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Internal Communication Strategy and Its Influence on Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to analyze the influence of internal communication strategies on employee engagement and to identify the most effective communication approaches in enhancing employee involvement. The research employed a literature review method by examining journal articles, conference proceedings, and academic books published between 2019 and 2025. Literature sources were obtained from Google Scholar, Scopus, ResearchGate, and DOAJ, and were selected based on topic relevance, full-text availability, and alignment with the research focus. Data were analyzed using content analysis through thematic categorization. The findings indicate that internal communication strategies have a significant impact on employee engagement across three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Three strategies were found to be the most effective: (1) digital channel–based communication that improves information access and accelerates feedback, (2) leadership-based communication that strengthens trust and emotional support, and (3) participatory two-way communication that fosters a sense of belonging and psychological ownership. Engagement formation occurs through role clarity, reinforced trust, and increased participation. In conclusion, internal communication serves as an organizational strategy that enhances employee motivation, loyalty, and contribution. Organizations must design communication patterns that are transparent, interactive, and participatory to optimize engagement.

Keywords: internal communication, employee engagement, communication strategy, organizational communication.

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamic transformation of the global business environment compels organizations to adapt not only through product innovation or marketing strategies, but also through strengthening human resource management. In an era of intense competition, the ability of organizations to retain and enhance employee performance has become a key determinant of sustainability (Oyetade et al., 2024). One strategic factor that plays a crucial role in optimizing employee potential is internal communication (Wuersch et al., 2023). Internal communication is no longer understood merely as the delivery of administrative information, but has evolved into a strategic process aimed at fostering engagement, building trust, and strengthening emotional relationships between the organization and its employees (Sufian Nory et al., 2021).

The new paradigm of human resource management positions internal communication as the foundation for developing employee engagement, defined as an employee's emotional and psychological attachment to the organization, manifested through commitment, enthusiasm, and willingness to contribute beyond formal job requirements (Lu & Chen, 2022). Research has shown that employee engagement directly influences both individual and organizational performance, including improvements in productivity, innovation, and employee retention (Bakker, 2022).

A growing body of literature supports the strategic relationship between internal communication and engagement. Nguyen and Ha (2023) found that transparent, consistent, and accessible internal communication significantly increases engagement, as it enhances role clarity, job satisfaction, and loyalty. Santos et al. (2023) further highlight that two-way internal communication strategies such as feedback channels, discussion forums, and employee involvement in decision-making processes not only strengthen employees' understanding of organizational vision but also encourage them to act as brand ambassadors who voluntarily promote the organization's positive image. In other words, internal communication has the capacity to influence employees' attitudes and behaviors in representing the organization.

Other studies emphasize the importance of emotional relationships within the communication process. Sangapan et al. (2021) demonstrated that employees who feel heard and involved in internal communication experience psychological ownership—the feeling that they are an integral part of the organization—which, in turn, enhances their contribution and loyalty. Sulaiman and Abdullah (2019) revealed that internal communication characterized by support and empathy from leaders increases employees' sense of being valued, strengthens trust, and fosters engagement. Thus, the effectiveness of internal communication is closely linked to interpersonal relationship quality and leadership style.

Despite extensive evidence on the positive correlation between internal communication and employee engagement, gaps remain within the literature. First, there is no consensus regarding which internal communication strategy is the most effective—whether digital technology utilization, communicative leadership approaches, or enhanced two-way communication. Second, while many studies examine internal communication broadly, few focus on how specific strategies directly enhance employee engagement, motivation, and retention in various organizational contexts. Third, the rapid development of communication technology presents emerging challenges, such as information overload, prompting the need for new understanding of how organizations can manage communication effectively in the digital era.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to comprehensively examine how internal communication strategies influence employee engagement. The research focuses on identifying the most effective communication strategies to enhance employee involvement through the mechanisms of role clarity, trust-building, and increased participation. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to organizational communication literature and provide practical recommendations for organizations in designing internal communication strategies that are more effective and engagement-oriented.

METHOD

This research employs a literature review approach as the primary method to analyze the relationship between internal communication strategies and employee engagement. The literature review method was selected because it enables a comprehensive understanding of concepts, models, and empirical findings from relevant prior studies. The data sources used in this research consist of reputable international journal articles, Indonesian national journals, scientific conference proceedings, and academic books published between 2019–2025, aligned with the latest developments on internal communication and employee engagement. The search for literature was conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ResearchGate, and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), using the following keywords: internal communication, communication strategy, employee engagement, and organizational communication. The research framework is presented in Figure 1 below:

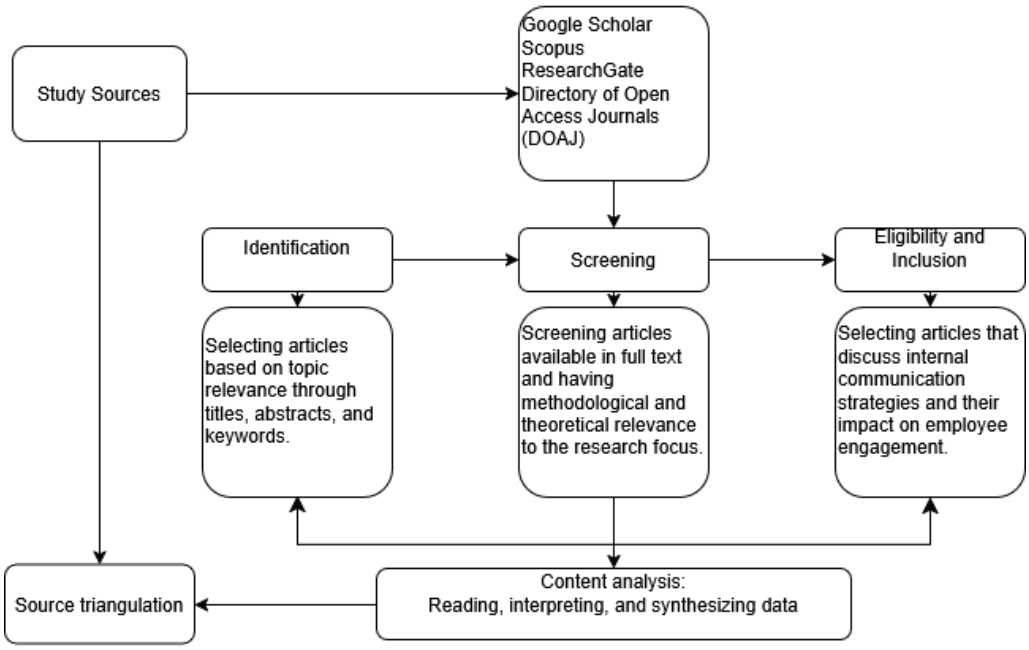


Figure 1. Research Framework

The literature selection process was carried out through three stages. First, identification, by selecting articles based on topic relevance through title, abstract, and keywords. Second, screening, which involved filtering articles that were available in full text and demonstrated methodological and theoretical relevance to the research focus. Third, eligibility and inclusion, which involved selecting articles that explicitly discussed internal communication strategies and their influence on employee engagement within organizational contexts. The selected articles were then analyzed thematically to identify patterns, similarities, differences, and research gaps.

The data analysis technique used in this study is content analysis, conducted through reading, interpreting, and synthesizing data from various sources to identify the relationship between internal communication strategies and employee engagement. The analysis was performed by categorizing the literature into three groups: (1) internal communication strategies adopted by organizations, (2) forms of employee engagement generated, and (3) factors that either strengthen or weaken the relationship between the two. The synthesis results are presented in a narrative description to illustrate how internal communication strategies influence the development of employee engagement.

To ensure the validity of the data, this research applies source triangulation, namely comparing findings from various studies conducted in different contexts to ensure information consistency. The final focus of the analysis process is to formulate a conceptual model and strategic recommendations for organizations regarding effective internal communication patterns that enhance employee engagement. Thus, this research contributes not only theoretically but also provides practical implications for the development of internal communication strategies in human resource management.

FINDING

Internal Communication Strategies in Organizations

A review of the literature indicates that internal communication in modern organizations is no longer one-directional and top–down (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024). Instead, organizations are shifting toward two-way communication models that emphasize employee participation (Ullrich et al., 2023). Internal communication strategies commonly used across organizations can be classified into three categories:

1. **Digital channel–based communication strategy**

Several studies show that the use of digital technologies—such as intranets, corporate instant messaging applications (Microsoft Teams, Slack, business WhatsApp groups), and structured email—helps accelerate the flow of information and strengthen connectivity among team members. Santos et al. (2023) state that digitalizing internal communication creates a *fast feedback loop*, enabling real-time information exchange between management and employees. The use of digital channels has also been shown to reduce ambiguity, as information can be documented and accessed at any time (Ryndian Gusty et al., 2025). However, the literature also identifies challenges, such as information overload, which may undermine message clarity if not managed properly (Arnold et al., 2023).

2. **Communicative leadership–based communication strategy**

This strategy highlights the role of supervisors or leaders as intermediaries between managerial vision and employees' daily tasks. Nguyen and Ha (2023) found that leaders with strong interpersonal communication skills are able to build trust and foster psychological safety among employees. Communicative leaders do not merely disseminate information; they accommodate employee opinions and aspirations through:

- Regular coaching sessions
- Feedback meetings
- One-on-one conversations between leaders and employees

The role of communicative leadership is crucial because, according to Sulaiman and Abdullah (2019), openness and empathy in communication enhance employees' sense of being valued and strengthen their emotional commitment to the organization.

3. **Two-way, participation-based communication strategy**

This strategy provides employees with the opportunity not only to receive information but also to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making processes. Organizations implement this strategy through:

- Digital suggestion boxes
- Internal discussion forums
- Periodic engagement surveys
- Town hall meetings

Sangapan et al. (2021) show that employee participation in internal dialogue increases *psychological ownership*, fostering a perception that their input is valued.

Impact of Internal Communication Strategies on Employee Engagement

The literature analysis reveals that employee engagement increases when internal communication is transparent, consistent, interactive, and participation-oriented (employee-centered). Based on findings by Bakker (2022) and Wong and Liem (2022), engagement manifests in three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. These dimensions are evident in the reviewed literature:

Employee Engagement Dimension	Impact of Internal Communication
Cognitive engagement	Employees understand organizational goals, direction, and their roles.
Emotional engagement	Employees feel valued and develop emotional attachment to the organization.
Behavioral engagement	Employees demonstrate initiative, contribute actively, and show higher performance.

DISCUSSION

Internal Communication as an Organizational Strategy

This study reinforces that internal communication is a strategic component of modern human resource management. The synthesis of literature confirms the premise presented in the introduction: internal communication is no longer an administrative function but a strategic tool to build emotional and psychological engagement. The model identified from the literature can be illustrated as follows:

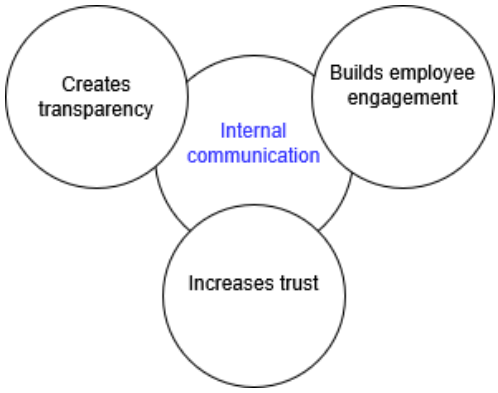


Figure 2. Internal Communication as an Organizational Strategy

Mechanism of the Influence of Internal Communication on Engagement

The literature indicates that internal communication strategies influence employee engagement through three mechanisms:

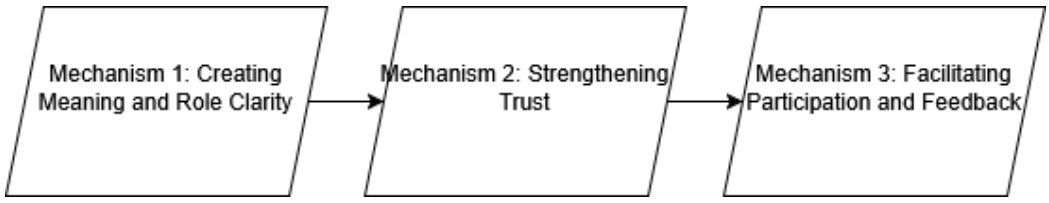


Figure 3. Internal Communication Mechanisms

1. **Mechanism 1: Creation of Meaning and Role Clarity**

The literature reveals that when internal messages are clear and consistent, employees' confidence increases, making engagement more easily formed. Conversely, unclear communication creates confusion and negatively affects work motivation. Internal communication helps employees understand:

- the goals of the organization,
- how they contribute to those goals,
- what their supervisors expect from their performance.

2. **Mechanism 2: Trust Building**

Across multiple studies, trust emerges as a key determinant of engagement. When internal communication is transparent and honest, employees feel that the organization does not hide information. This enhances psychological safety and fosters emotional attachment.

According to Santos et al. (2023), two-way communication channels enable reciprocal trust between the organization and its employees. Trust serves as the psychological foundation upon which engagement is built.

3. **Mechanism 3: Facilitation of Participation and Feedback**

Two-way communication strengthens employees' sense of ownership because they feel involved in decision-making processes. This increases engagement, as employees are not merely task recipients, but active contributors to organizational processes. Sangapan et al. (2021) emphasize that

involvement in communication processes creates a sense of pride and enhances employee contribution to the organization.

Transformation of Internal Communication Toward a Digital Culture

The literature indicates that shifts in communication culture occur alongside organizational digitalization. Digital transformation enables communication to become more flexible, efficient, and structured—especially for organizations implementing hybrid or remote work systems. However, digitalization also poses challenges. When communication occurs predominantly through digital channels, interpersonal relationships may weaken, resulting in reduced emotional engagement. Therefore, organizations must balance digital and face-to-face communication. Technology serves as a tool, not a goal; the ultimate objective remains to enhance employee engagement.

The Role of Leadership in Engagement

Communicative leadership plays a strategic role in building engagement. According to the literature, communicative leaders tend to:

- be more responsive to employee needs,
- be more open to criticism or feedback,
- be more capable of creating an inclusive work environment.

Sulaiman and Abdullah (2019) assert that employee engagement increases significantly when leaders not only give instructions but also demonstrate empathy and emotional support. Effective internal communication cannot be achieved without communicative leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to examine how internal communication strategies influence employee engagement through a literature review of studies conducted during the period of 2019–2025. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that internal communication is no longer merely a process of information dissemination, but has evolved into an organizational strategy capable of fostering employees' emotional, psychological, and behavioral engagement.

First, the findings show that modern organizations have shifted from a top–down communication model to a two-way participatory communication approach. Three main internal communication strategies were identified as the most effective in enhancing engagement: digital channel–based communication, communicative leadership–based communication, and participation-based two-way communication. Digital communication facilitates fast and well-documented information access; communicative leadership strengthens trust and psychological safety; and participatory communication builds psychological ownership and a sense of being valued among employees.

Second, internal communication strategies have been proven to directly influence the formation of employee engagement in three key dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Clear and consistent communication enhances cognitive engagement through goal clarity and role understanding. Open and supportive communication fosters emotional engagement, while participatory communication encourages behavioral engagement through greater initiative and contribution at work.

Third, engagement formation occurs through mechanisms of meaning-making and role clarity, trust building, and increased participation and feedback. Clear messages and effective communication channels help employees understand how their contributions relate to organizational goals. Trust emerges when organizations communicate transparently and encourage dialogue. Participation strengthens ownership, making employees feel that they are an important part of the organization.

Furthermore, the study reveals that communication digitalization creates both opportunities and challenges. While technology accelerates information flow, excessive reliance on digital communication may lead to information overload and weaken interpersonal connection. Thus, organizations must balance digital and face-to-face communication to maintain employee engagement.

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