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Leading at the Edge of the Algorithm: A Humanistic Framework for the AI-Augmented C-Suite

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Abstract

The accelerating diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into executive decision-making raises a foundational question: what distinctively human capacities must senior leaders cultivate to lead with judgment, accountability, and ethical integrity in an AI-augmented organizational world? This conceptual paper advances the HALE Framework — Humanistic AI-Augmented Leadership for Executives — comprising five interdependent pillars: (1) self-actualization as a developmental foundation; (2) spiritual intelligence as an integrative meta-capacity; (3) complexity navigation as a strategic lens; (4) conscious engagement with the automation-augmentation paradox; and (5) human-centric design as an ethical orientation. Drawing on management theory, humanistic management scholarship, spiritual intelligence literature, complexity science, and recent empirical findings on AI and leadership, the framework positions executive leadership not as competing with AI but as cultivating the developmental, ethical, and integrative capacities that AI cannot replicate. Five formal propositions are advanced to guide future empirical inquiry. Implications are developed for executive development, board governance, and future research design. The paper's marginal contribution relative to extant scholarship — particularly De Cremer's (2023) human-centric AI leadership work — lies in integrating developmental psychology, spiritual intelligence, and complexity theory into a unified, proposition-bearing framework explicitly calibrated to the C-suite context.

1.0 Introduction

The accelerating diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) since the public release of large language models in late 2022 has produced what may be the most rapid technology adoption in modern business history. Dwivedi et al. (2021) anticipated this disruption, arguing that AI represents transformative potential for the augmentation and replacement of human tasks across industrial, intellectual, and social applications at a pace that challenges existing managerial frameworks. Within three years of that observation, generative AI, agentic AI systems, and LLM-powered decision tools have become standard fixtures across enterprise operations. Hughes et al. (2024) document C-suite executives now routinely delegating strategic analysis, scenario planning, workforce modelling, and stakeholder communication to AI systems — tasks historically constitutive of senior leadership itself.

This technological transformation raises a foundational question that existing leadership theory has not yet adequately addressed: what distinctively human capacities must senior executives cultivate to lead with judgment, accountability, and ethical integrity in an AI-augmented organizational world? While research has examined AI's analytical and operational implications, considerably less attention has been given to how executive leadership must evolve when machines increasingly participate in cognitive and managerial work historically reserved for the C-suite.

This conceptual paper advances the HALE Framework — Humanistic AI-Augmented Leadership for Executives — built on five interdependent pillars: self-actualization as a developmental foundation for distinctively human executive capacity; spiritual intelligence as an integrative meta-capacity AI cannot replicate; complexity theory as a lens for navigating non-linear organizational dynamics; conscious engagement with the automation-augmentation paradox as the central strategic tension; and human-centric design as the ethical orientation guiding AI deployment. Five formal propositions accompany the framework to guide empirical inquiry. The paper concludes by clarifying its marginal contribution relative to prior scholarship and developing implications for executive development, board governance, and future research.

The framework's boundaries and scope warrant upfront clarification. The HALE Framework is a conceptual synthesis developed from management theory, humanistic management scholarship, spiritual intelligence literature, and complexity science. It does not claim to be a grounded theory, empirically tested model, or universal prescription for all leadership contexts. Its primary audience is the organizational C-suite in complex, AI-adopting enterprises, and it is proposed as a generative foundation for subsequent empirical research rather than as a settled account of AI-leadership dynamics. These boundary conditions are returned to in the limitations section.

2.0 Literature Review

Four intersecting streams of scholarship underpin the HALE Framework: the expanding empirical literature on AI's impact on executive roles; humanistic management and developmental leadership theory; spiritual intelligence in organizational contexts; and complexity science as a strategic leadership lens.

Stream 1: AI and the C-Suite

The literature on AI and executive leadership is expanding rapidly, though it remains largely focused on operational integration rather than developmental implications. Chowdhury et al. (2023) identify a tripartite AI capability framework for organizations — technical, organizational, and leadership readiness — arguing that the leadership dimension is the least developed in both theory and practice. De Cremer (2023), whose work represents the most proximate prior scholarship to the present paper, argues that the central leadership challenge of the AI era is not productivity but moral agency: the capacity to bear ethical responsibility for decisions in which AI systems are co-participants. Toth et al. (2022) extend this through an analysis of AI robot accountability, concluding that human executives remain the legitimate locus of moral responsibility even when AI systems generate the decision inputs.

The HALE Framework's marginal contribution relative to De Cremer's (2023) foundational work lies in three specific extensions. First, the framework integrates a developmental psychology dimension — self-actualization and constructive-developmental theory — that De Cremer does not address. Second, it incorporates spiritual intelligence as a theorized meta-capacity for ethical integration under pressure, a construct absent from De Cremer's analysis. Third, it situates these capacities within complexity science as a strategic epistemology, providing a mechanism by which executives navigate non-linear AI-augmented organizational dynamics. The HALE Framework thus does not replace De Cremer's contribution but builds above it, proposing the developmental and integrative capacities through which the moral agency De Cremer describes might actually be cultivated.

Stream 2: Humanistic Management and Developmental Leadership

Humanistic management theory holds that leadership cannot be reduced to technical competence or strategic calculation: it requires the full development of human capacities for judgment, moral reasoning, and meaning-making (Pirson, 2017). Within this tradition,

Kegan's (1994) constructive-developmental theory provides a framework for understanding how cognitive and ethical complexity develops across a leader's lifespan. Kegan identifies movement from socialized to self-authoring to self-transforming mind as the trajectory through which leaders gain the capacity for independent judgment and perspective-taking across competing value systems — capacities that become critical when AI systems generate decision inputs whose provenance, assumptions, and biases may be opaque to their users.

Maslow's (1970) self-actualization construct, applied to executive leadership by McLeod (2018) and others, identifies the upper register of human motivational development as characterized by values-driven purpose, ethical consistency, and the capacity for being-cognition — a form of perception relatively undistorted by ego-driven threat responses. In the AI-augmented context, being-cognition may be the mechanism through which self-actualizing executives are better equipped to detect and interrogate AI outputs rather than accepting them uncritically.

Stream 3: Spiritual Intelligence in Organizational Contexts

Spiritual intelligence (SQ) is among the more contested constructs in management scholarship, and a serious treatment of its role in the HALE Framework requires direct engagement with the critical literature rather than mere advocacy. Zohar and Marshall (2012) define SQ as the capacity to act from deep values and meaning, to use suffering as a source of growth, and to function beyond ego-driven motivation. Wigglesworth's (2012) SQ-21 operationalization provides a measurable construct with established psychometric properties, enabling empirical testing.

Critics of SQ's organizational application raise several substantive concerns that the present framework acknowledges. First, definitional boundary problems: SQ overlaps considerably with constructs such as moral reasoning, wisdom, and self-transcendence, raising questions about discriminant validity (King & DeCicco, 2009). Second, measurement challenges: self-report SQ instruments may conflate spiritual practice with spiritual capacity, and cultural transferability of Western-derived SQ frameworks has been questioned (Koenig, 2008). Third, organizational applicability: the translation of a contemplative construct into managerial decision contexts risks both reductionism and the instrumentalization of practices whose value derives precisely from their non-instrumental character.

The HALE Framework acknowledges these concerns and advances a more modest claim than wholesale endorsement of SQ as an organizational panacea. The claim is narrower: that whatever the correct operationalization and measurement of SQ, the capacity for executives to integrate values coherently under pressure, to act from purpose rather than reactivity, and to maintain ethical orientation amid organizational complexity is both theoretically plausible and practically significant — and that SQ, with appropriate measurement caveats, represents the most developed construct available for theorizing this capacity. Butanescu-Volanin's (2021) finding of an association between SQ and organizational performance indicators is treated here as preliminary and suggestive rather than as establishing causal or directional relationships; the methodological limitations of that single correlational study do not support strong inference, and future empirical work should employ longitudinal designs and multi-source measurement before stronger claims are warranted.

Stream 4: Complexity Science and Strategic Leadership

Complexity science offers a fundamentally different epistemology for organizational strategy than the rational planning models dominant in management education. Stacey (2011) argues that organizations are complex adaptive systems (CAS) in which causality is non-linear, outcomes are emergent, and planning horizons are inherently limited. Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) applied CAS theory to leadership, arguing that effective leadership in

complex environments involves enabling emergence rather than directing outcomes — a mode of leading that requires comfort with ambiguity, distributed sensing, and adaptive responsiveness rather than predictive control.

AI augmentation intensifies the complexity challenge in two ways. First, AI systems introduce their own non-linear dynamics: outputs may be emergent in ways their developers did not anticipate, and the interaction between AI systems and human organizations generates second-order effects that neither party fully controls. Second, AI augmentation may produce an illusion of reduced complexity — executives may mistake AI-generated scenario outputs for reliable predictions, systematically underestimating the irreducible uncertainty that complexity science identifies as a permanent feature of organizational life.

AI has already altered the logic of media production and circulation. In journalism, it supports drafting, editing, summarisation, transcription, translation, archiving, and discovery. On platforms, it ranks content, predicts relevance, detects policy violations, and personalises feeds (Broussard et al., 2019; Diakopoulos, 2019; Gillespie, 2018). In political communication and advertising, it allows actors to tailor messages to different audiences with increasing precision. In visual culture, generative systems can now produce synthetic photographs, voice clones, and videos that can be used for satire, creativity, propaganda, or fraud (Chesney & Citron, 2019).

These developments matter because they redistribute communicative power. Decisions once made by editors, reporters, or producers are increasingly shaped by systems trained on prior data and optimised for measurable outcomes. This does not remove human agency, but it changes where judgment sits and what kinds of judgment count. Visibility becomes partly a statistical matter. Credibility can be inferred from engagement. Relevance is predicted rather than argued. Public discourse is thus reorganised through infrastructures that are not always transparent to the people who inhabit them.

The key problem is that the goals of these systems are not naturally aligned with those of ethical communication. Recommendation systems often reward attention, emotional arousal, novelty, and repetition rather than depth, fairness, or public reason (Gillespie, 2018; O'Neil, 2016). Generative systems can produce fluent falsehoods or persuasive half-truths. Automated moderation can misread irony, political slang, code-switching, and locally meaningful expressions. The result is a media order in which scale improves while judgment may worsen.

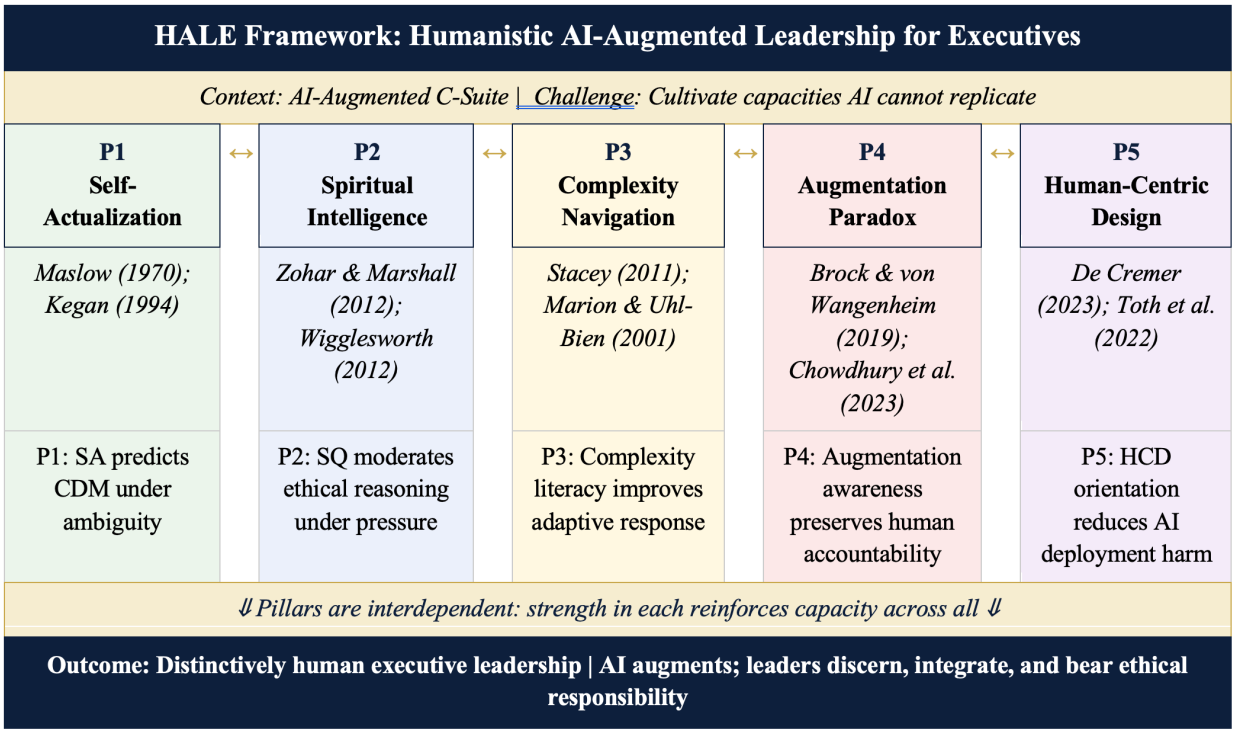
It is important not to anthropomorphise the technology too quickly. AI systems do not autonomously decide to privilege virality over verification or English over local nuance. Those priorities are built into them through data selection, model design, product incentives, moderation policy, commercial pressure, and institutional neglect. The present concern is therefore not with machines in the abstract, but with AI-mediated communication systems as socio-technical arrangements shaped by human choices.

Once this is recognised, the question of marginalised voices moves from the margins of the discussion to its centre. The issue is not merely whether AI works efficiently. It is whether the new infrastructure of mediation distributes recognition and voice more justly than the older one, or whether it intensifies old asymmetries under the banner of innovation.

3.0 The HALE Framework: Five Interdependent Pillars

The HALE Framework proposes that effective executive leadership in AI-augmented organizations requires the cultivation of five interdependent human capacities. The pillars are not sequential developmental stages but mutually reinforcing competencies: strength in each amplifies capacity across the others, and deficits in any single pillar constrain the exercise of the remaining four. This interdependence is represented in Figure 1 and theorized through the five formal propositions that accompany each pillar.

The selection of these five pillars rests on two organizing criteria. First, each addresses a capacity that is both theoretically significant and demonstrably not replicable by current or foreseeable AI systems — they represent distinctively human developmental achievements rather than technical skills that AI may eventually match or exceed. Second, each pillar is supported by an established theoretical tradition in management, organizational behaviour, or adjacent fields, enabling formal proposition development and subsequent empirical testing. Pillars were not selected to be exhaustive — other human capacities matter in AI-augmented leadership — but to be coherent, testable, and generative as a theoretical starting point.



Note. ↔ *denotes bidirectional reinforcement; pillars are not sequential stages but mutually constitutive capacities.*

Fig 1: The HALE Framework: Five Interdependent Pillars of Human-Centred Executive Leadership in the AI-Augmented Organization

3.1 Pillar 1: Self-Actualization as Executive Foundation

Self-actualization, in the tradition of both Maslow (1970) and Kegan (1994), describes the highest registers of human development: the capacity for independent values-based judgment, perspective-taking across competing moral frameworks, and being-cognition that perceives situations with relative freedom from ego-defensive distortion. For C-suite executives, self-actualization is not a personal aspiration but an organizational necessity. Executives operating at Kegan's self-authoring or self-transforming stages are better positioned to interrogate AI-generated decision inputs, recognize when algorithmic outputs reflect embedded assumptions misaligned with organizational values, and maintain ethical orientation under competitive pressure.

The boundary condition for this pillar is context-specificity: self-actualization moderates AI-augmented decision quality most significantly in conditions of genuine ambiguity — where AI outputs are uncertain, value-laden, or ethically consequential. In routine, well-defined decision contexts, developmental stage may matter less. This boundary condition limits the generalizability of P1 to high-stakes executive decision environments rather than all organizational contexts.

Proposition 1 (P1): Executives operating at higher levels of self-actualization — as operationalized by Kegan's (1994) constructive-developmental stages — will demonstrate greater capacity for conscious decision-making under ambiguity than executives operating at conventional developmental stages, independent of technical AI literacy.

3.2 Pillar 2: Spiritual Intelligence as Integrative Meta-Capacity

Within the HALE Framework, spiritual intelligence is advanced as a theorized integrative meta-capacity: the capacity to draw coherence from competing values, to act from purpose rather than reactivity, and to maintain ethical orientation under conditions of organizational pressure and moral complexity. The claim is not that all executives need contemplative practice, nor that SQ as currently operationalized captures this capacity without residual conceptual ambiguity. The claim is that whatever the correct construct label, executives in AI-augmented organizations face a distinctive integration challenge — coherently orchestrating human judgment, AI inputs, stakeholder interests, and ethical commitments — for which existing constructs of emotional intelligence, moral reasoning, and strategic thinking provide only partial accounts.

The narrower, more carefully hedged claim advanced here is that SQ — as operationalized through Wigglesworth's (2012) SQ-21 framework — provides a theoretically plausible and psychometrically operational starting point for studying this integrative capacity. The association between SQ indicators and performance outcomes reported by Butanescu-Volanin (2021) is preliminary and correlational, and the causal direction and mechanisms remain to be established through longitudinal research. Future empirical work should additionally address SQ's discriminant validity relative to emotional intelligence and moral identity constructs before strong organizational claims can be sustained.

Proposition 2 (P2): Executives with higher levels of spiritual intelligence — as measured by validated instruments such as Wigglesworth's (2012) SQ-21 — will demonstrate more consistent ethical reasoning under organizational pressure than executives with lower SQ, with this relationship expected to be strongest in high-stakes, value-laden AI-deployment decisions.

3.3 Pillar 3: Complexity Navigation as Strategic Epistemology

Complexity science provides the HALE Framework's strategic epistemology: a principled account of why AI-augmented organizational environments are not merely complicated but genuinely complex — characterized by non-linearity, emergence, and irreducible uncertainty. Marion and Uhl-Bien's (2001) complexity leadership theory identifies three leadership functions in CAS environments: adaptive leadership (enabling emergence), administrative leadership (managing structures), and enabling leadership (creating conditions for productive interaction). AI augmentation modifies all three: AI systems participate in each function while introducing new sources of emergence and uncertainty that human leaders must navigate.

The boundary condition for this pillar is organizational context: complexity navigation has its greatest leadership significance in genuinely complex adaptive environments — large, interconnected, rapidly changing organizations — and may be less decisive in stable, rule-governed contexts where complicated rather than complex problems predominate. This distinction matters for proposition testing: empirical research should specify organizational complexity as a moderating variable rather than treating all AI-augmented environments as equivalent.

Proposition 3 (P3): Executives with demonstrated complexity literacy — understood as familiarity with CAS principles, non-linear causality, and emergence — will generate more adaptive strategic responses to non-linear AI-augmented organizational disruption than executives applying linear planning frameworks, with this effect moderated by organizational complexity level.

3.4 Pillar 4: The Automation-Augmentation Paradox

The automation-augmentation paradox describes the central strategic tension of AI-augmented leadership: AI systems simultaneously extend and erode executive agency. They extend agency by augmenting analytical capacity, processing speed, and option generation. They erode it by creating conditions for accountability diffusion — the implicit or explicit displacement of moral responsibility onto algorithmic systems — and by generating automation bias, the well-documented tendency for human decision-makers to systematically over-weight algorithmic outputs relative to their epistemic warrant (Brock & von Wangenheim, 2019).

This pillar's contribution relative to De Cremer (2023) is the framing of the paradox as requiring active executive management rather than passive awareness. Executives must not only understand that AI outputs require human adjudication; they must develop the deliberate cognitive habits and organizational structures through which this adjudication is exercised consistently rather than selectively. Chowdhury et al. (2023) document that organizations systematically underinvest in leadership-level AI literacy despite its centrality to effective augmentation governance.

Proposition 4 (P4): Executives who explicitly distinguish AI-augmented from AI-autonomous decisions — and who have developed organizational protocols for that distinction — will demonstrate higher accountability clarity and lower incidence of automation bias than executives who treat AI outputs as neutral decision inputs.

3.5 Pillar 5: Human-Centric Design as Ethical Orientation

Human-centric design, as applied to executive AI leadership, denotes the orientation through which decisions about AI deployment are made: one in which the impact of AI systems on human stakeholders — employees, customers, communities, and society — is treated as a constitutive organizational value rather than a compliance constraint or reputational risk to be managed. De Cremer (2023) provides the foundational argument for this orientation; the present pillar extends it by connecting human-centric design explicitly to the C-suite decision architecture rather than treating it as a product or system design principle alone.

Toth et al.'s (2022) analysis of AI robot accountability establishes that the legitimacy of human-centric claims ultimately rests on the capacity of human executives to bear and exercise genuine moral responsibility for AI-driven decisions — a capacity that requires the developmental foundations articulated in Pillars 1 through 4. Human-centric design is thus the ethical output of the HALE Framework: the orientation toward which self-actualization, spiritual intelligence, complexity navigation, and augmentation awareness collectively point.

Proposition 5 (P5): Organizations whose C-suite demonstrates sustained human-centric design orientation in AI deployment will report fewer unintended stakeholder harms and higher organizational trust in AI systems than organizations applying efficiency-

first or compliance-driven AI deployment logics, with this relationship mediated by the strength of each preceding pillar.

3.6 Framework Integration and Theoretical Mechanisms

The five pillars of the HALE Framework are interdependent rather than additive. Self-actualization (P1) provides the developmental substrate from which spiritual intelligence (P2) can be cultivated as a genuine integrative capacity rather than a performance. Complexity literacy (P3) provides the strategic epistemology within which both self-actualization and SQ can be applied to organizational challenges rather than remaining as personal developmental achievements. Augmentation paradox awareness (P4) applies the preceding three capacities to the specific organizational problem of AI-mediated decision-making. Human-centric design (P5) crystallizes all four into an organizational orientation that can be embedded in governance structures, hiring criteria, executive development programmes, and board accountability mechanisms.

The theorized mechanism connecting these pillars is what the framework calls deliberate executive identity coherence: the ongoing process through which self-actualizing leaders integrate their values, their understanding of organizational complexity, their capacity for ethical reasoning under pressure, and their accountability for AI deployment into a coherent executive identity. This mechanism is analogous to what Kegan (1994) describes as the self-transforming mind's capacity to hold multiple value systems in dialogue without being captured by any single one — applied here to the specific challenge of AI-augmented organizational leadership.

Boundary conditions across the framework deserve explicit statement. The HALE Framework is most applicable to senior executives in complex, AI-adopting organizations where decision-making is genuinely value-laden and consequential. It is less applicable to algorithmic management contexts, front-line supervisory roles, or organizations where AI deployment is limited to routine task automation. The propositions are strongest where organizational complexity, decision stakes, and AI integration are simultaneously high — a condition increasingly characteristic of large enterprise C-suites but not universal across all organizational contexts.

3.7 Summary of Formal Propositions

Table 1 summarizes the five formal propositions derived from the HALE Framework, their pillar anchors, and the key theoretical literature from which each proposition is derived. These propositions are advanced as empirically testable hypotheses for future quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research.

Table 1. Summary of HALE Framework Formal Propositions

Prop.	Pillar	Formal Statement	Anchoring Literature
P1	Self-Actualization	*Executives operating at higher levels of self-actualization (Kegan Level 4+) will demonstrate greater capacity for conscious decision-making under ambiguity than those operating at conventional developmental stages.*	Kegan (1994); Maslow (1970)
P2	Spiritual Intelligence	*Executives with higher measured SQ will exhibit more consistent ethical reasoning under organizational pressure, moderating the relationship between situational demands and ethical compromise.*	Zohar & Marshall (2012); Wigglesworth (2012); Butanescu-Volanin (2021)
P3	Complexity Navigation	*Executives trained in complexity theory (CAS principles) will generate more adaptive strategic responses to non-*	Stacey (2011); Marion & Uhl-Bien (2001)

		linear organizational disruption than those applying linear planning frameworks.	
P4	Augmentation Paradox	*Executives who explicitly distinguish AI-augmented from AI-autonomous decisions will demonstrate higher accountability clarity and lower ethical drift than those who treat AI outputs as neutral inputs.*	Brock & von Wangenheim (2019); De Cremer (2023)
P5	Human-Centric Design	*Organizations whose C-suite applies human-centric AI deployment principles will report fewer unintended stakeholder harms and higher employee trust in AI systems than those applying efficiency-first deployment logics.*	De Cremer (2023); Toth et al. (2022)

4.0 Discussions

The HALE Framework addresses a specific gap in the AI leadership literature: the absence of an integrative, developmental account of what distinctively human executive capacities must be cultivated as AI systems assume greater participation in managerial work. Existing scholarship has addressed AI's technical implications (Dwivedi et al., 2021), its organizational governance dimensions (Chowdhury et al., 2023), and its ethical challenges (De Cremer, 2023; Toth et al., 2022). The framework contributes by integrating developmental psychology (Kegan, 1994; Maslow, 1970), spiritual intelligence theory (Zohar & Marshall, 2012; Wigglesworth, 2012), and complexity science (Stacey, 2011; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001) into a unified, proposition-bearing architecture explicitly calibrated to the C-suite context.

The framework's engagement with the spiritual intelligence literature warrants further methodological discussion. The decision to include SQ as a pillar is not an endorsement of all claims made in the SQ literature, several of which are contested on measurement and validity grounds. Rather, it reflects the view that the integrative capacity SQ attempts to operationalize — the capacity to act coherently from values under pressure — is both theoretically significant and under-represented in existing AI leadership frameworks. The framework invites researchers to refine, challenge, or replace the SQ construct while preserving the theoretical function it serves within the HALE architecture.

The automation-augmentation paradox pillar makes a contribution distinct from prior scholarship by framing the challenge not as AI literacy (knowing what AI can do) but as accountability clarity (knowing when and how human executives bear moral responsibility for AI-influenced decisions). This distinction matters practically: organizations that invest in AI literacy without developing governance structures for accountability clarity may produce executives who understand AI's capabilities while remaining systematically unable to resist automation bias in high-stakes contexts.

4.1 Implications

Executive Development

The HALE Framework suggests that executive development programmes need to extend beyond AI literacy training to address developmental and integrative capacities. Specifically, programmes should incorporate: developmental coaching aligned with Kegan's constructive-developmental framework; reflective practice on values integration under pressure; complexity science as a strategic thinking foundation; and structured deliberation protocols for AI-augmented decision governance. These are not standard features of current MBA or executive education curricula.

Board Governance

Boards bear fiduciary responsibility for ensuring that organizations exercise appropriate judgment in AI-augmented decision contexts. The HALE Framework implies board-level assessment criteria that extend beyond technical AI governance (algorithmic auditing, bias

monitoring) to developmental governance: evaluating whether C-suite executives demonstrate the self-actualization, SQ, complexity literacy, and human-centric design orientation the framework identifies as necessary for responsible AI leadership.

5.0 Conclusion and Future Research

The question of how executive leaders should cultivate distinctively human capacities in an AI-augmented organizational world is among the most significant managerial challenges of the present decade. The HALE Framework proposes that this cultivation requires attention to five interdependent pillars — self-actualization, spiritual intelligence, complexity navigation, augmentation paradox awareness, and human-centric design — and advances five formal propositions to guide the empirical research this question deserves. The framework does not position AI as a threat to executive leadership but as a condition that makes the development of genuinely human capacities more urgent, not less. Most organizations, as De Cremer (2023) observes, are investing heavily in AI systems while underinvesting in the human leadership capacities on which those systems' responsible deployment depends. The HALE Framework is offered as a theoretically grounded foundation for correcting that imbalance.

Several limitations bound the present contribution. First, as a conceptual paper, the HALE Framework does not provide empirical evidence for its propositions; the framework is a theoretical starting point, not an established account of AI-augmented leadership dynamics. Second, the selection of five pillars, while principled, is not exhaustive: emotional intelligence, intercultural competence, and systems thinking represent additional human capacities relevant to AI-augmented leadership that the present framework does not address. Third, the framework was developed primarily from Western management and organizational behaviour scholarship; its applicability across cultural and institutional contexts requires explicit examination. Fourth, the SQ pillar carries measurement uncertainty that limits the precision with which P2 can be operationalized absent further construct validation work. Fifth, the framework is calibrated to large enterprise C-suites in AI-adopting organizations and should not be extrapolated without modification to other organizational levels or contexts.

The five propositions generate a research agenda spanning multiple methodologies. In future research, quantitative studies can test P1 through P3 using validated developmental and SQ instruments against decision-quality outcomes. Qualitative research can examine how executives narrate and enact the automation-augmentation distinction (P4) in practice. Organizational-level studies can examine the relationship between C-suite human-centric orientation and AI deployment outcomes (P5) across industries and institutional contexts. Longitudinal designs are particularly needed for P2, where the causal direction of the SQ-decision quality relationship cannot be established through cross-sectional research.

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