

Internal Communication Practices and Their Impact on Employee Engagement and Relationship Satisfaction

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Abstract

With the rise of digital and hybrid work models, internal communication is now crucial for employee engagement and positive workplace relationships. Research shows that clear, strategic communication boosts employee motivation and satisfaction (Kimani, 2024; Carter, 2024). This study investigates how interactions between colleagues, communication with supervisors, leadership messages, and digital tools affect employees' experiences. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory and Communication Satisfaction Theory, this research will use a quantitative survey to analyse these factors. Initial findings indicate that open, consistent, and reciprocal communication strengthens employees' sense of belonging and overall satisfaction, fostering a more supportive and productive work environment.

Keywords: Internal communication, employee engagement, hybrid work, workplace relationships, communication practices

Introduction

In today's organizations, with remote and hybrid work arrangements prevalent, internal communication has evolved from a simple operational duty to a crucial organizational strategy. It involves all types of communication, both structured and casual, that help employees work together, stay updated, and foster connections. Studies repeatedly show that employees who feel connected, supported, and well-informed are more engaged and have better workplace relationships (Vora, Patra & R., 2017; Verghese, 2017). This research aims to explore the impact of particular internal communication methods on employee engagement and their satisfaction with workplace relationships in modern organizations.

Literature Review

Internal communication refers to the broad set of message exchanges occurring within an organization through channels such as meetings, messaging platforms, email, town halls, and collaborative tools (Verghese, 2017). It flows in multiple directions—upward, downward, horizontal, and cross-functional—and plays a crucial role in clarifying expectations, coordinating tasks, and communicating priorities.

Employee engagement—defined as the psychological and emotional investment employees bring to their roles—is strongly linked to communication quality. Studies show that communication promoting clarity, inclusion, and responsiveness strengthens engagement and commitment (Kimani, 2024; Carter, 2024). Relationship satisfaction, similarly, depends on the positivity, supportiveness, and meaningfulness of workplace interactions (Gehrau et al., 2024).

Several theories support this relationship.

- **Social Exchange Theory** When employees feel they are treated with respect and supported through communication, they tend to respond with more positive attitudes. (Romero-Rodriguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2024).
- **Communication Satisfaction Theory** shows how being transparent, open, and responsive can influence employees' job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization (Phan, 2025).
- **Organizational Support Theory** indicates that transparent communication shows the organization genuinely cares about employees' well-being (Gehrau et al., 2024).
- **Psychological Safety Theory** stresses the value of open dialogue where employees can voice their thoughts without fear (Romero-Rodriguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2024).
- **Media Richness Theory** points out that the richness of the communication medium plays a role in determining message clarity and the level of human connection it fosters (Phan, 2025).

Together, these perspectives show that communication is both informational and relational, shaping overall employee experience.

Types of Internal Communication Practices

- **Leadership Communication**
 - Involves communicating mission, vision, and strategic direction.
 - Enhances transparency and awareness of organizational priorities (Carter, 2024).
 - Strengthens trust and engagement by establishing credibility (Kimani, 2024).
- **Supervisory Communication**
 - Includes daily task-related exchanges, feedback, and recognition.
 - Strong supervisory communication is closely linked to job satisfaction and healthy workplace relationships (Vora, Patra & R., 2017).
- **Peer Communication**
 - Encourages teamwork and informal collaboration.
 - Supports knowledge sharing and problem solving (Verghese, 2017).
 - Strengthens belongingness and camaraderie (Gehrau et al., 2024).
- **Digital Communication Tools**
 - Include emails, messaging apps, collaborative platforms, and virtual meeting tools.
 - Essential for hybrid and remote work efficiency (Phan, 2025).
 - Improve accessibility and workflow but may create overload if misused (Romero-Rodriguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2024).
- **Two-Way Communication / Employee Voice**
 - Enables employees to share ideas and concerns.
 - Builds empowerment and involvement (Gehrau et al., 2024).
- **Internal Branding & Corporate Storytelling**
 - Communicates organizational values and identity.
 - Reinforces cultural alignment and shared purpose (Phan, 2025).
- **Crisis Communication**
 - Ensures clarity and reassurance during disruptions.
 - Builds confidence in leadership responsiveness (Carter, 2024).

Impact on Relationship Satisfaction

- **Builds Trust**

- Honest, respectful, and transparent communication fosters trust between employees and the organization, as supported by research showing that openness strengthens perceived organizational support (Gehrau et al., 2024; Kimani, 2024).
- When employees feel acknowledged and informed, workplace relationships naturally improve, aligning with findings that transparent communication enhances engagement and relational satisfaction (Carter, 2024).

- **Reduces Conflict**

- Clear and consistent communication minimizes misunderstandings and uncertainty, which reduces the likelihood of interpersonal conflict (Verghese, 2017).
- Addressing expectations early helps prevent conflicts and maintains a peaceful work environment, reflecting studies emphasizing clarity as a key factor in communication satisfaction (Phan, 2025).

- **Encourages Cooperation**

- Effective communication supports smooth collaboration, information flow, and collective problem-solving, reinforcing the role of communication in teamwork and empowerment (Romero-Rodriguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2024).
- Strong communication networks reinforce teamwork and enhance overall team performance, consistent with internal communication research highlighting peer and cross-functional interactions (Vora, Patra & R., 2017).

- **Improves Supervisor–Employee Relationships**

- Regular guidance, empathetic communication, and helpful feedback strengthen support between supervisors and employees, a relationship widely recognized in engagement literature (Kimani, 2024).
- Positive communication patterns lead to stronger relational bonds and higher satisfaction with supervisors, aligning with studies emphasizing the importance of supervisory communication quality (Carter, 2024).

- **Strengthens Corporate Culture**

- Consistent communication of values, norms, and expectations reinforces the organizational culture, which is supported by research on internal branding and communication-driven culture building (Phan, 2025).
- A communicative, value-driven environment promotes positive relationships and deeper interpersonal connections, as highlighted by studies linking communication practices with employee well-being and relational outcomes (Romero-Rodriguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2024).

Research Gaps

Although internal communication has been examined extensively, gaps remain. Studies specific to remote and hybrid environments are still emerging (Phan, 2025). Digital communication fatigue—an increasingly common issue—requires further exploration (Romero-Rodriguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2024). Relationship satisfaction is often overshadowed by performance-related outcomes (Carter, 2024). Further, distinctions between communication quantity and quality are underrepresented in current literature (Gehrau et al., 2024).

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative, descriptive, survey-based design is used, aligned with recommendations from previous internal communication studies (Kimani, 2024). Fifty multiple-choice items addressing identified research gaps were administered to respondents.

Sampling

Employees across IT, Education, and Service sectors were included. Random or stratified sampling ensured diverse representation (Carter, 2024).

Data Analysis

The sample consisted of 110 respondents across age ranges. Email and messaging apps were the most used communication channels in hybrid contexts, consistent with findings by Phan (2025). Respondents emphasized clarity, consistency, and timely communication as key contributors to positive work relationships (Gehrau et al., 2024). Reported challenges—such as delays and vague instructions—mirror issues highlighted by Romero-Rodriguez & Castillo-Abdul (2024).

Overall, participants preferred communication quality over quantity, supporting earlier findings by Kimani (2024) and Verghese (2017).

Practical Implications

Findings suggest that organizations should invest in clear and transparent communication to improve engagement and workplace relationships (Carter, 2024). Training supervisors in communication skills improves relational satisfaction, supporting insights from Vora, Patra & R. (2017). While digital tools enhance efficiency, their overuse may cause overload (Romero-Rodriguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2024). Strengthening communication systems can improve morale, reduce turnover intentions, and reinforce organizational culture (Kimani, 2024).

Conclusion

Internal communication is essential for keeping employees engaged and maintaining strong workplace relationships. When communication is managed effectively, collaboration improves, employees feel connected to the organization, and psychological safety increases (Phan, 2025). Strong communication builds trust and enhances both individual and organizational outcomes (Gehrau et al., 2024). To sustain these benefits, organizations must invest in effective communication channels, leadership training, and open two-way dialogue (Kimani, 2024; Carter, 2024).

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