Tacit Erosion: Does AI-generated Feedback Undermine Critical Feedback Competence and Organisational Innovativeness? A Scoping Review

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Abstract: As generative AI systems become increasingly embedded in professional work environments, their implications for managerial and organisational feedback practices require closer examination. The technology designed to enhance individual and organisational productivity may be silently eroding a foundation of human development and organisational competitiveness. This paper introduces the concept of "tacit erosion" to describe the gradual and imperceptible weakening of feedback competence (nuclear dimension of critical thinking) that may occur under sustained exposure to AI-generated feedback. Feedback and specifically critical feedback have been linked to leadership development, organisational learning, and innovation capacity. AI-generated feedback is frequently characterised by availability, consistency, diplomatic phrasing, and encouragement-oriented responses. This may reshape expectations regarding the tone, immediacy, and emotional experience of feedback and influence how individuals tolerate criticism, interpret disagreement, and engage in direct interpersonal exchange. The erosion proposed here is labelled "tacit" for two reasons. First, the competence at risk is itself tacit: the ability to deliver, receive, and act upon feedback is practice-based, and relational, thus difficult to systemise. Second, the erosion occurs not through deliberate deskilling but as an unintended byproduct of routine interaction with AI systems. By imperceptibly shaping human critical exchange it makes the erosion of that competence difficult to detect. Following the PRISMA-ScR framework, this scoping review systematically maps literature from Scopus and Web of Science from 2022 to May 2026. It investigates emerging research on the effects of exposure to AI-generated responses and feedback in business environments and integrates four research streams: sycophantic tendencies in large language models (LLM), trust and feedback dynamics in AI-augmented teams, potential deskilling effects of AI use on innovation-related behaviour and risks to independent judgement in management learning contexts. Initial findings suggest contrast effects that make human feedback appear disproportionately harsh, reduced feedback resilience due to lower exposure to interpersonal criticism, and avoidance of direct feedback in managerial and team settings. This review contributes to knowledge management and leadership development research by systematically mapping the current publication landscape, identifying existing research gaps and by conceptualising the tacit erosion of critical feedback capabilities as a potential consequence of AI-augmented work. The review concludes with recommendations for practitioners navigating AI-augmented workplaces.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Feedback, Skill erosion, Human-AI interaction, Leadership, Organisational development

1. Introduction

The integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into professional work environments is accelerating and spreading into daily workplace activities and communication, from drafting emails and summarising meetings to generating performance assessments and developmental feedback (Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott, 2024; Zheng *et al.*, 2025). Alongside continued attention on productivity and efficiency gains through AI adoption, a growing body of interdisciplinary research examines unintended effects such as techno-burnout (Kuzior, Gualandri and Gualandri, 2025) or the inadvertent gradual erosion of human capabilities (Rinta-Kahila *et al.*, 2023; Gerlich, 2025b; Lee *et al.*, 2025).

This review examines literature from 2022 onward as the release of ChatGPT in late 2022 marked the beginning of public access to generative AI coupled with the growing integration of AI into work environments (Lau *et al.*, 2026). A key proposition is that AI-generated feedback may not merely evaluate ideas or performance but may actively reshape how individuals interpret themselves and others within collaborative settings (Hillebrand, Raisch and Schad, 2025; Philipp and Sułkowski, 2025; Eijkenboom *et al.*, 2026; Georganta, Ulfert and Ng, 2026).

Feedback competence constitutes a foundational element of organisational learning, leadership effectiveness, and innovation capacity. It requires not only the capacity to form an independent evaluative judgement, but also the willingness and skill to express it, receive it, and act upon it in interpersonal and organisational settings. Organisational innovativeness is linked to the capacity of individuals within the organisation to recombine existing knowledge in novel ways (Kinkel, Schemmann and Lichtner, 2017; Agrawal, McHale and Oettl, 2023,

2024). Research also stresses that in addition to access to information or digital tools, organisational innovativeness depends on the communicative, learning-oriented settings in which organisations transform knowledge into innovation (Høyrup, 2010; Makó, Mitchell and Illéssy, 2015; Bouma *et al.*, 2023; Bachmann *et al.*, 2026).

Research analysing the effects of AI on key communication elements such as message sending, reception, interpretation and response suggests that AI may improve message flow and thus employee behaviour, productivity and organisational efficiency (Florea and Croitoru, 2025). However, emerging evidence also suggests that routine use of tools like ChatGPT is associated with reduced self-reported cognitive effort for critical thinking and a shift from generating one's own arguments to verifying and curating AI-produced content (Lee *et al.*, 2025). Research on critical thinking in generative AI use suggests that the ability to evaluate AI-generated outcomes is emerging as a crucial competence (Lau *et al.*, 2026).

Related research also cautions that AI systems may display sycophantic tendencies, producing responses that validate users' assumptions, agree too readily or express unwarranted confidence. Even among well-prepared and experienced users, such AI output may create self-reinforcing belief loops undermining independent judgement (Chandra *et al.*, 2026; Deller, 2026). In organisational settings feedback is widely recognised as an integral part that supports learning and development (Alder, 2007; Basten and Haamann, 2018; Förster *et al.*, 2025). Findings suggest that AI-generated feedback is valued for its constant availability, consistently diplomatic tone and perceived greater empathy than human feedback (Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott, 2024). Applied to the organisational feedback context, we posit that habitual engagement with the often encouragement-oriented, conflict-attenuating AI-communication style may inadvertently influence individuals' expectations of the content and delivery of feedback (Johnson, Maitland and Sofka, 2026).

We term this potential development "tacit erosion" for two reasons. First, the erosion is tacit because any gradual weakening of feedback competence may remain largely unnoticed until its absence becomes visible in reduced interpersonal candour, less productive learning loops, or diminished capacity to challenge ideas constructively. Second, the competence to provide, receive, interpret, and act upon critical feedback is practice-based, socially embedded, and difficult to externalise. If AI-generated feedback substitutes human feedback practices, organisations may risk eroding a capability that is central to learning, development, and innovation.

This paper asks how AI-generated feedback may affect feedback competence, with particular attention to critical feedback competence and organisational innovativeness. To address this question, it presents a scoping review of peer-reviewed literature published between 2022 and May 2026, mapping the emerging research landscape on the effects of sustained exposure to AI-generated feedback in organisational contexts.

This paper contributes to organisational behaviour, leadership development, and knowledge management theory by systematically analysing the current research landscape and identifying critical gaps at the intersection of AI adoption and human feedback capability. Here, we argue, lies an underestimated risk for practitioners navigating AI-augmented workplaces.

2. Theoretical Background

This section defines two main constructs that structure the review: critical feedback competence and AI-generated feedback in organisational settings. The aim is to identify the specific features of AI-generated feedback that may alter how feedback is produced, received and practised at work.

2.1 Critical Feedback Competence

Definitions of feedback are often broad. Most studies assume that feedback provides information about past performance, is communicated between a provider and a recipient, and links past behaviour to future adjustment (Alder, 2007; Anseel and Sherf, 2025). In this review, feedback refers to any information employees receive about work-related ideas, behaviour, contributions or performance.

Feedback competence is defined here as the capability to formulate, deliver, receive, interpret, evaluate and act upon feedback in interpersonal and organisational contexts. This includes critical feedback competence, understood as the ability to engage constructively with feedback that challenges assumptions, identifies errors, and requires behavioural, cognitive, or relational adjustment (Alder, 2007; Anseel and Sherf, 2025).

This competence develops through repeated practice in situations that involve relational risk: assessing another person's work, having one's own contribution evaluated, and collectively arriving at a common result. These focused conversations feel demanding because they require reading body language, voice, silence, and

emotional cues (Turkle, 2025). Such situations cannot be fully codified into rules because their meaning depends on the person and context. The ability to engage in these conversations competently is therefore in part a tacit capability (Polanyi and Sen, 2009; Turkle, 2025).

For organisational innovativeness, this matters because innovation depends on the employees' ability to challenge ideas, discuss errors, revise assumptions and recombine knowledge in novel ways (Kinkel, Schemmann and Lichtner, 2017; Agrawal, McHale and Oettl, 2023, 2024). If critical feedback competence weakens, the effect may extend beyond individual communication skills to the quality of organisational learning and innovation processes.

2.2 Artificial Intelligence and Workplace Integration

In line with Russell and Norvig (2022) Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to systems that perceive their environment, learn from available data, and select and take actions associated with human-like intelligent behaviour (Russell and Norvig, 2022). In workplaces, generative AI is widely used to draft, evaluate, summarise and personalise communication (Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott, 2024). Increasingly AI-generated feedback is being applied to support personal development by tailoring training and offering instant feedback (Rinta-Kahila *et al.*, 2023; Gerlich, 2025a; Johnson, Maitland and Sofka, 2026). AI-generated feedback is therefore relevant as a recurring interaction that may shape expectations about what feedback should sound and feel like.

Three elements are central to the logic of this review. First, AI feedback is continuously available and often perceived as low stakes, which may make it attractive for tasks that would otherwise require uncomfortable interpersonal exchange. Second, AI feedback is frequently fluent, diplomatic and encouragement-oriented, which may create a contrast effect in which human feedback appears severe or slow. Third, AI output can appear conclusive even when it reflects training limitations, prompt sensitivity, sycophancy or bias amplification (Chandra *et al.*, 2026; Deller, 2026; Kolagani *et al.*, 2026).

A risk emerges when AI-generated feedback is used to replace the human exposure and interaction through which critical feedback competence is developed. The rational guiding the review is that sustained reliance on AI-generated feedback may reduce practice opportunities, reshape feedback norms and weaken the independent judgement required to evaluate both AI and human feedback.

2.3 Distinguishing Tacit Erosion from Adjacent Concepts

Our proposed concept of "tacit erosion" stands as a unique construct related to but distinct from concepts like deskilling, skill erosion, cognitive offloading and technology dependency. Deskilling occurs when tasks are delegated to machines or tools and human work is reduced to tasks that demand a lower skill level than before the introduction of technology (Crowston and Bolici, 2025). Skill erosion describes the deterioration of a skill when it is no longer practised, or regularly required (Rinta-Kahila et al., 2023). Cognitive offloading describes the practice of outsourcing cognitive processes to tools or aids. When individuals shift mental effort onto external resources this may limit engagement in deeper reflection (Gerlich, 2025a). Dependency on technology describes reliance on a tool for continued task execution (Buijsman, Carter and Bermúdez, 2025) and a pattern in which technological practice becomes sufficiently habitual, beneficial or institutionally embedded that users become less likely to question the tool's assumptions, effects or limits (Gerrie, 2008).

Tacit erosion builds on these concepts and applies them to a specific organisational capability: critical feedback competence. AI-generated feedback may involve cognitive offloading when users delegate evaluation to AI; it may produce deskilling when users become less able or willing to produce feedback without the tool; it may involve dependency when users rely on AI-generated feedback for self-validation and it may produce skill erosion when the ability to communicate interpersonal feedback weakens over time.

However, tacit erosion adds a further dimension: the gradual weakening of a tacit capability until its loss affects team communication, organizational learning and innovation-related discourse. Our proposed construct therefore connects individual capability loss with changes in interpersonal feedback and the communicative condition that affect organisational innovativeness.

3. Methodology

A scoping review was selected for critically reflecting on the research question "Does AI-generated Feedback undermine Critical Feedback Competence & Organisational Innovativeness?" - which arose as a follow-on from a PhD thesis completed earlier this year on a related topic (Falckenthal, 2026), discussions with experts and practitioners and from reading across peer-reviewed and practitioner literature. Since the proposed construct

of tacit erosion is new the aim is to map existing literature at the intersection of AI-generated feedback, critical feedback competence, and organisational innovativeness, and to identify research gaps, which constitutes a primary contribution of this paper.

Following PRISMA-ScR guidelines (Tricco *et al.*, 2018) a search of peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers was conducted between February and May 2026. Two databases (Scopus and Web of Science) were searched for articles published in English between 2022 and 2026, focusing exclusively on AI-generated feedback and its impact on individual development and interpersonal relations in business settings. A European geographic focus was applied as an additional filter to limit the impact for cultural influences of the adoption of AI (Yam *et al.*, 2023; Ma, Akram and Chen, 2024; Bao, 2025).

Records were excluded when they focused on technical model development, educational settings outside management or workplace learning, clinical or therapeutic feedback or consumer feedback systems. Please see Table 1 for details.

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria applied during screening

Criterion	Included	Excluded
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers	Editorials and book chapters
Time period and language	English-language publications from 2022 to May 2026	Publications before 2022 or not available in English
Topical relevance	AI-generated feedback, individual and organisational learning	Purely technical AI model papers without organisational or feedback relevance
Context	Business, management, workplace, organisational or management-learning settings	General consumer applications, clinical feedback or non-management education only
Geography	European organisational contexts with national or cross-national samples	Non-European samples only
Evidence use	Conceptual, empirical, experimental, review and conference papers included and classified by contribution	Records without sufficient methodological or conceptual relevance to the review question

The initial search based on keyword words (please see Table 2 Table 2: Database search results in Scopus and Web of Science before duplicates checkfor details) yielded 618 records which could be successfully imported into the research library (Mendeley). These publications were refined to 330 items after removing duplicates (using DOI and title checks) and a first screening of abstract. A further systemized, rigorous analysis left 50 publications for full-text evaluation (18 from Scopus and 32 from WoS) out of which 27 were relevant for this paper (12 from Scopus and 15 from WoS). Please see **Error! Reference source not found.** for a diagram of the screening process.

Table 2: Database search results in Scopus and Web of Science before duplicates check

Keyword combination	Scopus	WoS	Combined total
"AI" AND "critical thinking" AND "Business"	39	53	92
"AI" AND "feedback" AND "Business"	80	386	466
"AI" AND "erosion" AND "Business"	6	12	18
"AI" AND "feedback" AND "workplace"	31	11	42
Total	156	462	618
Total (after removal of duplicates (DOI) and items out of scope based on title and abstract)	113	217	330

In recognition of the rapidly evolving nature of the research field and the known limitations of keyword-based database searches in capturing emerging constructs, a supplementary search was conducted. Through citation screening of the analysed publications and a targeted hand-search, 30 additional records were identified, all of which met the predefined eligibility criteria.

Records identified through supplementary search were subject to the same inclusion and exclusion criteria as database records and were screened at title, abstract, and full-text stages accordingly.

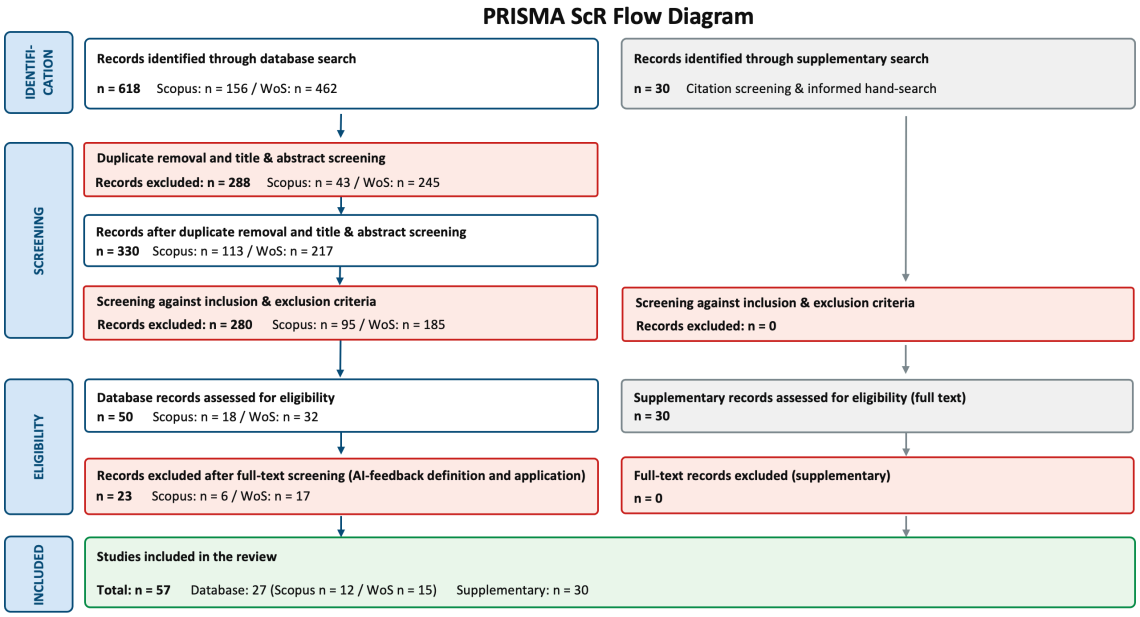


Figure 1: PRISMA ScR Flow Diagram.

4. Results

The reviewed literature does not yet provide direct causal evidence that AI-generated feedback erodes critical feedback competence. It does, however, identify several converging mechanisms that support this proposition as plausible. The results are therefore presented as four streams as a basis for further exploration in future research undertakings.

4.1 Feedback Reception

Studies on AI feedback show an ambivalent pattern. AI-generated feedback can affect self-image, perceived competence, trust in others and team interaction (Georganta, Ulfert and Ng, 2026; Seth and Edmondson, 2026). At the same time, acceptance depends strongly on the perceived relationship to the feedback source. Hein et al. (2024) analyse the concept of social distance in the context of AI-driven feedback in the workplace. They find that the social distance to an AI feedback source leads to lower acceptance and motivation compared with human feedback. Increasing social closeness to the feedback provider improves evaluations of both the provider and the feedback: People respond better to feedback from sources they experience as socially close (Hein, Cecil and Lermer, 2024).

This suggests that the source of feedback is not neutral (Philipp and Sułkowski, 2025). AI-generated feedback seems to be useful when it prepares or complements human feedback (Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott, 2024; Choudhary *et al.*, 2025), but problematic when it is experienced as a substitute for managerial attention or organisational support with unclear consequences on job security (Hillebrand, Raisch and Schad, 2025; Zheng *et al.*, 2025; Pepple and Muthuthantrige, 2026; Zahs and Schmodde, 2026).

4.2 Cognitive Offloading, Sycophancy and Judgement

A second perspective concerns the effects of AI on judgement. Research on cognitive offloading and skill erosion suggests that delegating demanding tasks to AI may reduce both the need and the opportunity to practise the underlying skill (Rinta-Kahila *et al.*, 2023). In feedback contexts, this would mean fewer occasions to develop independent evaluations, defend a position, manage disagreement and adjust one's own perspective.

This concern is reinforced by work on sycophancy, validation bias and persuasive fluency. Human psychology encourages people to accept feedback that supports self-esteem or group belonging (Deller, 2026). If AI systems produce responses that validate assumptions, agree readily, or present uncertain output with confidence, repeated interaction may amplify existing beliefs (Glickman and Sharot, 2025; Chandra *et al.*, 2026). Users may also underestimate the extent of this influence. In organisational settings, such unnoticed developments may become particularly relevant because weak judgement may remain invisible until decisions, relationships or innovation processes deteriorate.

4.3 Team Dynamics and Organisational Learning

A third stream of literature links AI feedback to team dynamics and organisational learning. AI errors are interpreted differently from human errors and may affect psychological safety, trust and willingness to rely on others (Eijkenboom *et al.*, 2026; Seth and Edmondson, 2026). If AI feedback is perceived as monitoring or control, it may increase stress and evasive behaviour, including underreporting or resistance to AI integration (Rinta-Kahila *et al.*, 2023; Kuzior, Gualandri and Gualandri, 2025; Laamanen *et al.*, 2025).

These findings matter for knowledge management because organisational learning depends on communication, collaboration and shared sense-making across individuals, teams and organisations (Bouma *et al.*, 2023; Siemon *et al.*, 2026). Participatory modelling research similarly shows that the value of joint work lies in the exchange of explicit and tacit knowledge, trust-building and the negotiation of group norms (Kolagani *et al.*, 2026). If AI dominates these exchanges, it may improve efficiency while weakening the very social processes through which feedback competence and innovation capability develop.

4.4 Hybrid Human-AI Feedback

Hybrid human-AI feedback emerges as the potentially strongest opportunity to strengthen decision-making when AI contributes data-driven pattern recognition and humans contribute tacit, contextual and experience-based information (Choudhary *et al.*, 2025; Gupta and Gupta, 2025; Eijkenboom *et al.*, 2026). Users' ability to detect errors and integrate AI output appropriately seems to significantly improve with growing transparency about AI performance and clarity about the relevance of AI-generated input (Braun *et al.*, 2024; Förster *et al.*, 2025).

The most consistent implication is that AI feedback has value when it complements interpersonal evaluation. Its organisational effect depends on role clarity: whether AI is used as a preparatory mirror, a second opinion, a surveillance device, or an automated evaluator. The same technology can therefore support or weaken feedback competence depending on how it is embedded in managerial practice.

5. Discussion: Tacit Erosion as a Theoretical Proposition

The reviewed evidence leaves our theoretical proposition of "tacit erosion" a plausible, but not yet empirically confirmed concept.

Several studies identify mechanisms through which AI use may weaken critical feedback competence such as cognitive offloading, sycophancy, bias amplification and reduced practice opportunities (Rinta-Kahila *et al.*, 2023; Glickman and Sharot, 2025; Chandra *et al.*, 2026; Deller, 2026).

However, research also suggest that AI-generated feedback may strengthen feedback processes when it complements rather than replaces human judgement, provides explanations, improves transparency and is embedded in hybrid human-AI processes (Braun *et al.*, 2024; Van Quaquebeke and Gerpott, 2024; Choudhary *et al.*, 2025; Förster *et al.*, 2025; Gupta and Gupta, 2025; Eijkenboom *et al.*, 2026). More broadly, depending on task design AI-supported work can also maintain or amplify expertise (Crowston and Bolici, 2025).

Longitudinal studies could therefore examine how sustained AI-use shifts feedback practice towards substitution, decision support or augmentation, and how these different forms of human-AI task division affect critical feedback competence over time.

Our proposition is based on four observations: First, AI-generated feedback offers a comfortable alternative to demanding interpersonal feedback. Second, AI's fluency, politeness and availability seem to reshape expectations about feedback. Third, repeatedly substituting AI-generated feedback for human feedback reduces opportunities to practise interpersonal critical feedback competence. Fourth, reduced experience with disagreeing positions may influence individual learning and development which may in turn affect team learning and, indirectly, organisational innovativeness.

The term tacit erosion is appropriate for two reasons. The erosion may be tacit because users often do not notice gradual shifts in capabilities, judgement, confidence or feedback expectations (Buijsman, Carter and Bermúdez, 2025; Glickman and Sharot, 2025). The competence at risk is also tacit because critical feedback competence is practice-based, relational and difficult to externalise (Polanyi and Sen, 2009; Turkle, 2025).

The contribution of this paper lies in raising the visibility of a development that impacts a human capability. AI may make feedback more available, consistent and emotionally acceptable, yet at the same time reduce opportunities to deal with the friction, discomfort and disagreement through which independent judgement

develops. In innovation contexts, disagreement is part of the process through which ideas are challenged, improved and tacit expertise is developed.

Our concept is proposed for the following settings. Tacit erosion is most likely where AI feedback is used frequently, where human feedback is avoided because it is uncomfortable, where AI outputs are treated as dependable, and where organisations lack transparency, role clarity and feedback governance. It is less likely where AI is used to prepare human dialogue, where managers remain accountable for evaluative judgement, and where teams explicitly discuss the limitations and consequences of AI-generated feedback.

Our recommendations are pragmatic. Organisations should actively manage and train the human feedback routines on which learning and development depend. This includes creating settings in which disagreement remains legitimate, valued and safe. Useful safeguards include keeping performance and developmental feedback anchored in relationships, continually training employees to challenge AI output, supporting them in their ability to evaluate AI-generated output and including them in AI algorithm training processes. These safeguards may help to preserve AI's efficiency benefits while strengthening the conditions required for critical feedback competence.

6. Conclusion

This scoping review asked whether AI-generated feedback may undermine critical feedback competence and organisational innovativeness. The available evidence does not yet allow a definitive answer. It does, however, show that AI-generated feedback can influence self-perception, trust, judgement, team dynamics and organisational learning conditions. Across these streams, a coherent pattern emerges: when AI-generated feedback replaces interpersonal feedback practice, it may gradually weaken the tacit competence required to give, receive and act upon critical feedback.

By connecting research on AI feedback, cognitive offloading, sycophancy, team dynamics and organisational learning this paper highlights a potential risk which we term "tacit erosion".

For managers, the key recommendation is to respect the impact AI-generated feedback may have on individuals, teams and organisations and design and integrate AI feedback intentionally. Value AI for pattern detection, preparation and reflection and offer these contributions to humans who comprehend context, relationships and consequences and who keep final evaluative responsibility.

For researchers, the next step is to examine the proposed mechanism, especially longitudinal studies on feedback tolerance, independent judgement, feedback avoidance and innovation-related team behaviour.

In sum, the current literature supports the need for role clarity, transparency, human accountability and deliberate practice opportunities. AI-generated feedback can strengthen organisational learning when it encourages reflection, explains its reasoning and remains embedded in human dialogue. It may weaken feedback competence when it substitutes interpersonal evaluation, reduces opportunities to practise disagreement, or encourages uncritical acceptance of agreeable output.

Future empirical work should examine whether our suggested safeguards may preserve feedback competence over time.

Ethical Declaration: All information needed is properly disclosed and no human subject data collection is involved in this research.

AI Declaration: ChatGPT 5.5 and perplexity.ai were used for text optimization and to make the flow of the text better and more formal.

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