

Internal Communication and Its Impact on Employee Engagement: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Employee engagement has emerged as a strategic imperative for organizations striving to maintain sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly volatile global marketplace. Internal communication serves as a critical organizational mechanism through which leadership aligns employees with strategic goals, fosters interpersonal trust, cultivates a cohesive organizational culture, and enhances workplace relationships across all hierarchical levels. This study investigates the multidimensional impact of internal communication on employee engagement among employees across various industrial sectors. Employing a quantitative research design grounded in positivist epistemology, primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 250 full-time employees. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and multiple regression analysis were employed to examine the nature and strength of relationships between key dimensions of internal communication and employee engagement. The findings reveal that communication transparency, leadership communication, feedback mechanisms, and communication satisfaction collectively and individually serve as significant positive predictors of employee engagement. The study contributes to the expanding body of scholarly literature emphasizing the strategic role of internal communication in driving organizational performance and employee well-being.

Keywords: Internal Communication, Employee Engagement, Organizational Communication, Leadership Communication, Employee Satisfaction, Organizational Performance

1. Introduction

Organizations today operate in increasingly dynamic, complex, and uncertain environments where human capital is widely recognized as one of the most strategically valuable assets. In this context, employee engagement has emerged as a significant and robust predictor of organizational effectiveness, productivity, innovation capacity, and employee retention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Nadales-Gallego et al., 2025). Engaged employees demonstrate higher levels of discretionary effort, organizational citizenship behaviors, and psychological investment in their work, all of which translate into tangible organizational outcomes (Arif et al., 2023).

Communication serves as the structural foundation of organizational functioning. Effective internal communication enables organizations to disseminate strategic information, foster collaborative relationships, reduce uncertainty and ambiguity, and strengthen employee commitment and organizational identity (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Kim & Uysal, 2025). According to the Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report (2024), organizations with highly engaged employees consistently outperform their competitors across multiple performance dimensions including profitability, customer satisfaction, and productivity. The report further emphasizes that only a minority of the global workforce considers itself actively engaged, representing a significant organizational challenge.

Despite substantial investments in communication infrastructure, digital technologies, and employee engagement initiatives, many organizations continue to experience alarming levels of disengagement. This persistent gap between communication investment and engagement outcomes highlights the critical need to empirically investigate how specific dimensions of internal communication contribute differentially to employee engagement and broader organizational outcomes (Jiang & Shen, 2023; Lemon & Boman, 2023). The present study responds

directly to this imperative by examining the predictive utility of four key communication dimensions: communication transparency, leadership communication, feedback mechanisms, and communication satisfaction.

2. Background of the Study

Historically, internal communication was viewed primarily as a unidirectional, top-down tool for information dissemination, concerned chiefly with the efficient transmission of organizational directives and operational updates. However, contemporary research has fundamentally reconceptualized it as a strategic organizational function capable of shaping organizational culture, reinforcing values, and influencing employee attitudes and behaviors in profound ways (Men & Stacks, 2014). This paradigm shift reflects a broader recognition that employees are not merely passive recipients of organizational information but are active participants in co-constructing organizational meaning and identity.

The rise of digital workplaces, hybrid work arrangements, geographically dispersed teams, and the increasing prevalence of knowledge work has further amplified the strategic importance of effective communication. Organizations now rely on diverse and evolving communication channels including organizational intranets, enterprise social media platforms, virtual meetings, electronic newsletters, instant messaging applications, and collaborative digital workspaces to engage and inform their employees. The proliferation of these channels presents both opportunities and challenges for maintaining communication coherence, consistency, and quality.

Research consistently indicates that communication quality significantly influences critical employee outcomes, including organizational trust, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement (Karanges et al., 2015). Poorly managed communication environments, characterized by information ambiguity, inconsistency, or a lack of transparency, tend to generate uncertainty and distrust, which are antecedents of disengagement. Consequently, progressive organizations are increasingly integrating robust communication strategies into their broader employee engagement frameworks, recognizing communication as a foundational driver of workforce vitality.

3. Review of Literature

The following section synthesizes the most influential theoretical and empirical contributions to the fields of internal communication and employee engagement. The review is organized chronologically and thematically to highlight the evolution of scholarly understanding and to identify key theoretical frameworks underpinning the present study.

Kahn (1990)

William Kahn's seminal work introduced the conceptual foundations of employee engagement as a distinct psychological state. Kahn (1990) proposed that employees differentially invest their personal selves in work roles based on three psychological conditions: meaningfulness (the sense that work is worthwhile and valuable), safety (the perception of interpersonal and organizational security), and availability (possession of the physical, emotional, and cognitive resources required for engagement). This foundational framework continues to inform subsequent engagement research and underscores the relational nature of the engagement process, positioning organizational communication as a primary vehicle through which these psychological conditions are either cultivated or undermined.

Welch and Jackson (2007)

Welch and Jackson proposed an influential stakeholder model of internal communication, conceptualizing it as a multidimensional strategic management process that extends well beyond information transmission. Their framework identifies four dimensions of internal communication: line manager to employee communication, team peer communication, project peer communication, and corporate internal communication. They argued that each dimension contributes uniquely to promoting employee commitment, fostering organizational identity, and enhancing organizational effectiveness. Critically, their model emphasizes the bidirectional nature of effective communication and positions employee engagement as an intended outcome of deliberate, strategically aligned

internal communication practices. Their work has been widely adopted as a theoretical scaffold in subsequent empirical investigations.

Saks (2006)

Drawing upon social exchange theory, Saks (2006) investigated the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement, demonstrating that perceived organizational support and communication practices are robust positive predictors of engagement. He posited that employees who perceive their organizations as communicating openly, providing adequate informational resources, and offering psychological support reciprocate through higher levels of job and organizational engagement. This social exchange perspective has proved particularly influential in theorizing the mechanisms through which communication exerts its effects on engagement, suggesting that communication functions not merely as information transfer but as a signal of organizational valuation of the employee.

Men and Stacks (2014)

Men and Stacks conducted an empirically rigorous investigation into the effects of authentic leadership communication on employee outcomes. Their findings demonstrated that transparent, authentic communication from organizational leaders significantly increases employee trust, satisfaction, and engagement. They argued that when leaders communicate with openness, consistency, and a genuine concern for employee welfare, they create psychological safety that is essential for full engagement. Importantly, their research established a direct causal pathway from leadership communication style to employee behavioral engagement, suggesting that leader communication represents a high-leverage point for organizational interventions aimed at improving engagement outcomes.

Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, and Lings (2015)

Karanges and colleagues conducted a comprehensive empirical investigation into the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement in a large Australian service organization. Their findings identified communication satisfaction as one of the most powerful predictors of employee engagement, surpassing several other organizational factors typically associated with engagement. The study utilized structural equation modeling to establish the pathways through which communication satisfaction mediates relationships between specific communication practices and engagement outcomes. Their work provides robust empirical support for the strategic investment in internal communication quality and reinforces the importance of designing communication systems that genuinely satisfy employees' informational and relational needs.

Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra (2014)

Mishra and colleagues conducted an influential investigation into the expanded and evolving role of internal communications in driving employee engagement in contemporary organizational contexts. Their study emphasized that leadership communication, particularly when characterized by authenticity, consistency, and strategic alignment, is a critical determinant of employee organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors. The authors argued that internal communication professionals must evolve beyond traditional roles focused on message production and dissemination to become strategic partners capable of advising leadership on communication practices that build relational trust and deepen employee engagement. Their work extended the understanding of internal communication as a strategic organizational capability rather than a merely operational function.

Ruck and Welch (2012)

Ruck and Welch conducted an important investigation into employee voice and its relationship to communication effectiveness and engagement. Their study argued that genuine two-way communication, characterized by robust mechanisms for upward communication and meaningful employee voice, contributes significantly to both engagement and organizational effectiveness. They demonstrated that employees who perceive their voices as genuinely heard and valued by organizational leadership report substantially higher levels of engagement, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. Their work challenges organizations to move beyond one-

directional communication models and to invest meaningfully in creating conditions under which employee perspectives and concerns can be authentically expressed and responsively addressed.

Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, and Saks (2015)

Albrecht and colleagues developed an integrative framework connecting employee engagement to both its organizational antecedents and performance-related consequences. Their model positions communication climate as a fundamental organizational antecedent of engagement, arguing that organizations characterized by open, transparent, and participative communication climates are systematically more effective at generating and sustaining high levels of employee engagement. The framework draws upon job demands-resources theory to explain the mechanisms through which communication serves as an organizational resource that buffers against disengagement and energizes employees toward productive work behaviors. Their contribution highlights the systemic nature of engagement and the importance of considering communication not as an isolated intervention but as a component of broader organizational climate.

Verghese (2017)

Verghese investigated internal communication effectiveness in the context of rapidly changing organizational environments and digital communication transformation. His research underscored the importance of communication channel selection, message frequency, and strategic intent in determining whether internal communication achieves its intended engagement outcomes. Verghese argued that organizations increasingly operating in volatile and uncertain environments require communication strategies that are both agile and employee-centric, capable of responding quickly to changing informational needs while maintaining consistency of organizational messaging. His work has particular relevance for contemporary organizations navigating digital transformation and hybrid work arrangements, where traditional communication approaches may prove insufficient.

4. Research Gap

Although a substantial and growing body of research has examined employee engagement and internal communication independently, relatively fewer studies have empirically investigated the combined and simultaneous effects of multiple communication dimensions on employee engagement within a single, unified empirical framework. This limitation is particularly pronounced in the context of emerging and developing economies, where distinct cultural, institutional, and organizational conditions may moderate the relationships identified in Western-dominated research traditions.

Furthermore, the majority of existing empirical studies have examined individual communication dimensions in isolation, limiting the capacity to compare their relative predictive contributions and to understand how they collectively shape the engagement experience. The present study seeks to address this significant research gap by simultaneously examining the influence of four theoretically grounded communication dimensions, namely communication transparency, leadership communication, feedback mechanisms, and communication satisfaction, on employee engagement. In doing so, the study contributes to a more holistic and ecologically valid understanding of the communication-engagement relationship.

5. Research Objectives

The study aims to:

- Examine the overall nature and direction of the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement.
- Analyze the specific impact of communication transparency on employee engagement levels.
- Investigate the influence of leadership communication style and quality on employee engagement.
- Assess the effect of organizational feedback mechanisms on employee participation, morale, and engagement.

- Determine the relative and combined predictive power of internal communication dimensions as predictors of employee engagement.

6. Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence reviewed above, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H1: Internal communication as a composite construct positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

H2: Communication transparency positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

H3: Leadership communication positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

H4: Feedback mechanisms positively and significantly influence employee engagement.

H5: Communication satisfaction positively and significantly influences employee engagement.

7. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study positions internal communication as a multidimensional independent construct comprising four empirically distinct and theoretically grounded dimensions. These dimensions are posited to exert direct, positive effects on employee engagement, which constitutes the primary dependent variable of the study.

Independent Variables:

- Communication Transparency — the degree to which organizations share accurate, complete, and timely information with employees
- Leadership Communication — the quality, authenticity, and consistency of communication from organizational leaders
- Feedback Mechanisms — the availability and effectiveness of formal and informal channels for upward and bidirectional communication
- Communication Satisfaction — the overall level of employee satisfaction with organizational communication practices and outcomes

Dependent Variable:

- Employee Engagement — operationalized through the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of work engagement as measured by the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

8. Research Methodology

8.1 Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and explanatory research design consistent with a positivist philosophical orientation. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed to collect data from employees across multiple industries at a single point in time. This design was selected for its efficiency in capturing large-sample data, its suitability for examining relationships among variables, and its alignment with the deductive research logic underpinning hypothesis testing. While the cross-sectional nature of the design precludes definitive causal inferences, the use of regression analysis enables systematic assessment of predictive relationships between the communication dimensions and employee engagement.

8.2 Population

The target population for this study comprised full-time employees working in five major industrial sectors: education, manufacturing, information technology, healthcare, and service industries. These sectors were strategically selected to ensure diversity of organizational contexts, communication environments, and employee

profiles, thereby enhancing the generalizability and external validity of the findings. Employees were required to have been employed in their current organizations for a minimum of six months to ensure sufficient exposure to organizational communication practices.

8.3 Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure proportional representation across the five identified industrial sectors. Stratification was based on industry affiliation, ensuring that employees from each sector were proportionally represented in the final sample. Within each stratum, participants were selected through simple random sampling procedures to minimize selection bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample. This approach strikes an effective balance between statistical rigor and practical feasibility.

8.4 Sample Size

A final sample of 250 respondents was successfully recruited and included in the analysis. According to Hair et al. (2019), a sample size exceeding 200 is generally considered adequate for multiple regression analysis, providing sufficient statistical power to detect medium-to-large effect sizes at conventional significance thresholds. The achieved sample size of 250 thus satisfies the minimum requirements for the statistical procedures employed in this study. Additionally, this sample size ensures stable estimates of regression coefficients and reduces the risk of both Type I and Type II errors.

9. Data Collection

Primary Data

Primary data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire delivered both electronically and in paper format to accommodate participant preferences and organizational contexts. The questionnaire was developed through a systematic review of established measurement instruments and was organized into three sections:

Section A — Demographic Information

- Age group
- Gender identity
- Highest educational qualification
- Total work experience (in years)
- Industrial sector of employment

Section B — Internal Communication Scale

Adapted and validated from the internal communication framework developed by Welch and Jackson (2007), with items assessing the four primary communication dimensions under investigation.

Section C — Employee Engagement Scale

Adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) originally developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002), a widely validated and internationally recognized instrument measuring the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of work engagement.

All items in Sections B and C were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree). Prior to full-scale data collection, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review and a pilot study involving 30 respondents to assess content validity, face validity, and internal consistency. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for all scales exceeded the conventionally accepted threshold of 0.70, confirming adequate internal consistency.

Secondary Data

Secondary data informing the theoretical framework, literature review, and contextual analysis of this study were drawn from a diverse array of scholarly and professional sources, including:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and EBSCO databases
- Academic textbooks and reference volumes in organizational behavior, human resource management, and communication theory
- Industry and practitioner reports, including the Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report
- Corporate communication studies and white papers from established research institutions

10. Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study sample. The sample was broadly balanced with respect to gender, with male respondents constituting a slight majority. The largest age cohort was the 21–30 group, consistent with the age composition of the broader workforce in the sectors surveyed. These demographic characteristics are considered representative of the target population and support the validity of the findings.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Study Sample

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	140	56.0
Female	110	44.0
Age 21–30	105	42.0
Age 31–40	85	34.0
Age 41 and above	60	24.0

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each study variable. All mean scores fall above the scale midpoint of 3.00, indicating generally positive employee perceptions of organizational communication practices and overall work engagement. Communication transparency recorded the highest mean score among the independent variables (M = 4.12), while feedback mechanisms recorded the lowest (M = 3.84), suggesting a relative area of organizational improvement.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication Transparency	4.12	0.63
Leadership Communication	3.98	0.71
Feedback Mechanisms	3.84	0.77

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication Satisfaction	4.06	0.65
Employee Engagement	4.15	0.61

11. Multiple Regression Analysis

Regression Model

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the simultaneous predictive effects of the four communication dimensions on employee engagement. The regression model is specified as follows:

$$Employee\ Engagement = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Communication\ Transparency) + \beta_2(Leadership\ Communication) + \beta_3(Feedback\ Mechanisms) + \beta_4(Communication\ Satisfaction) + \epsilon$$

Regression Results

Table 3 presents the standardized regression coefficients, t-values, and associated significance levels for each predictor variable. All four predictors demonstrated statistically significant positive effects on employee engagement at $p < 0.001$ or $p < 0.01$, providing robust empirical support for all five research hypotheses.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results — Predictors of Employee Engagement

Predictor Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Communication Transparency	.36	5.84	.000
Leadership Communication	.29	4.92	.000
Feedback Mechanisms	.18	3.11	.002
Communication Satisfaction	.31	5.23	.000

Model Summary

Table 4: Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R ²	0.68
Adjusted R ²	0.67
F-value	129.43
Significance	$p < 0.001$

Interpretation

The overall regression model achieved statistical significance ($F = 129.43$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the collective predictive validity of the four communication dimensions. The model explains approximately 68% of the total variance in employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.68$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.67$), representing a substantial effect size by conventional standards and indicating that internal communication dimensions are powerful determinants of engagement outcomes.

Communication transparency emerged as the strongest individual predictor of employee engagement ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$), underscoring the fundamental importance of organizational openness and honesty in generating employee trust and commitment. Communication satisfaction was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$), followed by leadership communication ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$). Feedback mechanisms, while demonstrating the smallest effect, nonetheless contributed a statistically significant and practically meaningful unique variance ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$). Collectively, these findings confirm all five research hypotheses and highlight the multidimensional nature of the communication-engagement relationship.

12. Findings

The empirical analysis generated the following principal findings, each of which carries important theoretical and practical implications:

- Internal communication as a composite construct significantly and positively influences employee engagement, confirming its strategic role as a driver of organizational vitality and workforce commitment.
- Communication transparency exhibits the strongest independent impact on employee engagement, affirming that employees respond most powerfully to organizational environments characterized by openness, honesty, and the timely and accurate provision of information.
- Leadership communication significantly enhances employee trust, organizational identification, and behavioral commitment, highlighting the critical role of leader communication behaviors in shaping the engagement climate.
- Effective feedback systems improve employee participation, sense of voice, and morale, reinforcing the value of bidirectional communication architectures in sustaining engagement over time.
- Communication satisfaction is a robust positive predictor of organizational attachment, work engagement, and intent to remain, suggesting that organizations should systematically monitor and improve employees' subjective satisfaction with communication practices.
- All five research hypotheses were supported at conventional levels of statistical significance, providing a coherent and comprehensive empirical account of the communication-engagement relationship.

13. Practical Implications

For Managers

- Develop and institutionalize transparent communication policies that commit to the timely and accurate sharing of organizational information, particularly during periods of uncertainty or change.
- Actively encourage and systematically support two-way communication practices, creating regular opportunities for employee voice and participative decision-making.
- Conduct regular, accessible, and interactive town hall meetings and team briefings to maintain communication alignment and to address employee concerns in a timely manner.
- Invest in the quality and responsiveness of feedback and recognition systems to reinforce employee contributions and to demonstrate organizational responsiveness.

For HR Professionals

- Strategically integrate internal communication planning into broader employee engagement frameworks, recognizing communication as a foundational rather than supplementary engagement driver.
- Conduct regular, systematic assessments of employee communication satisfaction as part of broader organizational health diagnostic processes.
- Design and implement targeted communication skills training programs for line managers and senior leaders, equipping them to communicate with authenticity, clarity, and empathy.
- Leverage digital employee feedback platforms and pulse survey tools to maintain continuous, real-time insight into the quality of the organizational communication experience.

For Organizations

- Invest strategically in modern, accessible, and user-friendly digital communication technologies that support diverse communication modalities and accommodate the needs of hybrid and remote workforces.
- Actively cultivate organizational cultures of openness and psychological safety in which communication transparency is modeled by senior leadership and reinforced through organizational systems and practices.
- Align internal communication strategies explicitly with organizational values, purpose, and strategic objectives to strengthen employee identification with the organizational mission and to deepen engagement.

14. Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of the following methodological and contextual limitations:

- The cross-sectional research design captures data at a single point in time, precluding the establishment of causal directionality in the observed relationships and limiting the capacity to examine how communication-engagement dynamics evolve over time.
- Data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which are inherently susceptible to response bias, including social desirability bias and common method variance.
- The sample is limited to five industrial sectors and may not fully represent the diversity of organizational contexts, communication environments, and workforce characteristics present across the broader economy.
- Potential moderating variables, including organizational culture, leadership style, organizational size, and employee personality characteristics, were not systematically examined in the present study.
- The findings may exhibit limited generalizability to organizational contexts characterized by markedly different cultural, institutional, or regulatory environments from those represented in the study sample.

15. Future Research Directions

The findings of this study open several productive avenues for future empirical investigation:

- Future studies should employ longitudinal research designs to track the evolution of communication practices and engagement levels over time, enabling causal inference and the examination of dynamic relationships.
- Researchers should investigate the potential mediating roles of organizational trust and organizational commitment in the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement.
- There is a pressing need for empirical research specifically examining internal communication practices and their engagement effects in remote, hybrid, and digitally mediated work settings, which represent an increasingly prevalent organizational reality.

- Comparative cross-national and cross-cultural studies would enrich understanding of how cultural context moderates the relationships identified in the present study.
- Future research should examine the role of communication channel selection and media richness in moderating the effectiveness of internal communication as an engagement driver.
- Mixed-methods research designs combining quantitative survey data with qualitative organizational case studies would provide richer, more contextually nuanced insights into the communication-engagement nexus.

16. Conclusion

The findings of this study provide robust empirical confirmation that internal communication is a significant and multidimensional determinant of employee engagement across diverse organizational contexts. Transparent communication, effective leadership communication, responsive feedback mechanisms, and high levels of communication satisfaction collectively contribute to the cultivation of engaged, committed, and productive employees. The strength and consistency of the relationships observed across all four communication dimensions underscore the strategic imperative of investing in communication quality as a fundamental organizational capability.

Organizations that prioritize strategic, employee-centric internal communication are demonstrably more likely to cultivate committed, motivated, innovative, and productive workforces capable of navigating the challenges of an increasingly complex and competitive global environment. The study makes a meaningful contribution to the organizational communication and employee engagement literatures by providing an empirically grounded, multi-dimensional account of how communication shapes the engagement experience. As workplaces continue to evolve in response to digital transformation, demographic change, and shifting employee expectations, effective, transparent, and responsive internal communication will remain a cornerstone of organizational success and employee engagement.

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