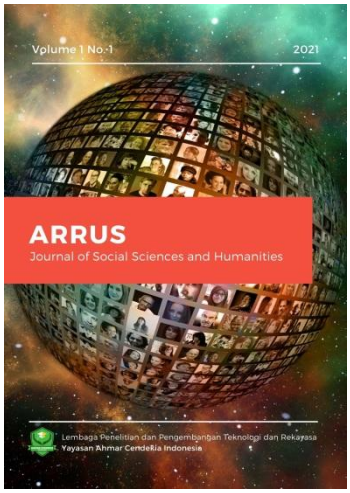
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Transforming Organizational and Public Relations Communication

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Abstract: This study examines how artificial intelligence (AI) is incorporated into organizational and public relations communication across seven organizational cases in Medan, Indonesia. Using a qualitative multiple-case design, the study draws on interview records from seven organizational cases and applies thematic analysis supported by within-case analysis and cross-case comparison. Five themes were identified: workflow acceleration, data-supported sensemaking and decision support, retained human professional authority, organizational readiness and governance, and relational and contextual sensitivity. The findings show that AI is primarily used to support content production, information processing, data analysis, service responsiveness, and decision support, while strategic, editorial, ethical, and relational decisions remain under human responsibility. Representative interview evidence further indicates that AI-generated outputs require verification, contextual judgement, and human approval. Intercultural Communication Competence is therefore interpreted as a contextual analytical lens rather than as a participant-generated theme, particularly in a multicultural urban setting such as Medan. The study concludes that AI contributes most effectively to organizational and public relations communication when its use is supported by human oversight, confidentiality safeguards, contextual review, professional competence, and continuous organizational learning.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Transformation, Intercultural Communication, Organizational Communication, Public Relations

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a pivotal force in reshaping communication processes across organizational and public relations (PR) domains. The ability of AI technologies to analyse large-scale data, automate repetitive communication tasks, and enhance audience targeting has transformed how institutions engage with stakeholders (Florea & Croitoru, 2025). In Indonesia, where both public and private sectors are navigating digital transformation, the integration of AI represents a strategic imperative rather than an optional enhancement. In Medan, adoption is growing but uneven, raising tensions between speed/scale and the need for empathy, cultural fit, and transparency.

Despite its growing adoption, organizations in regional contexts such as Medan face a common challenge: how to obtain the speed and analytical advantages of AI without weakening contextual judgement, relational quality, and message authenticity. The seven organizational cases discussed in this study represent markedly different communication environments. Fore Coffee employs AI-supported customer and business analytics; PTPN IV Regional II uses AI to support public relations content and data presentation; PT

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INALUM integrates AI into industrial analytics and management support; PT Posmetro uses AI in newsroom and editorial workflows; Codinglab applies AI to technical productivity and internal knowledge management; Putra Mulia Hotel uses AI to support hospitality communication; and PDAM Tirtanadi uses AI for social-media listening, complaint analysis, content support, initial customer service through hotline workflows, and issue detection. This cross-sector variation provides a useful basis for examining which communication functions can be automated and which continue to depend on human interpretation, accountability, and relationship management.

This study explores how AI transforms communication practices within these organizations, focusing on how PR departments and communication leaders leverage technology to improve message relevance, stakeholder trust, and operational effectiveness.

1.1. *Artificial Intelligence and Communication Transformation*

AI technologies such as natural language processing (NLP), chatbots, and predictive analytics are revolutionizing how organizations manage communication (Florea & Croitoru, 2025). Recent studies indicate that AI fosters adaptive and data-driven communication strategies, enabling more efficient stakeholder segmentation and real-time feedback loops (Gligorijevic & Boerman, 2024). However, researchers also highlight ethical and cultural challenges. According to (Jerinic-Ivic, 2024), communicators must ensure that AI-generated messages remain contextually and culturally appropriate, emphasizing the need for human-centered oversight in AI-assisted communication processes. In the PR context, AI enhances information dissemination, stakeholder engagement, and crisis management (Yue et al., 2024). Yet, scholars warn that the automation of relationship management may depersonalize communication if human empathy and intercultural understanding are not preserved (Sarwari, 2024). Therefore, the synergy between technological efficiency and human sensitivity is essential in maintaining the ethical integrity of PR practices (Öztezcan, 2026).

In communication management, AI systems support message automation, predictive analytics, and audience segmentation allowing practitioners to target messages more precisely and respond in real time (Gligorijevic & Boerman, 2024). Recent studies highlight that AI-driven communication tools such as sentiment analysis dashboards, chatbots, and generative content engines contribute to transparency and responsiveness in both public and corporate communication (Ismail et al., 2025). However, they also risk undermining interpersonal warmth and contextual sensitivity if human communicators are sidelined. As argued by (Jerinic-Ivic, 2024), communication must remain "culturally intelligent" even when technologically mediated.

1.2. *AI and Organizational Communication*

Indonesia's digital transformation strategy driven by initiatives such as Making Indonesia 4.0, encourages both state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private companies to integrate AI technologies for service optimization and public engagement. Studies on Southeast Asian corporations show that AI deployment varies according to organizational maturity and digital literacy levels (Ariawan et al., 2025). Medan, as a strategic regional hub, provides an insightful case for understanding AI-driven communication adaptation within both public and private organizational ecosystems. The literature suggests that the success of AI adoption depends on leadership's ability to blend automation with human communication values such as empathy, trust, and relational accountability (Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2024).

AI has transformed internal communication systems by automating workflow messages, enhancing data-driven decision-making, and supporting digital knowledge management (Hassan, 2024). Research by (Deepika & Dharmula, 2026) shows that AI-based analytics can enhance employee engagement by identifying communication bottlenecks, yet may also create ethical tension regarding privacy and data ownership (Hossain et al., 2025).

1.3. *AI Ethics and Human Oversight*

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Ethical considerations represent one of the most discussed dimensions of AI integration in communication. (Thakre et al., 2023) underline that algorithmic bias and opaque decision-making processes may distort message neutrality. Similarly, (Mujtaba, 2025) underline that algorithmic bias and opaque decision-making processes may distort message neutrality.

The European Communication Monitor 2024 reported that over 67% of communication professionals express concern about the lack of AI ethics training in their institutions (Zerfass et al., 2024). Therefore, scholars advocate for the establishment of AI governance policies that include cultural and ethical validation steps before dissemination (Jerinic-Ivic, 2024).

1.4. *Intercultural Communication Competence in Digital Contexts*

Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) remains relevant to AI-mediated communication because technically accurate messages may still be socially inappropriate when tone, local expectations, or relationship norms are ignored. ICC encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioural capacities that support communication across cultural differences (Sarwari, 2024). This issue is particularly relevant in Medan, a multicultural urban centre characterized by diverse Batak, Malay, Javanese, Chinese, and other communities (Damanik, 2024). In this study, however, ICC is used as a sensitizing interpretive concept rather than as a predetermined empirical theme. The analysis first identifies patterns inductively from the interview records and only then considers whether recurrent concerns about empathy, contextual fit, trust, and message appropriateness have implications for intercultural communication. This sequencing avoids attributing the theoretical label of ICC to participants who did not explicitly use it.

2. Research Method

2.1. *Research Design and Setting*

This study uses a qualitative multiple-case design to examine how AI is incorporated into organizational and public relations communication in Medan. The case-study logic is appropriate because the research question concerns how AI is actually used, interpreted, verified, and bounded within different organizational communication environments rather than whether AI produces a single measurable effect. The seven cases represent different communication settings: consumer service (Fore Coffee), state-owned plantation communication (PTPN IV Regional II), industrial operations and management support (PT INALUM), journalism (PT Posmetro), software services (Codinglab), hospitality (Putra Mulia Hotel), and public utility communication (PDAM Tirtanadi). The unit of analysis is the organizational communication practice described in each interview-response record.

2.2. *Interview Records and Informant Profiles*

Seven informants representing seven organizations in Medan participated in the study. The participants were selected purposively based on their involvement in organizational communication, public relations, editorial activities, digital technology, or AI-supported organizational processes. To protect confidentiality, each participant was assigned an identification code. Table 1 below presents profile of interview informants and summary of key interview finding.

Table 1. Profile of interview informants and summary of key interview finding.

Code	Organization	Professional Role	Interview Duration	Key Interview Finding
INF-01	Fore Coffee	HR Staff	35 min	AI for data, inventory, recommendations, chatbots, and customer analytics.
INF-02	PTPN IV Regional II	Head of Public Relations	47 min	AI supports PR content, visualization, data analysis, and reports.
INF-03	PT INALUM	Public Relations Division	45 min	AI for production optimization, quality control, predictive

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Code	Organization	Professional Role	Interview Duration	Key Interview Finding
				maintenance, and decision-making.
INF-04	PT Posmetro	Coverage Coordinator	40 min	AI to assist editing, data management, trend analysis, newsroom
INF-05	Codinglab / PT Kodinglab Integrasi Indonesia	HR Staff	35 min	AI for administration, coding, data, and internal communication
INF-06	Putra Mulia Hotel	Public Relations Division	40 min	AI for digital content, publications, PR efficiency, and guest communication.
INF-07	PDAM Tirtanadi	Public Relations Division	45 min	AI for social listening, complaint analysis, content ideation and creation, initial hotline service, and issue detection.

Note: *Participant codes were used to protect confidentiality; personal names were not disclosed.*

As shown in Table 1, the informants represented diverse organizational sectors, including food and beverage, state-owned enterprises, industry, media, technology, hospitality, and public services. Interview durations ranged from 35 to 47 minutes. Despite differences in organizational context, the interviews revealed several recurring patterns, particularly the use of AI for improving work efficiency, supporting data analysis and content production, assisting decision-making, and strengthening operational coordination. At the same time, participants consistently emphasized the continuing importance of human judgement, verification, contextual understanding, and professional responsibility.

2.3. Data Analysis

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke (2021). The analysis involved data familiarization, identification of meaningful units, initial coding, development of categories, and generation and refinement of themes. Given the multiple organizational contexts represented in the dataset, the analysis was conducted in two interconnected stages. First, a within-case analysis was undertaken for each organization to identify how AI was used, the perceived benefits and risks of its use, the role of human professionals, and organizational conditions influencing its implementation. Second, a cross-case comparison was conducted across the seven organizational cases to identify recurrent patterns, similarities, differences, and context-specific variations.

Through this iterative process, related codes were compared across cases and organized into broader themes concerning AI-enabled workflow acceleration, data-supported sensemaking and decision support, human oversight and retained professional authority, organizational readiness and governance, and relational and contextual sensitivity. The themes were developed from recurring patterns in the interview records rather than imposed as predetermined categories. Representative interview excerpts were subsequently used to illustrate the analytical themes, with participants identified through anonymized codes (INF-01–INF-07).

3. Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis produced five cross-case patterns: (1) AI-enabled workflow acceleration, (2) data-supported sensemaking and decision support, (3) human oversight and retained professional authority, (4) organizational readiness and governance risk, and (5) relational and contextual sensitivity. These themes are presented as cross-case findings rather than as seven isolated company descriptions so that the empirical argument remains visible across sectors.

3.1. AI-Enabled Workflow Acceleration

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Across the cases, the most consistent benefit of AI is the compression of routine work. At PTPN IV Regional II, AI is used for social-media content, instructional material, visual design, data presentation, and reporting. PT Posmetro uses AI and digital tools in newsroom planning, editing assistance, data management, and trend analysis. Codinglab applies AI to document preparation, information retrieval, programming assistance, unit-test preparation, database queries, and internal knowledge management. Putra Mulia Hotel uses AI for content planning and drafting, while PDAM Tirtanadi uses it for social-media comment analysis, content ideation, early customer-service support, and issue detection. The common mechanism is not simply automation; AI redistributes human attention from repetitive preparation toward interpretation and stakeholder-facing tasks.

"AI is viewed more as a work assistant than as a burden." (INF-02, translated from the interview record)

"Technology allows the newsroom to work faster, more flexibly, and more adaptively to issues developing in real time." (INF-04, translated from the interview record)

These extracts make visible what the earlier version only summarized: practitioners perceive efficiency as a change in work allocation rather than as full substitution. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that AI can improve responsiveness and communication productivity while still requiring human supervision (Florea & Croitoru, 2025; Yue et al., 2024).

3.2. *Data-Supported Sensemaking and Decision Support*

A second theme concerns AI as an information-structuring infrastructure. Fore Coffee's response record describes Google Cloud/BigQuery-supported analysis of customer preferences, stock prediction, recommendations, and real-time patterns that can be shared across teams. PT INALUM represents the strongest operational variant: integrated data, quality monitoring, process optimization, and predictive maintenance are used to support managerial decisions. Codinglab uses an internal AI system to retrieve project, client, and server information, while PT Posmetro uses trend analysis to identify newsworthy issues. PDAM Tirtanadi extends the same logic to organizational listening through analysis of complaints and emerging public issues. Across these cases, AI makes signals more visible, but people still decide which signals matter.

"The effectiveness of its use depends greatly on organizational readiness, management policy, and the competence of the workforce operating the system." (INF-03, translated from the interview record)

The cross-case distinction is important: AI-supported data do not constitute autonomous organizational decisions. The evidence instead supports a data-informed judgement model in which AI accelerates detection, comparison, and presentation, while relevance and action remain organizational responsibilities.

3.3. *Human Oversight and Retained Professional Authority*

The strongest and most theoretically coherent pattern is the retention of human authority. PTPN IV Regional II explicitly reserves strategic decisions for human practitioners even when AI supports visualisation and analysis. PT Posmetro maintains editorial authority with journalists and editors. Codinglab uses AI to generate ideas and accelerate technical work, but expert staff inspect and correct the output. Putra Mulia Hotel retains human control over strategic messaging and guest relationships. PDAM Tirtanadi emphasizes that AI output must be checked against actual conditions before communication is released.

"AI remains an assisting tool in journalistic activities, and editorial decision-making remains with humans." (INF-04, translated from the interview record)

"AI functions as communication support, not as a total replacement for human interaction." (INF-05, translated from the interview record)

"The results or answers produced by AI still have to be rechecked." (INF-07, translated from the interview record)

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Taken together, these extracts support an augmentation model more strongly than a replacement model. Human review is not presented as an exceptional response to AI failure; it is a routine control embedded in professional practice. This is particularly important in communication work because accountability cannot be delegated to a generated output.

3.4. *Organizational Readiness, Risk, and Governance*

AI adoption also creates capability and governance demands. PTPN IV Regional II identifies critical thinking, professional experience, confidentiality, and verification as prerequisites. PT Posmetro highlights continuous skill development and the protection of journalistic credibility. PT INALUM links technological effectiveness to management support and workforce competence. Fore Coffee indicates that data-driven work requires cultural adjustment inside the organization. PDAM Tirtanadi identifies dependency and misunderstanding of real-world conditions as practical risks. Thus, readiness is not reducible to access to AI tools; it combines skills, policy, judgement, and institutional controls.

"AI does not yet fully understand reality." (INF-07, translated from the interview record)

This finding strengthens the manuscript's applied contribution. It suggests that responsible AI communication requires organizations to define the boundary between low-risk automation and communication that requires explicit human approval, especially when confidentiality, reputation, public service, or editorial credibility is involved.

3.5. *Relational and Contextual Sensitivity: Implications for ICC*

Relational sensitivity appears in the dataset more clearly than intercultural competence as an explicit participant concept. Codinglab emphasizes that clients need attention, empathy, clarity, and trust in addition to technical solutions. Putra Mulia Hotel similarly treats interpersonal communication and understanding of guest needs as central to hospitality. PDAM Tirtanadi warns that AI can misunderstand real conditions. These statements indicate a recurrent need for contextual interpretation, but they do not by themselves demonstrate that participants consciously conceptualize this need as ICC.

"AI acts as a tool that supports PR performance, while strategic and human-centred roles remain the responsibility of people." (INF-06, translated from the interview record)

For this reason, ICC should be positioned as a second-order interpretive implication rather than a first-order empirical theme. The contextual relevance of ICC is nevertheless defensible because Medan is a multicultural city in which organizational communication addresses audiences shaped by diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Damanik, 2024). In such a setting, the ability to evaluate tone, social appropriateness, and relational meaning can function as a human safeguard when AI-assisted content is technically fluent but contextually weak. This more cautious positioning directly separates what the participants said from what the authors infer theoretically.

Following the within-case analysis, a cross-case comparison was conducted to identify recurring patterns, similarities, and differences across the seven organizational cases. Initial codes derived from the interview records were compared and grouped into broader thematic categories. Table 2 presents the analytical linkage between the emerging themes, representative initial codes, organizational cases supporting each theme, and selected interview evidence. This matrix was used to enhance analytical transparency by showing how the themes were developed from recurring patterns in the interview data rather than imposed as predetermined categories.

Table 2. *Cross-Case Evidence Matrix*

Theme	Representative initial codes	Cases supporting the theme	Representative response evidence
Workflow acceleration	content drafting; editing; reporting; knowledge	Fore Coffee; PTPN IV; Posmetro; Codinglab; Putra Mulia; PDAM	AI reduced routine processing time by supporting content preparation, editing,

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	retrieval; early service; issue detection		reporting, information retrieval, early customer service, and issue detection.
Sensemaking / decision support	customer preference analytics; trend analysis; integrated operational data; social listening	Fore Coffee; PTPN IV; INALUM; Posmetro; Codinglab; PDAM	AI-supported analytics helped organizational actors interpret customer preferences, public trends, operational data, and social-media feedback, while final decisions remained under human responsibility.
Human oversight	strategic authority; editorial control; expert checking; rechecking; human relationship management	PTPN IV; Posmetro; Codinglab; Putra Mulia; PDAM	Strategic, editorial, and communication decisions remained with human professionals, who were also responsible for reviewing and verifying AI-generated outputs.
Readiness and governance	critical thinking; confidentiality; skills development; management support; dependency risk	Fore Coffee; PTPN IV; INALUM; Posmetro; PDAM	Effective AI use depended on professional competence, critical thinking, organizational support, confidentiality safeguards, continuous learning, and awareness of overdependence on AI.
Relational / contextual sensitivity	empathy; trust; guest relations; contextual understanding; real-world fit	Codinglab; Putra Mulia; PDAM	Human interaction remained important where communication required empathy, trust, contextual understanding, and sensitivity to actual client, guest, or public conditions.

Note: *The matrix summarizes cross-case themes from interview records using paraphrased evidence; selected excerpts are reported in the Findings section.*

As shown in Table 2, five recurring themes emerged across the organizational cases. Workflow acceleration was the most widely distributed pattern, appearing across organizations through content drafting, editing, reporting, knowledge retrieval, customer-service support, and issue detection. This indicates that the most immediate contribution of AI lies in reducing routine processing time and supporting faster organizational responses.

The second theme, sensemaking and decision support, shows that AI also contributes to how organizational actors interpret information. Customer analytics, trend analysis, integrated operational data, and social listening provide practitioners with structured information for decision-making. However, the evidence consistently indicates that final decisions remain under human responsibility.

The third theme, human oversight, appeared strongly in the public relations, media, technology, hospitality, and public-service cases. Participants emphasized strategic authority, editorial control, expert checking, rechecking, and direct relationship management. This pattern suggests that AI is perceived primarily as an augmentative tool rather than an autonomous communication actor.

The fourth theme, organizational readiness and governance, highlights the importance of critical thinking, professional competence, confidentiality, continuous skills development, management support, and awareness of dependency risks. These findings indicate that effective AI adoption depends not only on technological availability but also on organizational capability and governance.

Finally, relational and contextual sensitivity emerged particularly in organizations where direct interaction with clients, guests, or the public is central. Empathy, trust, contextual understanding, and awareness of real-world conditions remain areas in which human communicators retain an essential role. This theme provides the empirical basis for discussing intercultural and contextual communication competence as a higher-level interpretive dimension.

Taken together, the matrix demonstrates that AI adoption across the seven cases follows a common pattern of augmentation rather than replacement: AI strengthens efficiency, information processing, and decision support, whereas human professionals retain responsibility for judgement, verification, contextual interpretation, and relationship management.

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3.6. Cross-Case Interpretation: Augmented Communication Governance

The cross-case synthesis suggests an augmented communication governance model. AI contributes most strongly at the stages of detection, analysis, drafting, visualization, and routine response preparation. Human professionals retain authority at the stages of contextual interpretation, ethical judgement, confidentiality assessment, editorial or strategic approval, and relationship management. The contribution of the study therefore lies not in claiming that all organizations use the same AI tools, but in identifying a recurring governance boundary across different sectors: AI expands communication capacity, while human actors remain accountable for meaning and consequences.

3.7. Managerial Implications: A Communication-Specific AI Governance Protocol

The cross-case findings can be translated into a practical governance protocol for communication directors, public relations managers, and other professionals responsible for AI-assisted communication. Rather than focusing solely on technical performance, the protocol emphasizes communication-specific risks, including confidentiality, factual accuracy, contextual appropriateness, stakeholder relationships, and professional accountability. Table 3 summarizes six managerial control stages derived from the recurring patterns identified across the organizational cases.

Table 3. Communication-Specific AI Governance Protocol Derived from the Findings

Stage	Managerial control	Decision rule
Task Classification	Identify the communication task, audience, sensitivity, and potential reputational impact before using AI.	Routine and low-risk tasks may receive greater AI assistance; strategic, crisis-related, confidential, or reputationally sensitive tasks require stronger human control.
Input and Data Control	Review the information entered into AI systems and restrict confidential, personal, strategic, or organizationally sensitive data.	Sensitive or confidential information should not be entered into external AI systems unless organizational policy explicitly permits it.
AI-Assisted Processing	Use AI for drafting, summarizing, analysing trends, generating ideas, preparing visualizations, or supporting routine communication activities.	AI output should be treated as preliminary material or decision support rather than as an automatically publishable final product.
Factual Verification	Check factual accuracy, completeness, source reliability, and consistency with actual organizational conditions.	AI-generated information should not be communicated externally until relevant facts have been verified by a responsible professional.
Contextual and Relational Review	Assess tone, empathy, cultural appropriateness, stakeholder expectations, and possible misinterpretation..	Messages involving customers, communities, employees, media, or other stakeholders require human contextual review before dissemination.
Human Approval and Accountability	Assign final approval to an authorized communication or organizational professional and document important decisions where appropriate	Final responsibility for strategic, ethical, editorial, and relational communication decisions remains with human professionals.

The protocol reflects the central finding of this study that AI is most effective when used as an augmentative rather than autonomous communication technology. Routine and low-risk activities may benefit substantially from automation, whereas strategic, confidential, reputational, editorial, and stakeholder-sensitive communication requires progressively stronger human oversight. Human approval therefore functions not merely as a final technical check, but as a mechanism for maintaining accountability, contextual relevance, and relational quality.

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4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that artificial intelligence is transforming organizational and public relations communication across the seven organizational cases in Medan primarily by accelerating routine workflows, supporting data analysis, strengthening information processing, and assisting communication-related decision-making. However, the findings consistently indicate that AI functions more effectively as an augmentative tool than as a substitute for communication professionals, as strategic judgement, editorial authority, factual verification, ethical responsibility, and stakeholder relationship management remain dependent on human oversight. The cross-case analysis further shows that the effectiveness of AI adoption is shaped not only by technological capability but also by organizational readiness, professional competence, management support, confidentiality safeguards, and continuous learning. At the same time, empathy, trust, contextual understanding, and sensitivity to real-world social conditions remain essential human communication capacities that AI cannot fully reproduce. Therefore, sustainable AI-enabled communication should be developed through a human–AI collaboration model in which AI extends efficiency and analytical capacity, while human professionals retain responsibility for interpretation, accountability, and relational quality. In this context, Intercultural Communication Competence provides a useful interpretive lens for understanding how communication professionals can evaluate whether AI-assisted messages are not only efficient and accurate, but also contextually and socially appropriate. Future studies should extend this analysis to broader organizational settings and examine how human oversight, organizational readiness, and contextual communication competence influence stakeholder trust in AI-mediated communication.

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