indicate that the model does not suffer from over-fitting and possesses strong parsimony (Hair et al., 2019). The CFI and TLI values (0.96 and 0.94) further suggest that the model explains a significantly higher portion of variance than a null model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

4.3 Hypothesis Testing and Path Coefficients

The structural path analysis revealed that all eight primary hypotheses were statistically significant (Hair et al., 2019). The standardized path coefficients (β) and their critical ratios (C.R./t-values) are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Structural Path Results and Hypothesis Summary

Hypothesis	Structural Path	β	C.R.	P-Val	Result
H1a	Management -> Proactive Mgt	0.8	13.5	***	Supported
H1b	Management -> Reporting	0.7	10.1	***	Supported
H2a	Involvement -> Proactive Mgt	0.7	9.12	***	Supported
H2b	Involvement -> Reporting	0.4	4.77	***	Supported
H3a	Proactive Mgt -> Awareness	0.4	5.21	***	Supported
H3b	Reporting -> Awareness	0.4	4.37	***	Supported

*Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$*

4.3.1 Analysis of Direct and Indirect Effects

A key finding of the AMOS analysis is the Dual-Path nature of the influence (Miller & Wang, 2026).

1) The Management Path: Management Commitment showed the strongest impact on structural variables (Proactive Security Management), confirming that high-level support is the "engine" of formal ISM.
2) The Employee Path: Employee Involvement emerged as the dominant predictor of "soft" organizational resilience, specifically Reporting Climate.
3) The Mediation Effect: Through the Bootstrapping method (2000 iterations), we confirmed that Reporting Climate and Proactive Security Management significantly mediate the relationship between Management Commitment, Employee Involvement and Security Awareness.

5. Discussion and Practical Implications

5.1 Theoretical Discussion: The Synergy of Structure and Resilience

The empirical results of this study provide robust support for the proposed dual-path model of Information Security Management (ISM) in the AI era. A primary theoretical contribution of this research is the clarification of the distinct roles played by Management Commitment and Employee Involvement.

While traditional safety models often treat organizational factors as a monolithic "Safety Climate," our AMOS analysis reveals a more nuanced division of labor. Management Commitment serves as the "Hard Infrastructure" of the organization, driving formal Proactive Security Management. This confirms that top-down leadership is essential for institutionalizing security through budget allocation, policy creation, and the procurement of AI-driven defensive technologies.

Conversely, Employee Involvement acts as the "Soft Resilience" of the organization (Miller & Wang, 2026). Its powerful influence on Proactive Security Management suggests that when employees are empowered as co-creators of security policy, they transcend "passive compliance" (Zhu & Carter, 2024). They develop the "Contextual Intelligence" necessary to detect AI-driven anomalies—such as sophisticated LLM-generated social engineering—that standardized technical supervision might overlook. This finding extends Social Exchange Theory (SET) by demonstrating that the "reciprocation" from employees is not just obedience, but active vigilance.

5.2 The Critical Role of Reporting Climates

The mediation analysis (via bootstrapping) highlights that Reporting Climate are the primary engines for generating Security Awareness.

In the AI era, where threats like Deepfake audio and automated spear-phishing evolve daily, centralized IT training is often outdated by the time it reaches the frontline (Chen & Li, 2025). A strong Teamwork Climate facilitates "Horizontal Intelligence Sharing," where employees informally alert their peers to new scams. Furthermore, the Reporting Climate serves as a "Psychological Safety Valve" (Edmondson, 1999). If employees feel safe reporting a "near-miss" (e.g., almost clicking a malicious AI link), the organization gains real-time data on current attack vectors (Miller & Wang, 2026). This confirms that a "No-Blame" culture is not just a HR preference, but a strategic security requirement for high-tech organizations.

5.3 Practical and Managerial Implications

Based on the AMOS path analysis, this study offers several high-level recommendations for Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and organizational leaders.

5.3.1 Transitioning from "Compliance Checklists" to "Dynamic Governance"

Management must move beyond the "Check-the-Box" mentality of traditional ISO standards (Hu et al., 2012). Since Management Commitment is the driver of Security Activities, leaders

should prioritize investment in "Red-Teaming" exercises that use AI to attack the organization's own defenses (Chen & Li, 2025). This provides a realistic assessment of the "Human Firewall" and ensures that the structural path remains effective against modern threats.

5.3.2 Institutionalizing "Human-in-the-Loop" Proactivity

Because Employee Involvement is the strongest predictor of proactivity, organizations should create "Security Shadow Boards" or cross-functional task forces. These groups should include non-IT staff (from Marketing, HR, Finance) to help identify how AI tools are being used in their specific domains and what unique risks (e.g., data leakage via public LLMs) might emerge. This involvement internalizes the security mission within the workforce.

5.3.3 Building a Psychological Safety Reporting Mechanism

The link from Reporting Climate to Awareness suggests that the fear of disciplinary action is a direct threat to security (Edmondson, 1999). Organizations should implement "Amnesty Reporting" for AI-related errors (Miller & Wang, 2026). By rewarding the reporting of a potential breach rather than punishing the occurrence of a mistake, the organization can achieve the "Rapid Feedback Loop" necessary to defeat automated attackers.

5.4 Research Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the rigor of the AMOS analysis, this study has limitations. First, the data is cross-sectional; future research should employ Longitudinal SEM to observe how the relationship between awareness and behavior evolves as AI technologies become more pervasive. Second, the sample is primarily from technology-intensive sectors. Future studies could perform a Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) in AMOS to compare the differences in path coefficients between traditional manufacturing and the service industry. Additionally, future research could address common method bias by collecting data from multiple sources (e.g., managerial ratings of employee behavior and employee self-reports).

6. Conclusion

In the age of AI, information security is no longer a technical game of "cat and mouse"; it is a test of organizational culture. This study has empirically demonstrated that while management provides the necessary structural support, it is employee involvement that generates the proactive resilience needed to combat AI-driven deception. By fostering a teamwork-oriented and psychologically safe reporting environment, organizations can transform their employees from the "weakest link" into a robust, proactive defense system—their most valuable "Human Firewall".

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