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Humanising Artificial Intelligence: Strategic Communication and Emotional Intelligence in AI-Enabled Organisations

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Abstract
The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into organisational decision-making is transforming leadership practices, communication processes and organisational governance. Although AI can enhance efficiency, predictive capability and strategic decision-making, its implementation also raises concerns about transparency, ethical accountability, employee trust, and emotional well-being. Existing research has predominantly examined the technological and operational dimensions of AI adoption, with comparatively limited attention to its communicative and emotional dimensions. Addressing this gap, this conceptual study proposes a Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework that positions strategic communication and emotional intelligence as complementary leadership mechanisms in AI-enabled organisations. Drawing on socio-technical systems theory, dialogic communication theory, emotional intelligence theory, ethical leadership theory and the Technology Acceptance Model, the framework conceptualises strategic communication as a mediating mechanism linking AI implementation with employee trust, while emotional intelligence functions as a moderating leadership capability that strengthens the effectiveness of communication in fostering trust. The framework further proposes that strategic communication and emotional intelligence contribute to ethical leadership, while employee trust supports organisational resilience and performance. By integrating technological, communicative, emotional, and ethical perspectives, the study contributes to the emerging literature on human-centred AI and highlights leadership's role in ensuring that technological transformation remains transparent, ethical, and responsive to human needs. The study proposes practical implications for leadership development, ethical AI governance, trust-building, and sustainable digital transformation.
Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Strategic Communication; Emotional Intelligence; Ethical Leadership; Employee Trust; Human-Centred AI; Organisational Resilience

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed the landscape of today's organisations, impacting business decision-making, leadership practices and processes. Organisations can leverage advances in machine learning, natural language processing and predictive analytics to automate complex tasks, enhance operational efficiencies and bolster strategic planning (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017; Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). AI-powered systems are increasingly being used in diverse business functions, such as recruiting, performance

monitoring, customer relationship management, strategic forecasting, and more.

However, adopting AI in companies isn't only about efficiency. AI decision-making can bring immense human, ethical, and relational challenges. Algorithmic systems are frequently 'black boxes, difficult for users, especially employees, to understand, particularly how they make their decisions (Pasquale, 2015). Insufficient transparency may negatively affect perceptions of fairness, autonomy, and trust (Martin, 2019). Meanwhile, the use of AI can also create anxiety, opposition to change and job insecurity (Jarrahi, 2018). These challenges indicate that AI technology alone is not enough; how it is interpreted, communicated, and experienced by stakeholders in the organisation also matters.

Recent studies show that leadership and communication are crucial to this process. In a different study, Xu et al. (2024) examined employees' trust in AI in the context of HR at organisations and found that trust in leadership, along with explanations of AI's benefits and risks, influenced the process of building trust. Likewise, Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott (2024) argue that AI is changing how people communicate at work and that leaders are now also “stewards of organisational communication” in an era when AI is part of workplace communication. These findings underscore the critical importance of treating AI use as a leadership and communication task, rather than just a technology development.

The socio-technical view of organisational effectiveness is the fit between technological systems and human systems (Trist, 1981). Technology thus becomes a key leadership factor in the change process, fostering understanding and acceptance within the organisation. The strategic communication process can help employees better understand the "Why," "How," and "What" of the decisions that AI can enable. Effective (and clear) communication can help to minimise uncertainty, encourage conversations and build trust in the process of organisational change (Hallahan et al., 2007; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Men, 2014). In environments where AI is used, communication becomes especially significant, as employees may be asked to agree to or act on decisions made by AI systems they may not fully understand.

In addition to communication, emotional intelligence (EI) is another important leadership competence in an organisational setting where technology is playing an important role. EI is the capacity to identify, comprehend and manage feelings of oneself and one's peers (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2004). Leaders with high EI are better able to empathise with employees' feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and resistance that come with technology transitions. Empathy, emotional awareness, and interpersonal sensitivity are components that can help build psychological safety, trust, and employee engagement in emotionally intelligent leadership (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Côté, 2014). Therefore, strategic communication addresses the cognitive and informational aspects of AI implementation, while emotional intelligence addresses the emotional and relational aspects.

Although there is extensive research on AI adoption, most studies have focused on the technical, operational, and efficiency aspects. There has been extensive research on the use of AI, but most of it has focused on the technical, operational, and efficiency aspects. While the relationship between trust, leadership, and workplace communication and AI has started to be understood, the synergy between strategic communication and emotional intelligence, and how this relationship affects employees' reactions to AI, is still rather under-studied. Specifically, the interaction between these leadership attributes in building trust, ethical leadership, and sustainable organisational results in AI environments has not been sufficiently conceptualised. This is a significant omission, as technology systems do not exist in isolation from organisational adoption, which is mediated by human relationships, perceptions, and emotions.

The present study introduces a Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework to solve this issue by incorporating the concepts of artificial intelligence, strategic communication, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership and employee trust. The framework defines strategic communication as the process by which the use of AI in change is explained and legitimised, and emotional intelligence as a leadership ability that can influence how employees respond to technological change. Together, these capabilities offer a human-centred approach to AI governance and put technology into practice with transparency, empathy, trust, and ethical accountability.

This study makes three contributions. First, it brings together the theories of socio-technical systems, dialogic communication, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and technology acceptance models to create an interdisciplinary perspective on implementing human-centred AI. Second, it underscores two other leadership tools that can positively impact employee trust and perceptions of AI: strategic communication and emotional intelligence. Third, it provides real-world applications for organisational leaders aiming to incorporate AI effectively with ethical considerations and humanising approaches.

This conceptual paper aims to shed light on this issue and explore the potential of strategic communication and emotional intelligence to make AI implementation more human. This conceptual study aims to examine the potential of strategic communication and emotional intelligence to make AI implementation more human. The framework lays the groundwork for future empirical studies on the interconnections between AI implementation, communication, emotional intelligence, and organisational performance.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

2.1 Artificial Intelligence in Organisational Contexts

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an essential technological enabler, transforming organisations, decision-making, and leadership. AI is a system that carries out tasks normally done by human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making (Russell & Norvig, 2021). Machine learning and predictive analytics can help automate complex cognitive tasks, improve decision accuracy, and increase operational efficiency (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018).

From recruitment to performance management, from customer service to strategic planning, AI systems are playing an increasing role in various aspects of organisational functioning (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). These systems can process large amounts of data and identify patterns a person may not be able to, which can enhance organisational effectiveness and promote innovation. But as the use of algorithmic decision-making also increases, so do the ethical, psychological, and relational issues.

Algorithmic systems can be “black boxes” and reduce the knowledge of their employees in the generation of decisions (Pasquale, 2015). This transparency may help foster perceptions of fairness and trust (Martin, 2019), especially when employees are directly impacted by AI-driven decisions. AI adoption may also create anxiety, resistance to technology, and job-security concerns (Jarrahi, 2018). The automation of decision-making could significantly affect employee perceptions of autonomy and control, both psychological factors in organisational life (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The evidence also indicates that factors such as organisational-level and leadership-related issues can influence employees' trust in AI, alongside the technology itself. Xu et al. (2024) found that trustworthy leadership boosted workers' initial trust in AI and their willingness to embrace it in an HR environment, with explanations of AI benefits and risks also shaping trust formation. This aligns with a socio-organisational view of AI, in which the context in

which AI is adopted and understood can affect its adoption.
The issues raised show that implementing AI is not just a technical matter. It is also a human and organisational process, which needs to be considered, as employees interpret and understand technological changes and react to them. This view is supported by the socio-technical systems theory, which stresses the compatibility of technological features with human and organisational aspects (Trist, 1981). This is where leadership ability in communication, trust and employee reaction to change are needed for effective implementation of AI.

2.2 Strategic Communication and Organisational Trust
Strategic communication is the intentional and deliberate use of communication to accomplish organisational goals and manage organisational relationships with stakeholders (Hallahan et al., 2007). Effective communication within organisations helps align people, aids organisational change and influences employee perceptions of organisational decision-making. The theory of dialogic communication is an important theoretical approach to understanding communication in technology-mediated organisational contexts. Kent and Taylor (2002) emphasise dialogue, transparency, responsiveness, and understanding as key elements of effective organisational communication. These principles are especially pertinent in the context of technology adoption in organisations, where employees might feel the technology is complex, unfamiliar, or a threat.
When AI becomes a part of the workplace, the role of communication becomes more significant. Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott (2024) highlight the opportunities and risks of AI-powered workplace communication and the need for leaders to guide organisational communication when AI is included in interpersonal communication. Their analysis highlights the need to keep human responsibility and trust in AI-driven communication.
Transparency in communication can help alleviate uncertainty by providing employees with accurate, timely, and relevant information (Men, 2014). If leaders make decisions about technological change clear and explain the purpose, implications, and consequences openly, employees will feel the decisions are legitimate and fair. Dialogue and feedback time can further build understanding and trust.
Communication is especially crucial in AI-powered decision-making, where the logic and workings of algorithms can be hard for employees to understand. According to media richness theory, communication effectiveness depends partly on a channel's ability to convey complex information (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Technical and abstract information is a crucial component of decision-making in AI, and clarity, contextualisation, and communication are particularly important.
A review of organisational change also suggests that communication quality affects employee reactions to technological innovation. When leaders explain changes openly and allow staff to participate and give feedback, staff are more likely to accept the changes (Lewis, 2006). This is why strategic communication is also crucial for organisations to minimise uncertainty, establish legitimacy and gain trust when implementing AI.

2.3 Emotional Intelligence and Leadership in Technological Contexts
Another significant leadership skill in a technologically oriented organisation is emotional intelligence (EI). EI is the capacity to perceive, understand, and manage feelings in oneself and others (Mayer et al., 2004). In addition, Goleman (1995) developed a framework of EI competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation.
Emotional reactions like anxiety, uncertainty, fear, and resistance often result from

technological change. Emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to identify and respond to these reactions positively (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005). Leaders can foster psychological safety and support employee relationships during tech disruption by using empathy and emotional awareness.

Studies indicate that emotional intelligence plays a role in leadership success, employee engagement, relationship quality and organisational performance (Côté, 2014). These skills are also especially important in AI-driven workplaces as employees might perceive algorithms as impersonal, unpredictable, or threatening. Emotionally intelligent leaders can offer relational support and help employees cope with the psychological impact of technological change.

Ethical Leadership may also be affected by EI. Attentive leaders are more likely to consider the emotional and social impacts of decisions made in an organisation on stakeholders (George, 2000). This is especially important in AI-informed decision-making, where algorithms can produce outcomes that significantly affect fairness, autonomy, and employee health and happiness.

2.4 Ethical Leadership and Trust in AI-Enabled Organisations

Ethical leadership focuses on being honest, treating others fairly, and demonstrating a focus on stakeholder welfare (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical leadership is not only a way to influence behaviour in organisations, but also a way to demonstrate what is considered ethical. Trust is key in AI-driven environments, where employees may be required to follow guidance from machinery they are not fully familiar with. Organisational trust exists when employees trust their leaders' intentions and organisational processes (Mayer et al., 1995). Transparency, fairness, algorithmic accountability, and the perceived legitimacy of algorithmic decision-making affect trust in AI.

Recent findings support the importance of leadership in building trust in AI. Xu et al. (2024) found that initial trust in AI and willingness to embrace it were built through trustworthy leadership, and that explanations of AI's benefits and risks also played a role in trust formation. The results confirm that employees' trust in AI cannot be explained solely by the technical attributes of AI systems.

Employees' mistrust of algorithmic systems can occur when they feel that systems are biased, can't explain why, and are not sufficiently accountable (Martin, 2019). Ethical leadership can help alleviate these concerns by establishing systems for transparency, human oversight, and accountability. The social exchange view of trust indicates that trust is built when relationships are based on reciprocity, fairness and respect (Blau, 1964).

Therefore, strategic communication and emotional intelligence can help build trust in complementary ways. Communication provides clarity and explanation, and emotional intelligence helps leaders understand and address employee concerns. These capabilities can work hand in hand to foster ethical leadership and boost trust in organisational leadership and AI-powered systems.

2.5 Technology Acceptance and Human-Centred AI

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a well-established theoretical framework to explain how individuals accept technological systems (Davis, 1989). TAM suggests that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use play a key role in technology acceptance. In the context of organisations implementing AI, these perceptions are also influenced by how employees explain, experience, and interpret the technology.

Communication can enhance employees' understanding of AI systems and help them understand the technology's purpose and utility for their organisation. Meanwhile,

emotionally intelligent leadership can help combat anxiety and resistance to technological change. Technology acceptance mechanisms indicate that acceptance is not only based on system characteristics but is also shaped by the social and relational contexts in which technology is implemented.

This view is consistent with the tenets of human-centred AI, which seeks to build and use AI systems that are sensitive to human values, needs, and ethical concerns (Shneiderman, 2020). Human-centred approaches focus on transparency, fairness, accountability and human oversight. In organisational settings, these principles must be translated into technology and supported by leadership practices that foster understanding, trust, and engagement.

2.6 Research Gap

The literature review above shows that the use of AI has been studied in great depth, from both technological and operational and efficiency perspectives. Some recent studies have started to explore the importance of leadership, communication, and trust in AI adoption, but these are not well connected.

There are three gaps of interest. First, while strategic communication is acknowledged as crucial in the change process, further conceptual focus is needed to explore how it can be used to influence employee trust in AI-driven decision-making. Second, while there are indications that emotional intelligence relates to other factors for effective leadership, trust, and employee reactions to change in organisations, the integration of emotional intelligence with the communication process in AI-enabled organisational contexts remains weak. Third, the current literature lacks strong conceptual integration of the elements of successful AI implementation, strategic communication, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and employee trust.

This research aims to fill these gaps by proposing the Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework, a conceptualisation of strategic communication and emotional intelligence as complementary leadership mechanisms that can help translate AI implementation into employees' understanding, trust, ethical leadership, and sustainable organisational outcomes.

The framework thus takes a different view of AI adoption than simply a technological or operational challenge and frames it as a leadership and human-communication challenge.

3. Conceptual Research Approach: Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework

This research uses a conceptual research method to synthesise literature from the interdisciplinary fields of artificial intelligence, strategic communication, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, organisational trust, and technology acceptance. The conceptual analysis aims to uncover theoretically relevant relationships between these constructs and to bring them together in a conceptual framework to understand the implementation of human-centred AI.

The proposed Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework is grounded in socio-technical systems theory, dialogic communication, emotional intelligence theory, ethical leadership theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model. These perspectives point to the fact that the organisational impact of AI will be shaped not only by technological capability, but also by how organisational changes enabled by AI are communicated, negotiated, and handled by organisational leaders.

The framework suggests that strategic communication and emotional intelligence are two leadership mechanisms that can complement each other in AI-driven organisations. While

strategic communication helps to share information, explain, engage in conversation and gain employee understanding, emotional intelligence helps leaders understand and deal with the emotional and relational impacts of technological change. These mechanisms support the development of ethical leadership and increase employee trust, which in turn enhances organisational resilience and performance.

3.1 Conceptual Foundation

Organisations' decisions are increasingly driven by AI-enabled systems, and leaders are tasked with explaining and interpreting them for others in the organisation. While AI can handle vast amounts of data and offer data-driven insights, it lacks the human relational understanding, emotional awareness, and ethical judgment necessary for effective implementation within an organisation.

Therefore, in a socio-technical sense, a technological system's capability would need to correspond to that of human and organisational systems (Trist, 1981). Leaders play a pivotal role in this alignment process as they determine the organisational meaning and action of technological change. Table 1 summarises the theoretical foundations underpinning the proposed framework.

The current model is based on this and considers strategic communication and emotional intelligence as complementary leadership skills. Leaders can share with their team what they have decided to do based on AI and the organisation's objectives and allow for discussion. Emotional intelligence helps leaders identify employee concerns, respond with empathy, and manage the emotional impact of technology. The framework shifts the conversation from a technological focus to a human-centred leadership focus.

Theory	Core idea	Role in the framework
Socio-Technical Systems Theory	Organisational effectiveness depends on alignment between technological and human systems	Establishes the human–technology foundation
Dialogic Communication Theory	Dialogue, transparency and responsiveness build mutual understanding	Supports Strategic Communication
Emotional Intelligence Theory	Emotional awareness and regulation shape interpersonal effectiveness	Supports Emotional Intelligence as a leadership capability
Ethical Leadership Theory	Fairness, accountability and integrity guide responsible leadership	Supports Ethical Leadership
Technology Acceptance Model	Perceived usefulness and ease of use influence technology acceptance	Explains employee acceptance of AI

Table 1: Theoretical Foundations of the Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework

3.2 Artificial Intelligence and Organisational Decision-Making

AI systems can also assist organisations in decision-making by analysing vast amounts of data, detecting patterns, and providing predictions (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). They can improve efficiency, eliminate routine tasks, and reduce the need for strategic planning.
However, issues regarding transparency, fairness, autonomy and trust are raised as part of the benefits of AI. Without transparency in how algorithmic decisions are made, they can be seen

as unreliable, unfair, and/or poorly accounted for (Pasquale, 2015; Martin, 2019). Such perceptions may contribute to uncertainty and resistance to technology change.

According to the Technology Acceptance Model, perceptions of a technology's usefulness and ease of use affect an individual's acceptance of it (Davis, 1989). In an organisational AI setting, however, such perceptions can also depend on employees' knowledge of how AI systems function and how they affect them. In this context, strategic communication is important in making technical processes meaningful to organisations.

The framework suggests that communication is needed to give transparency, context and meaning in the implementation of AI. This generates the first proposed relationship. This results in the first proposed relationship.

3.3 Strategic Communication as a Mediating Mechanism

Strategic communication serves as the organising process through which leaders explain, contextualise, and interpret AI-enabled change. Dialogic communication theory highlights openness, responsiveness, transparency, and mutual understanding as the bases of effective communication (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

In an AI environment, these points are important to keep in mind, as workers may be called on to act on decisions made by algorithms whose inner workings they are unlikely to comprehend. Clear communication can help to minimise uncertainty by clarifying the goals and impact of AI adoption, as well as by offering a platform for employees to ask questions and voice concerns.

Communication can thus affect trust by bolstering perceptions of transparency and organisational legitimacy (Men, 2014). Providing clear and timely explanations of how decisions are being made using AI will help employees feel like the organisation is making sense, is legitimate, and is trustworthy.

Thus, strategic communication is framed as a mediating process between AI implementation and employees' trust. Strategic communication is therefore conceptualised as a process between AI implementation and employee trust. It puts technology capacity into human understanding and organisational meaning.

Proposition 1 (P1): Strategic communication positively influences employee trust in AI systems.

3.4 Emotional Intelligence as a Moderating Leadership Capability

Strategic communication addresses the informational/cognitive aspects of technological change, while EQ addresses the emotional/relational aspects. The adoption of AI can create anxiety and uncertainty, and resistance to the technology and fear of job loss (Jarrahi, 2018). This means organisational communication can be effective in part because leaders can detect and adjust to these emotional responses.

Emotionally intelligent leaders possess self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy and interpersonal sensitivity (Mayer et al., 2004; Goleman, 1995). These skills help leaders tailor their communication to employees' emotions and ensure opportunities to express and resolve concerns positively.

Emotional intelligence has been linked to leadership effectiveness, organisational relationships, and employee outcomes (Côté, 2014). EI can thus amplify the impact of strategic communication in implementing AI by shaping how effectively leaders convey information, reassurance, dialogue, and trust.

Thus, emotional intelligence is conceptualised as an intervening construct in the relationship between strategic communication and employee trust in the framework of this study.

Proposition 2 (P2): Emotional intelligence positively moderates the relationship between strategic communication and employee trust in AI systems.

3.5 Ethical Leadership as an Outcome of Human-Centred AI Governance

The use of AI in decision-making also poses some questions about fairness, transparency, accountability, and human oversight. Ethical leadership is therefore important in ensuring AI use within the organisation aligns with values and stakeholder interests.

Ethical Leadership is characterised by integrity, fairness, accountability and stakeholder welfare concerns (Brown & Treviño, 2006). In an AI-powered business, these guidelines call on leaders to ensure that decisions involving the technology are still considered and monitored by humans in an ethical way.

Strategic communication promotes transparency and accountability in ethical leadership. Emotional intelligence also comes into play, as leaders must grasp how their decisions influenced by AI affect people and social structures and respond to them with empathy and moral sensitivity (George, 2000).

The framework also indicates that effective communication and emotional intelligence are two key factors which constitute ethical leadership in an AI-powered organisation.

Proposition 3 (P3): Effective communication and emotional intelligence positively impact ethical leadership in AI-driven organisations.

3.6 Employee Trust and Organisational Outcomes

One mechanism through which leadership determines organisational outcomes is trust. According to Mayer et al. (1995), organisational trust is the trust that employees have in the intentions and processes of their organisation. Trust is especially important in an AI environment, where workers may have to depend on technological systems whose processes and results, they cannot fully assess.

In social exchange theory, trust-building revolves around relationships built on reciprocity, fairness, transparency, and respect (Blau, 1964). Leaders who are transparent and take the time to address employee concerns with emotional sensitivity can foster trust in organisational leadership and in AI-enabled systems. Transparency and responsiveness to employee concerns, with a touch of emotional sensitivity from leaders, can help build trust in both organisational leadership and AI-powered systems.

Trust can then help to build employees' engagement, organisational commitment, cooperation and adaptability. In an environment of rapid technological change, these outcomes help build organisational resilience and performance. The framework thus places employee trust as a focal point downstream of human-centred leadership practices and upstream of organisational outcomes.

Proposition 4 (P4): Employee trust positively influences organisational resilience and performance in AI-enabled environments.

3.7 Integrated Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework

The arguments from above are incorporated in the Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework outlined in Figure 1. The framework suggests that implementing AI creates technological and organisational conditions that call for human-centred leadership responses. Strategic communication is about transparency, dialogue and contextual understanding, and emotional intelligence is about empathy, emotional awareness and relational responsiveness. Strategic communication is conceptualised as a mediation mechanism between AI implementation and employee trust, and emotional intelligence as a moderation mechanism

of leadership capability, thereby strengthening the effectiveness of strategic communication. The framework also suggests that these capabilities positively affect ethical leadership and employee trust. Trust in turn leads to organisational resilience and performance. The model thus combines technical, communicative, emotional, ethical, and organisational aspects into an overall conceptual framework for implementing human-centred AI.

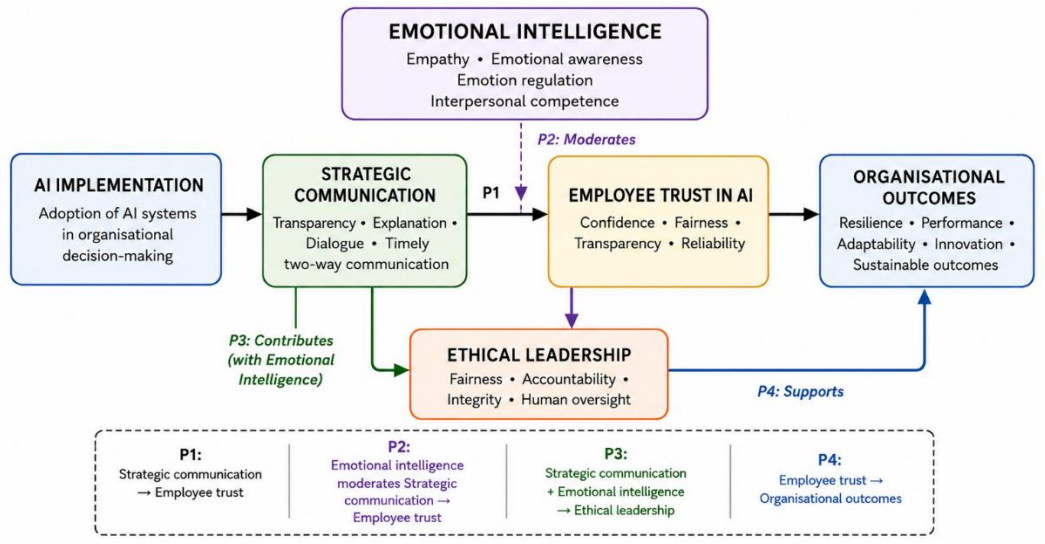

Figure 1: Human–Centric AI Communication EQ Framework

P1: Strategic communication → Employee trust
P2: Emotional intelligence moderates Strategic communication → Employee trust
P3: Strategic communication + Emotional intelligence → Ethical leadership
P4: Employee trust → Organisational outcomes

4. Discussion

4.1 Humanising Artificial Intelligence through Strategic Communication

The key argument of this study is that human centricity in AI is not possible with technology design alone. Organisational acceptance will also depend on employees' comprehension, interpretation, and lived experience of the changes AI brings. Strategic communication is therefore important because it translates technological systems into meaning for each organisation.

The use of AI in decision-making can seem opaque or impersonal, especially when employees lack knowledge of the algorithms driving those decisions (Pasquale, 2015). This opacity can lead to doubt and dampen trust, fairness, and a sense of security (Martin, 2019). These can be dampened through strategic communication, which offers explanation, context, transparency and opportunities for dialogue.

This is confirmed by recent studies. Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott (2024) highlight the interpersonal trust challenges that arise in the workplace with the use of AI in communication and stress the leader's role in stewarding the use of AI in organisational communication. Their work confirms that it takes more than technology—it takes leadership—to embrace AI in the organisational communication process.

From a dialogic communication perspective, communication is not only the transfer of information. It is a relational process in which organisational actors come to share

understanding (Kent & Taylor, 2002). This is significant in an AI-driven environment. While employees do not necessarily need full technical knowledge of an algorithm, they do need enough knowledge of its purpose, implications, limitations, and its role in organisational decision-making.

The framework thus goes beyond the traditional view of AI adoption as a communication tool, suggesting it is a mechanism for building meaning and trust. Strategic communication can help improve understanding of technology and make it more palatable to employees, enhancing their sense of acceptance and legitimacy.

This is confirmed by the Technology Acceptance Model. While perceived usefulness and ease of use remain significant factors in technology acceptance (Davis, 1989), organisational AI adoption occurs in a social context. Communication can shape employees' perceptions of the usefulness, legitimacy, and impact of AI systems. Effective strategic communication links technological capacity with the human processes involved in technology acceptance.

4.2 Emotional Intelligence as a Critical Leadership Capability in AI-Enabled Organisations

While strategic communication explores the cognitive and informational aspects of AI implementation, emotional intelligence explores the emotional and relational aspects.

Technological change can cause anxiety, uncertainty, and resistance, and raise concerns about job security (Jarrahi, 2018). These reactions can't be resolved with information alone. It is normal for employees to feel fear, distrust, or a loss of control about the introduction of AI, even if they understand the reasons behind it.

Through emotional intelligence, leaders can identify such reactions and respond empathetically, emotionally and interpersonally (Mayer et al., 2004; Goleman, 1995). In this way, EI is not a substitute for strategic communication but makes it effective. The organisational message can have different effects when the employees feel that the leader is attentive, understanding, and responsive to their concerns.

This justifies including EI as a moderating capacity in the proposed framework. Emotionally intelligent leadership can reinforce the link between communication and trust by adapting communication to employees' emotional and relational needs.

This point also applies to the broader role of EI in leadership research. Emotional intelligence is not just a leadership skill; it becomes especially relevant when new technologies are rolled out, changing the nature of jobs, working autonomy, and employees' security.

4.3 Ethical Leadership and Responsible AI Governance

Data privacy and security are also big concerns with the human-centred application of AI. Algorithmic decision-making can raise issues of fairness, accountability, transparency, and lack of human oversight, especially when it is hard for employees to challenge or understand algorithmic decisions (Martin 2019).

In this regard, ethical leadership is an important governance mechanism. Beyond facilitating the efficient and effective functioning of AI systems, ethical leaders must also ensure that AI implementation aligns with stakeholders' values and interests (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

The framework suggests a complementary role of strategic communication and emotional intelligence in this process. Communication fosters transparency and accountability by making decision-making processes more open to scrutiny. EI helps leaders to understand the impact of technology choices on people and respond sensitively and compassionately to employees' concerns.

This has serious consequences: Human-centred AI governance is not solely a technical or

compliance challenge; it is a leadership challenge as well. Human oversight is especially needed when AI decisions affect employees' opportunities, assessments, working conditions, or autonomy.
The framework builds on ethical approaches to AI by adding leadership communication and emotional intelligence components that help introduce ethical principles into organisations.

4.4 Trust as the Central Relational Outcome

Within the proposed framework, the trust relationship is the focal relationship. Trust in AI leaders, the organisational processes involved in using AI, and the AI systems themselves all play a part in the extent to which employees are willing to engage with the systems.
Mayer et al. (1995) define trust as a willingness to be vulnerable because of positive expectations about another party's intentions and actions. The use of AI in environments also adds a layer of vulnerability, since workers may have to depend on the system's processes, which they may not be able to monitor and assess 100% through AI.
This conceptualisation has been confirmed by recent empirical studies. They reported that trustworthy leadership fostered initial trust in AI among employees and their willingness to use AI, and that explanations of AI benefits and risks also influenced the trust formation process (Xu et al., 2024). The results are especially significant for the current framework because they show that leadership- and communication-related factors affect trust in AI more than technological characteristics.
This vulnerability may be reduced through strategic communication that builds transparency and reduces uncertainty. Emotional intelligence can be used to develop trust as it communicates empathy, responsiveness and caring for others' well-being. These mechanisms could help shape employees' attitudes to be more positive towards technological change.
The framework thus positions trust as lying between leadership practices and organisational outcomes, rather than as merely an outcome of communication. Trust is a relational bridge between human-centred leadership and employee acceptance, engagement, resilience and organisation performance.

5. Managerial Implications

Organisation leaders, HR experts, and those involved in AI implementation should pay close attention to the Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework. The framework proposes that organisations integrate technological skills, strategic communication, emotional intelligence, ethical governance, and trust-building practices to implement AI successfully. Thus, AI implementation should be seen not as a technical issue but as a socio-organisational change.

5.1 Build Communication-Centred AI Leadership

Organisations need to ensure that strategic communication is embedded as a leadership function in their AI world. AI systems may include intricate algorithms and decision-making processes that employees might not be able to grasp. A lack of knowledge can create uncertainty, erode trust, and lead to resistance to change when using new technologies.
Thus, leaders need to clearly and regularly communicate the rationale, scope, and implications of using AI. Beyond informing employees of technological shifts, leaders should communicate how decisions are made with AI, the importance of human judgment, and the potential impact those decisions will have on employees.

Recent research supports the importance of leadership in this process. According to Xu et al.

(2024), trustworthy leadership correlated with increased employee trust in AI and increased intention to adopt AI systems, and explanations of AI benefits and risks also affected trust formation. Leaders need to therefore see explanation and trust-building as a part of the process of implementing AI, not as a communication task done after technology has been decided.
Importantly, communication should not be one-way but rather two-way. Leaders must provide opportunities for staff to ask questions, give feedback and raise concerns. These conversations may help build trust and legitimacy (between the two parties and the organisation) (Kent & Taylor, 2002; Men, 2014).

5.2 Develop Emotional Intelligence for AI-Enabled Leadership
The introduction of AI can lead to anxiety, uncertainty, resistance, and fears of job displacement (Jarrahi, 2018). To be able to acknowledge and respond to these emotions rather than assume resistance is simply about resistance to implementation, leaders must be emotionally competent.

In fact, these are the aspects of emotional intelligence that should be included in leadership development, particularly for children: self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, active listening, and interpersonal sensitivity (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2004). The goal goes beyond simply developing more empathetic leaders. Instead, emotionally intelligent leadership should provide organisations with insight into how employees feel about technological change and the leadership responses needed to address it.
This is especially relevant because the effectiveness of strategic communication can depend on how it is delivered and received. Psychological safety, trust, and employee adaptation come more easily when leaders communicate clearly and show emotional awareness.

5.3 Establish Ethical Governance and Human Oversight
The adoption of AI raises concerns about fairness, transparency, accountability, and decision-making power. Organisations should therefore have governance mechanisms in place to ensure that decisions made with AI are appropriately supervised by humans.
Ethical AI governance should include:

- clearly defined accountability for AI-enabled decisions;
- mechanisms for reviewing potentially biased or unfair outcomes;
- transparency regarding the use and limitations of AI systems;
- opportunities for employees to seek clarification or challenge decisions where appropriate; and
- clear ethical guidelines governing AI implementation.

An AI governance framework with a multidisciplinary team, comprising technical, management, human resources, legal, and ethics stakeholders, can offer a wider lens on AI-related decisions.
Strategic communication helps with this governance process, as it facilitates the communication of decisions, and emotional intelligence helps leaders to understand and respond to the human impact of technological decisions. Ethical governance, therefore, ought to be viewed as a continuous leadership duty, and not a 'tick the box' activity.

5.4 Make Trust a Deliberate AI-Implementation Objective
Trust needs to be viewed as an explicit outcome of implementing AI in the organisation, not a given because of successful technology adoption. Workers must be confident in the

technology, as well as the people and processes that use it. Leaders must therefore communicate consistently about how AI systems are utilised, the decisions they shape, the limitations of the AI systems, and where human judgement is still required.

The findings by Xu et al. (2024) further validate the significance of trustworthy leadership and employee-focused approaches in fostering trust at the initial stage of AI integration. Likewise, Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott (2024) provide insights on the implications of AI on trust in workplace communication and the role of leaders in positioning the use of AI in organisational communication.

In addition to consistency between organisational communication and organisational action, trust-building is needed. Transparency by leaders and lack of explanation or accountability from algorithms by employees is likely to cause a loss of trust. Organisations therefore need to track employees' perceptions of transparency, fairness, voice, accountability, and trust in the use of AI for decision-making. These signs can warn of resistance and disengagement and enable leaders to act before issues take root.

5.5 Integrate Human-Centred AI into Organisational Strategy

Human-centred AI should be incorporated into organisational strategy rather than treated as an additional consideration after technological decisions have already been made. AI implementation strategies should address four interconnected dimensions:

Technological capability: What can the AI system do?

Human impact: How will employees experience and respond to it?

Ethical governance: How will fairness, accountability, transparency, and human oversight be ensured?

Leadership capability: Do leaders possess the communication and emotional competencies required to guide the transition?

This aligns with human-centred AI principles, which focus on human values, transparency, fairness, and responsible design and implementation of the technology (Shneiderman, 2020).

The message is clear: AI transformation must be built on both technology performance and human acceptance. Organisations that are open to these dimensions are better positioned to navigate technological change and maintain organisational legitimacy.

5.6 Rethink Leadership Development for the AI Era

The vision of leadership skills has to be expanded to support an AI-led organisation. Explain the concepts of strategic decision making and operational effectiveness and the traditional emphasis upon technical competence. These capacities are vital and must be complemented by communication skills, emotional intelligence, ethical judgment, and technological literacy in AI contexts.

Leadership development programmes should therefore prepare managers to:

- Have a basic knowledge of AI and its known limitations to communicate.
- Explain technological change in an understandable and clear way.
- Identify employee feelings and deal with uncertainty and resistance positively.
- Make decisions on ethical grounds when AI impacts employees and stakeholders.
- Develop and maintain trust when technology disrupts.
- Ensure technological efficiency while considering human and organisational requirements.

This leadership competency can support employee engagement, flexibility, organisational resilience, and sustainable digital transformation.

6. Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

Organisations are undergoing a transformation due to Artificial Intelligence that is affecting the way they make decisions, lead and communicate. Yet the power of AI-driven transformation is dependent on more than technology. Of course, human, relational and ethical considerations of technological change are relevant and must be taken into account by organisations.

This conceptual study aimed to introduce the Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework to represent strategic communication and emotional intelligence in an AI-centric implementation. The framework is based on socio-technical systems theory, dialogic communication theory, emotional intelligence theory, ethical leadership theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model, and integrates technological, communicative, emotional, and ethical aspects into a single conceptual model.

In the big picture, strategic communication is envisioned as a bridge that helps turn AI implementation into understanding, transparency, and trust among employees. Emotional intelligence is seen as a moderating leadership capability that can enhance communication effectiveness by helping leaders understand and respond to employees' emotional and relational reactions to technological change. These capabilities work together to create ethical leadership and employee trust that can aid organisational resilience and performance.

The study's valuable contribution to the emergent body of literature on human-centred AI is to move beyond the focus on the technological properties of AI to the leadership processes in which AI is understood, experienced, and governed. It also brings together previously separate lines of research related to strategic communication, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, trust and technology acceptance. By doing so, the framework offers a foundation for understanding AI adoption in technological, human, and organisational terms.

The study is conceptual and therefore does not provide empirical support for the proposed relationships. Future research should test the framework empirically using quantitative and qualitative methods. The proposed relationships between AI implementation, strategic communication, EI, ethical leadership, employee trust, and organisational outcomes could be explored in survey-based studies and using structural equation modelling. Qualitative research may also help uncover employee experiences related to AI-enabled decision-making and the impact of leadership communication on that experience.

Future research could also consider potential differences in the proposed relationships across industries and organisational and cultural contexts. The sectors may vary in their implications for AI use, ranging from healthcare, financial services, education, manufacturing, and professional services. Further cross-cultural research is needed to explore the potential impact of cultural norms and values on employee reactions to AI, particularly regarding expectations of leadership, communication, authority, and trust.

The framework can be further expanded as generative AI, conversational agents, and more independent decision-making systems advance. These technologies could exacerbate current questions around transparency, accountability, employee voice, and human oversight.

It's not only the technology that's key to the future of AI in organisations. More than that, it's about how organisations lead people through technological changes. Human-centred AI needs leaders who can communicate transparently, have emotional intelligence, make ethical decisions, and earn trust. The Human-Centric AI Communication–EQ Framework offers a conceptual structure for further study and application in the emerging field of AI communication and EQ.

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