



From Shakespeare to ChatGPT: The Evolution of Language, Empathy, and Leadership Communication in Digital Workplaces

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ABSTRACT

In the present article, the evolution of leadership language and empathy has been discussed since the classical and early modern rhetorical traditions to digitally mediated and AI assisted communication at the work place. It is a synthesized summary of evidence of empathic digital leadership, the usefulness of tone and clarity in text-based communication, limitations of mediated interaction, the development of AI support messaging and implications of global English and hybrid human AI authorship using a narrative integrative review of the recent empirical and conceptual research. The analysis indicates that the role of empathy at the middle of trust, psychological safety and engagement has to be now coded consciously in ongoing written and platform-based communication. Generative AI is able to improve clarity and consistency but cannot overtake moral ownership, and can become a normalization of synthetic empathy without critical use. The article suggests a human AI empathic leadership communication model, which finds AI as a contingent complement of, but not the replacement of, responsible leadership voice. It ends by providing practical suggestions that can be made to leaders and organizations and identifies the priorities on empirical study about AI mediated leadership communication

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Introduction

Context and rationale

Digital workplaces built on hybrid and remote teams; collaboration platforms and AI tools have altered how leaders are encountered. Employees now experience authority and care mainly through emails, chats and online statements that can be stored and circulated. Language and empathy therefore become core instruments for shaping trust, inclusion and psychological safety. Much work on digital transformation and e leadership focuses on technology and structures, with limited attention to how mediated messages construct or damage legitimacy (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge, 2000).

From Shakespeare to Slack and ChatGPT

The move from Shakespearean rhetoric to AI assisted messaging signals a shift in leadership voice. Early modern speeches and drama used narrative and moral appeal to align followers. Contemporary platforms invite brevity and informality while

generating permanent records that magnify the impact of careless or insincere language. Generative AI now produces fluent, audience tuned text, and studies suggest these tools may support clarity yet also normalize generic, strategically empathetic messages that imitate care (Liu, 2024; Xiao, 2025).

Problem statement

The problem is whether AI assisted, platform mediated leadership communication can sustain authentic empathy and credibility or instead produces polished performance that weakens trust. Research on emotional intelligence and empathetic leadership links genuine empathy with positive employee outcomes (Goleman, 1998; Ma et al., 2024), but offers little guidance when algorithms help craft the leader's message. Existing work across e leadership, AI ethics and organizational discourse rarely connects historical rhetoric, empathy theory and AI assisted language in digital workplaces, leaving a gap.

Aim and objectives

Aim: To examine how leadership language and empathy evolve from classical and early modern rhetoric to AI mediated communication in digital workplaces and what this implies for authentic and effective leadership practice.

Objectives: To map key shifts in leadership discourse, synthesize ten to twelve empirical studies on empathy in digital and AI mediated communication, evaluate the adequacy of existing leadership and communication theories, and propose guidelines for leaders using tools such as ChatGPT without compromising integrity or psychological safety.

Research questions

RQ1: How has leadership language evolved from earlier rhetorical traditions to AI mediated communication in digital workplaces?

RQ2: How is empathy expressed or diluted in digital and AI mediated leadership communication?

RQ3: How far do existing leadership and communication theories account for AI assisted leadership discourse?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Historical evolution of leadership language

Leadership language has always been a technology of power, but the mediums through which it travels have progressively reconfigured its tone, hierarchy and capacity for empathy. Early modern rhetorical traditions, often symbolized by Shakespearean drama and state oratory, fused narrative, moral reasoning and emotional appeal to legitimize authority and create shared meaning. Leadership voice was expected to be situated, accountable and aesthetically rich. Twentieth century corporate communication increasingly replaced this with bureaucratic prose that favored standardization, legal defensibility and distance, reinforcing hierarchy while muting moral texture. With email, intranet and internal messaging, organizations pursued efficiency and scalability through templates and formulaic phrases, further compressing nuance. Contemporary scholarship shows that digital channels do more than transmit messages; they shape expectations of immediacy, informality and availability, while weakening contextual cues that traditionally signaled sincerity and care (Verčič, 2025). More recent conceptual work on artificial intelligence mediated communication argues that once intelligent systems start generating or

editing leadership messages, language can no longer be treated as exclusively human authored, and existing communication theories must be revisited accordingly (Hancock, 2020). This trajectory underpins the need to read leadership discourse historically and critically rather than treating AI assisted messaging as merely another tool choice.

Empathy in leadership

Recent systematic reviews converge on empathy as a core mechanism through which leaders influence trust, psychological safety and performance. Muss (2025) synthesizes empirical studies and shows that cognitive and affective empathy are consistently associated with stronger commitment, reduced withdrawal behaviors and higher perceived fairness. Ma et al. (2024) demonstrate that empathetic leadership predicts innovative behavior via enhanced career adaptability and reduced uncertainty, reinforcing the view that empathy is not sentimental excess but a strategic resource. Parallel work on emotional intelligence in digital contexts emphasizes that effective digital leaders must read affect through text, manage tone and explicitly signal care to counteract the thinness of mediated channels (Ertiö, 2024; Digital Leadership Competence model, 2025). However, much of this literature assumes messages are personally crafted and verbally embodied. It rarely considers what happens when empathetic cues are drafted, suggested or softened by generative systems. Consequently, there is a conceptual slippage between genuine relational empathy and instrumentally optimized empathy scripts that has not been adequately interrogated.

Digital workplaces and mediated communication

Studies of the contemporary digital workplace underline a structural ambivalence. On one hand, flexible platforms enable frequent contact, inclusive participation and written traces of values and commitments. On the other, they intensify information overload, fragmentation and misinterpretation. Verčič (2025) documents an internal communication paradox: employees value the convenience of digital channels but report higher satisfaction and trust when meaningful interactions retain some direct, dialogic quality. Research on leader digital competence similarly finds that technical proficiency alone is insufficient, and that credible digital leadership depends on clarity, responsiveness and socioemotional sensitivity in mediated exchanges (op't Roodt, 2025). Work on psychological safety in digitally enabled project teams shows that leaders who explicitly acknowledge emotions, invite dissent and personalize messages can offset some relational losses of remote work, while purely transactional communication deepens distance (Leading Psychologically Safe Digitally Enabled Project Teams, 2025). Yet these studies tend to describe behaviors at a high level and pay less attention to the micro linguistics of empathy in text, leaving open how specific lexical, narrative and tonal choices create or erode a sense of human presence in digital leadership.

AI mediated communication and ChatGPT

The emergence of generative systems such as ChatGPT introduces a qualitatively different layer to mediated leadership communication. Hancock (2020) defines artificial intelligence mediated communication as interaction in which an intelligent agent modifies or generates messages on behalf of users, and argues that these challenges assumptions embedded in traditional computer mediated communication theories. Subsequent empirical work confirms both promise and risk. Liu (2024) reports that AI-generated texts are not only fluent but also efficient, yet its users are not sure who talks wanted to talk, and no one is responsible to determine whether one cares as much as he says he cares. Florea (2025) discovers that with

artificial intelligence-aided communication, it would be possible to enhance consistency, and the clarity of leadership communication is enhanced. Nevertheless, blind dependence is prone to formulaic language. It also lowers perceived authenticity in case employees feel they are being involved in automation. HRM literature shows that ChatGPT is applied more in such recruitment, feedback and policy communicative activities. But there are ethical issues with the technology in terms of transparency, bias, and depersonalization (Budhwar, 2023; Li, 2025). Sahebi (2025) goes further, arguing that artificial intelligence mediated communication can erode epistemic trust if audiences cannot reliably infer whether messages reflect genuine human judgement. Collectively, these studies treat AI as more than a neutral channel; they position it as a co author with its own affordances and constraints. Yet they seldom connect this insight to the specific problem of empathetic leadership language, leaving a blind spot where synthetic empathy is normalized but under theorized.

Theoretical framework

This study draws on four interlinked theoretical lenses to interrogate the evolving relationship between language, empathy and leadership communication. Media Richness Theory and Media Synchronicity Theory help explain why leaders traditionally select richer channels for ambiguous and emotionally sensitive content, but recent evidence suggests that employees increasingly experience empathy through leaner media when language is deliberate and dialogic (Rizi, 2024; Verčič, 2025). Social presence theory and contemporary refinements show that perceptions of warmth and interpersonal connection can be fostered even in text-based environments when messages convey attentiveness, personalization and responsiveness (Kreijns, 2021; Cummings, 2023; Oviedo and Fox Tree, 2024). Relational and authentic leadership theories foreground transparency, consistency and moral ownership of voice, raising critical questions about whether leaders can delegate message construction to AI and still claim authenticity. Social constructionist and discourse perspectives position leadership as enacted through language practices; from this standpoint, AI generated or AI edited texts are not peripheral aids but part of the discursive production of leadership itself. Integrating these frameworks supports a more critical reading of AI assisted empathy: it may enhance surface indicators of presence while undermining the relational and ethical foundations that the theories assume.

Consolidated research gap

Across these strands, three gaps become evident. First, work on digital leadership and internal communication recognizes the importance of empathy and socioemotional competence but treats AI primarily as infrastructure rather than an active coauthor of leadership language. Second, research on empathy in leadership remains largely focused on human-to-human interaction and does not systematically interrogate AI generated or AI scaffolded expressions of care as a distinct phenomenon. Third, studies on artificial intelligence mediated communication and ChatGPT rarely engage with historical or rhetorical traditions and do not test their implications against relational or authentic leadership frameworks. Consequently, the field lacks integrative secondary analyzes that trace the evolution from classical rhetoric to AI generated discourse, examine how empathy is linguistically constructed in AI supported leadership messaging, and assess whether prevailing theories can accommodate this shift without normative contradiction. Addressing this gap is essential to distinguish between genuinely human centered communication in digital workplaces and the emergence of sophisticated but potentially hollow empathy scripts.

Methodology

Research design

This study adopts a qualitative secondary research design in the form of a narrative integrative review. The approach is chosen to synthesize conceptually and empirically diverse work on leadership communication, empathy, digital and e leadership, and AI mediated organizational communication into a coherent analytical framework. An integrative review is appropriate where the aim is not only to summarize existing findings but to generate new perspectives by juxtaposing theories, contexts and methods (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005; Torraco, 2005). It allows the inclusion of empirical and conceptual contributions and is therefore suited to examining how historical rhetoric, contemporary leadership theories and emerging AI practices intersect. To maintain rigor, the review follows recent guidance that treats literature review as a systematic research methodology with explicit design, selection and synthesis procedures rather than as a descriptive background exercise (Snyder, 2019).

Data sources and search strategy

Scopus is used as the primary database because of its strong coverage of management, communication and information systems journals, supplemented by Web of Science and Google Scholar to minimize omission of relevant interdisciplinary work. Searches target peer reviewed journal articles and high-quality conference papers that address leadership communication, empathy in leadership, digital and e leadership practices, and AI or chatbot based communication in organizational settings. Illustrative search strings combine controlled and free text terms such as e leadership and digital communication, empathy and leadership communication, and ChatGPT or AI mediated communication with workplace or organizational. The main timeframe is 2010 to 2025, selected to capture the rise of social media, remote work and AI assisted tools while allowing for the inclusion of foundational theoretical pieces where still conceptually influential. Reference list screening and forward citation tracking are used iteratively to refine coverage and identify frequently cited contributions.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria require that studies are published in English, appear in peer reviewed outlets, and focus on leadership or manager employee communication within organizational contexts that involve digital or technology mediated interaction. Both quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods studies are considered, alongside robust conceptual or theoretical papers that engage directly with communication, empathy or AI in leadership. Exclusion criteria remove purely technical AI or machine learning work without substantive consideration of communication or leadership implications, non-organizational or clinical studies of empathy that do not address leadership relationships, and opinion pieces lacking empirical or analytical grounding. These boundaries are intended to balance breadth with conceptual relevance and to ensure that the synthesis speaks directly to communication practice in digital workplaces.

Data extraction and synthesis

For each included source, key information is extracted on study context, sample or focus, methodological approach, communication channels examined, treatment of empathy or socioemotional content, and any discussion of AI or automated language tools. Attention is paid to how leadership language is operationalized, how employees interpret mediated messages,

and how authenticity or trust are discussed. The synthesis uses thematic analysis, guided by integrative review principles, to cluster findings into conceptual categories such as empathic digital leadership behaviors, constraints and affordances of mediated channels, uses of AI in leadership messaging, and employee perceptions of authenticity. Rather than aggregating effect sizes, the analysis is interpretive and comparative, seeking patterns, tensions and contradictions across studies to inform the subsequent findings and theoretical discussion (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005; Kutcher et al., 2022). This enables the identification of approximately ten to twelve focal primary studies that anchor the themes used later in the article.

Limitations

The methodology has several limitations. Limiting reviews to only English peer-reviewed publications may ignore the perspectives of non-Anglophone contexts where digital leadership and AI adoption are different. As generative AI moves forward rapidly, any synthesis will be temporally lagged as new tools and practices emerge between search and publication. This study has not generated any primary empirical data. Its contributions, therefore, are conceptual and interpretative and depend on the quality and comprehensiveness of work already done. In framing the conclusions and mentioning directions for further empirical work, these constraints are acknowledged.

Findings

Drawing on twelve recent primary empirical studies, six themes explain how language, empathy and technology interact in digital leadership communication. The evidence supports the value of empathic and clear communication, but also exposes methodological constraints and unresolved tensions around AI assisted discourse.

Empathic digital leadership and employee outcomes

Ngubane and Mbokota (2025) show that leaders in hybrid teams who invite input, acknowledge vulnerability and follow through on commitments foster psychological safety and openness even when most interaction is mediated, highlighting behavioral and linguistic consistency as central to trust. Jin and Ikeda (2023) find that servant leaders' empathic communication reduces workplace loneliness by triggering empathic communication among colleagues, demonstrating that relational care is transmitted through specific supportive cues rather than abstract values. Myers (2025) reports that hybrid team members experience psychological safety when managers provide explicit reassurance, personalized recognition and timely responses through digital channels, rather than relying on generic updates or tool availability. Taken together, these studies indicate that empathic leadership behaviors, when rendered visible in mediated communication, are associated with trust, belonging and willingness to speak up. However, samples are context specific, often small or sector bound, and with the exception of Jin and Ikeda there is limited systematic linguistic analysis, which weakens guidance on which concrete textual practices most effectively convey empathy.

Language tone, clarity and psychological safety

Research on internal communication in digital contexts further confirms that language tone and clarity shape perceptions of safety and integrity. Lee (2023) shows that transparent and authentic chief executive communication, including clear explanations and acknowledgment of employee concerns, predicts higher employee trust and identification, suggesting that carefully framed messages can compensate for physical distance. Scogin (2025) finds that employees interpret consistent,

honest and dialogic internal messages as evidence that leadership behavior aligns with espoused values, reinforcing organizational culture and engagement. These studies collectively position leadership language as a visible test of credibility. Yet they rely heavily on self-reported perceptions of authenticity and trust rather than examining message content at scale, and are largely conducted in single country corporate settings, which limits generalizability and leaves the micro level mechanics of inclusive, psychologically safe digital language under specified.

Constraints of digital media on empathy

Evidence also challenges the assumption that more digital contact naturally promotes empathy. Newson et al. (2021) show that higher levels of computer mediated contact during crisis periods correlate with lower wellbeing among more empathic individuals, implying that continuous low quality interaction can produce emotional fatigue rather than connection. Myers (2025) finds that hybrid workers frequently interpret silence, minimal responses or delayed replies in digital channels as interpersonal rejection, revealing how the absence of non verbal cues destabilizes trust. These studies suggest that digital environments create structural risks of misinterpretation, distance and perceived indifference, which leaders must counter through explicit affirmation, context and empathy laden wording. Methodological constraints remain: designs are mostly cross sectional, rely on self selected samples and do not always isolate leadership messages, but the converging pattern supports a critical claim that mediated empathy requires intentional linguistic work rather than technical optimism.

AI supported leadership communication

Primary studies on generative AI in organizational settings reveal ambivalent responses that are directly relevant to leadership communication. Lu (2024) shows that employees in online travel agencies view ChatGPT related tools as both efficiency enhancing and a source of job insecurity and procedural unfairness, capturing a double perception of benefit and threat. Lee et al. (2024) find that non expert users perceive ChatGPT as convenient and informative but express concern about opaque authorship, misinformation and the erosion of human responsibility. Zhang (2025) reports that strong dependence on ChatGPT for work tasks in a public service context is associated with reduced individual effort, raising concerns about over reliance on AI generated content. Hai (2025) demonstrates that intensive collaboration with generative AI can increase work alienation and expedient behavior, suggesting that AI supported communication may unintentionally weaken ethical climates if not carefully governed. Across these studies, AI assisted communication is filtered through questions of transparency, control and accountability. Most rely on surveys or scenario based designs, focus on specific sectors and do not isolate leadership messages from general usage, but together they highlight that employees are alert to signs of synthetic or unowned language and may react skeptically where empathy appears machine scripted.

Global English, inclusivity and power

Findings also indicate that the linguistic choices of leaders in digital spaces intersect with power, culture and inclusion. Ngubane and Mbokota (2025) show that in South African hybrid teams leaders who adapt communication styles to varied linguistic backgrounds, avoid dense corporate jargon and create interactive spaces are more successful at building psychological safety than those who rely on standardized global English. Newson et al. (2021) demonstrate cross national variation in how digital contact relates to wellbeing, implying that expectations of responsiveness and emotional expression are culturally patterned. Together these studies suggest that apparently neutral English language digital communication can

reproduce exclusion if it fails to reflect diverse interpretive frames. The evidence base is still thin, often limited to single country samples or broad wellbeing measures, with little fine grained comparative work on how specific lexical and narrative choices foster or undermine inclusion in multilingual digital teams.

Hybrid identities: human voice and algorithmic assistance

Recent studies point toward hybrid communicative identities in which human leaders and AI systems co produce messages. Yan (2025) finds that employees' awareness of generative AI and perceptions of responsible organizational behavior shape whether they approach AI as a helpful resource for job crafting or avoid it out of ethical concern, implying that organizational framing and openness are pivotal. Valtonen et al. (2025) show that AI adoption influences wellbeing indirectly via workload, autonomy and perceived organizational support, reinforcing the idea that the human governance of AI, including how leaders talk about it, matters more than the tool in isolation. Zhang (2025) and Hai (2025) together indicate that unreflective AI dependence can weaken personal accountability and identification, whereas transparent and bounded use sustains engagement. Across these studies participants consistently favor scenarios where AI is acknowledged as a support and leaders clearly own the final message. Although most designs are correlational, short term and focused on early adopters, and rarely analyze authentic AI assisted leadership texts, the converging evidence underlines a central argument for this article: in AI rich workplaces, empathetic leadership depends less on technical sophistication than on whether leaders visibly claim responsibility for the language that represents them

Analysis

Revisiting rhetoric from Shakespearean persuasion to AI scripts

The findings indicate that effective digital leadership still depends on rhetorical resources long associated with classical and early modern traditions, even though the medium and authorship have changed. Empathic communication that reduces loneliness or builds psychological safety, as seen in servant and empathic leadership studies, relies on credible ethos, emotionally resonant pathos and coherent logos expressed in everyday messages rather than grand speeches (Jin and Ikeda, 2023; Ngubane and Mbokota, 2025). In this sense, leaders who frame decisions transparently, acknowledge uncertainty and speak to shared values reproduce the narrative and moral functions once associated with Shakespearean and political oratory.

AI assisted tools complicate this lineage. Generative systems can replicate stylistic markers of ethos and pathos, for example personalized greetings, appreciative phrasing or carefully structured explanations, and can do so at speed and scale. However, the primary studies on ChatGPT use and AI supported work suggest that employees are alert to questions of authorship and sincerity and become skeptical when language feels generic or detached from observed behavior (Lu et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024; Zhang, 2025). These reactions expose a fault line: AI can simulate rhetorical technique but cannot supply lived moral authority. Where leaders outsource too much of their communicative voice, the classical alignment between speaker, speech and character is weakened, and rhetorical sophistication risks reading as performance rather than conviction.

Empathy and leadership theories in digital and AI intensive contexts

The empirical themes broadly affirm the relevance of transformational, servant and authentic leadership theories. Empathy, individual attention and ethical concern continue to predict trust, engagement and innovation in mediated workplaces (Jin

and Ikeda, 2023; Ngubane and Mbokota, 2025). The difference is that these qualities must now be enacted through continuous micro messages in email, chat and platforms rather than primarily through face to face presence. This shifts the practical center of the theories from abstract relational orientation to the granular craft of language.

Tension arises most sharply for authentic leadership. When leaders employ AI to draft or refine messages, authenticity depends on whether AI is a visible assistant to an already coherent moral stance or an invisible substitute for it. The findings on perceived risks of AI dependence and alienation imply that empathy which is only linguistically correct but not grounded in recognizable human ownership is experienced as strategic display rather than authentic concern (Hai, 2025; Zhang, 2025). The theories therefore still hold but require explicit recognition that in digital contexts authenticity is judged through textual consistency over time and transparency about tools used in producing that text.

Media richness, computer mediated communication and social presence

Traditional media richness theory would predict that lean text based channels are ill suited to emotionally complex and equivocal issues, yet the reviewed studies show that many critical leadership interactions now occur precisely in these channels. Psychological safety and trust are sustained not by default richness of the medium but by the deliberate enrichment of lean media through clarity, responsiveness and explicit empathic cues (Lee, 2023; Scogin, 2025). Social presence theory is partially revised in practice: warmth and presence can be projected in text when leaders acknowledge feelings, personalize references, explain reasoning and invite dialogue.

AI support can assist this enrichment by suggesting clearer or more considerate wording. However, the findings also imply that uncritical use of AI risks converging toward uniform scripts that erode the distinctiveness that signals real presence. In other words, media richness and social presence theories remain useful, but the findings reposition language design as the primary route for creating perceived richness in dominant text-based environments, with AI functioning as a tool that must be governed rather than a guarantee of empathic presence.

Digital trust, transparency and algorithmic mediation

Across the empirical themes, trust emerges as contingent on three interlocking conditions: congruence between message and behavior, clarity about whether AI is involved, and sensitivity to cultural and linguistic context. Studies on internal communication and psychological safety show that employees treat transparent, consistent messages as evidence that leaders mean what they say (Lee, 2023; Ngubane and Mbokota, 2025). Work on ChatGPT use and AI collaboration indicates that suspicion grows when the origin of messages is unclear or when AI is perceived as displacing rather than supporting human judgement (Lu et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024; Hai, 2025). Research on global and hybrid teams highlights that unmodified corporate English can marginalize some employees, undermining both inclusion and trust (Newson et al., 2021).

Relational and authentic leadership theories insist that leadership is fundamentally a human relationship. The findings do not contradict this, but refine it: the relationship is increasingly mediated, sometimes co written with AI, yet employees still anchor their evaluations in whether a recognizable human agent accepts responsibility for the message and its implications. Algorithmic mediation therefore sharpens, rather than dissolves, the ethical and relational demands placed on leaders.

A human AI empathic leadership communication model

The synthesis points toward an implicit model in which empathic leadership communication in AI rich digital workplaces depends on the alignment of three elements. Inputs comprise leader values, organizational culture and the configuration of AI and communication tools. The process involves intentional language choices, including explicit empathy, narrative coherence, cultural sensitivity and transparent, bounded use of AI as a support rather than a surrogate. Outputs are measured in perceived empathy, trust, clarity, psychological safety and willingness to engage.

This model does not reject AI; it positions it as an amplifier of both strengths and deficits. When grounded in consistent values and owned by leaders, AI assisted communication can scale clarity and care. When used to mask disengagement or to mass produce synthetic empathy, it exposes contradictions that existing theories of leadership predict will damage trust. In this sense, the findings extend classical rhetoric and contemporary leadership theory into the digital era by treating AI not as an independent actor but as a linguistic instrument that makes the integrity of leadership communication more, not less, visible.

Conclusion and recommendations

Summary of key insights

Leadership communication has moved from slow, performative rhetoric to continuous, distributed, AI assisted messaging in digital workplaces. Across this evolution, empathy remains essential rather than optional. It must now be deliberately encoded in written and platform based communication, because most employees encounter leadership as text and short mediated interactions rather than as physical presence. AI tools such as ChatGPT can enhance clarity, consistency and responsiveness, but they cannot replace the moral authority, ownership and relational depth that define credible leadership.

Practical recommendations for leaders

AI is not something that leaders should overlook as an aid, but not substitute their speech. Development of AI to generate draughts may aid in saving time, but final messages should be individualized with veritable reference of people, work teams, and events to make them sound more human. The concepts that the leaders should test through the assistance of AI are respect, inclusion and psychological safety, and avoided impulsive expressions. When meaningful or sensitive communication is involved, one can recommend that it should be evident, somebody helped, it is not the leader that is taking responsibility on their part. It is also necessary to learn techniques of digital empathy, including an explicit awareness of feeling, aiding framing in the uncertainty of a confrontation and diverse cultural/linguistic grouping.

Implications for organizations

Organizations should create clear internal guidelines on when and how AI may assist leadership communication, emphasizing transparency, data protection and human accountability. Digital empathy should be embedded into leadership selection, training and appraisal, aligning rewards with behaviors that demonstrate care and integrity across channels. Consistency is vital: spoken commitments, written policies and AI generated content must reinforce rather than contradict one another.

Future research and closing remark

Future work should test how employees respond to varying blends of human and AI authored messages, across cultures and power positions. Ultimately, technology can extend the reach of leadership language, but only humans can own its meaning.

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