

# THE EFFECTS OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to develop an integrative conceptual framework for studying employee communication and engagement effectiveness on organisational performance. Although research indicates employee communication and engagement play an essential role in organisational performance, there is limited empirical research assessing their interdependent relationships on a financial and non-financial performance basis. This paper extensively reviewed the literature on employee communication and engagement related to organisational performance, financially and non-financially, during stable economic situations and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing from the Social Exchange theory, this paper theoretically provides the basis for a thorough evaluation of employee communication and engagement's impact on organisational success. This paper identifies employee communication attributes of two-way, transparency, and consistency that influence employees' psychological, intellectual, and physical engagement may affect the organisational performance's financial and non-financial measures. The integrative connections showing engagement mediates the relationship between employee communication and organisational performance tend to contribute more to increasing organisational values. Practically, this study's conceptual model may benefit communicators in identifying the essential directions for developing and executing effective internal communication strategies to keep the organisation moving forward and ensure long-term growth. The originality of this study is that it improvises the conceptualisation of employee communication effectiveness and organisational performance. It introduces an integrative conceptual model of employee communication, engagement and organisational performance constructs that may explain how to better predict organisational outcomes, both financially and non-financially, in the age of pandemics or non-pandemics.*

**Keywords:** *Employee Communication, Engagement, Organisational Performance, Financial Performance, Non-Financial Performance*

## Introduction

Modern scholars recognise employee communication and engagement as two pillars of organisational effectiveness. Employee communication effectiveness is a crucial indicator of an organisation's performance (Mmutle, 2022; Otieno *et al.*, 2015; Bourne *et al.*, 2013; Morris, 2010) for its role in improving the organisation's bottom-line outcomes, such as increased productivity (Martinez & Hurtado, 2018; Chmielecki, 2015), stability (Papa *et al.*, 2008), and profitability (Verčič, 2021). Similarly, employee engagement is essential to organisational success, where engaged people who are hard-working, ethical, and accountable provide the "backbone" of a positive work environment (Verčič & Vokić, 2017).

Recent studies have also demonstrated the importance of communication in enhancing work engagement (Men & Vercic, 2023; Vercic & Vokic, 2017; Jiang & Men, 2015). Indeed, internal communication is a component of the organisational environment that determines whether employees are engaged or disengaged (Bakker *et al.*, 2011) due to its capacity to effectively communicate the organisation's values to all employees and involve them in achieving organisational goals (Welch, 2011). A culture of open communication is established through employee engagement with the organisation's beliefs and objectives, which fosters mutual understanding, respect, and the development of solid relationships. Given the emphasis on balancing the organisation and its employees' interests, improved communication raises trust and business unit performance (Quirke, 2012). Furthermore, effective communication organisations see reduced employee turnover and resistance, higher shareholder returns, more outstanding dedication and engagement, and positive financial returns (Atouba, 2018; Meng & Berger, 2012; Ruck, 2015; Jacobs *et al.*, 2016).

The present study proposes that employee communication and engagement potentially impact organisational performance. Despite increasing research showing they are connected, limited empirical studies investigate their relationships as interdependent constructs. In particular, studies are insufficient in linking communication and part of organisational performance, which is a financial success (Bahtiar Mohamad *et al.*, 2018). Scholars and practitioners believe that two indicators, financial and non-financial, increase stockholders' expectations (Stacks & Michaelson, 2010) and eventually affect the return on investment (ROI) calculation (Meng & Berger, 2012).

In the turmoil of global financial markets today, thorough research is necessary to highlight the critical function of excellent communication in enabling organisational growth (Meng & Berger, 2012). Through ongoing studies, researchers and practitioners believe that keeping abreast of how employee communication is working and evolving provides significant benchmarks of communication effectiveness and valuable indications for improving organisational performance, financially or non-financially.

Studies need further investigations as the Covid-19 global health crisis has caused employee engagement to become particularly fragile (Lee *et al.*, 2021). Employees' workplace is fraught with ambiguities. The crisis-induced organisational changes, including layoffs, downsizing, or benefit reductions, have caused employees' psychological bond with the organisation at risk (Lee *et al.*, 2021). If employees perceive a communication deficiency during the changes, their commitment to management actions could be substantially weakened (Einwiller, 2021). Such a crisis has also disrupted and challenged organisations' fundamental assumptions and decision-making processes (Kovoor-Misra *et al.*, 2000; Weick, 1988), threatened organisational

legitimacy, and ultimately impacted the organisations' performance (Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Coombs, 2015).

Internal communication has a significant impact on organisation-public relationships and employee communicative behaviour amid crises, according to several studies in the field of public relations (Mazzei *et al.*, 2012; Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2015). However, the effort to conceptualise the relationship between employee communication as a critical contributor to employee engagement influences organisational performance during crises is not emphasised. This relationship deficiency may constrain our understanding of employee communication and engagement factors and their behavioural outcomes related to better organisational performance. The lack of theoretical underpinning particularly limits insights into comprehending the rationale for the two factors' interrelated roles and how and to what extent organisations may consistently sustain the performance of their employees, both in the age of pandemics and non-pandemics.

Effective employee communication grew even more critical during crises due to the abovementioned issues. Thus, this conceptual paper aims to fill an important gap in the literature by investigating the effect of employee communication on engagement that influences organisational development in its financial and non-financial performances, either during the age of pandemics or non-pandemics. Relevant past research findings guide the discussion of this paper. It begins with the need to conduct this conceptual study and its justification. Following that is the literature review supported with pertinent critical arguments and theoretical underpinnings. In the final section, a conceptual model with a set of formal propositions is discussed, and the significance of the study concludes the paper.

### **The Need for the Conceptual Study**

This conceptual study is necessary because additional research is needed to establish the critical link between communication effectiveness and organisations' financial and non-financial business performance (Meng & Berger, 2012). More studies are expected to improve the expectations of stakeholders and investors on organisations' ultimate return on investment (Meng & Berger, 2012; Stacks & Michaelson, 2010). Although there are numerous empirical studies on the effectiveness of employee communication on organisational performance, to no avail, the connections between the constructs are still under-explored. This conceptual paper builds a theoretical framework for the first move that predicts relationships between concepts (Jaakkola, 2020) of employee communication, engagement, and organisational performance. This paper identifies issues that should be considered and explains how they operate by exposing the antecedents, outcomes, and contingencies associated with the central notion (MacInnis, 2011; Meredith, 1993) before being tested in empirical studies. Thus, this study is expected to improve existing research by refining the conceptualisation of employee communication effectiveness and organisational performance.

Secondly, conceptual papers "bridge the existing theories in interesting ways, link work across disciplines, provide multi-level insights and broaden the scope of our thinking" (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015, pp 129). The papers are practical means for theory building (Jaakkola, 2020) since justifications are not formed from facts in the ordinary sense but rather include and combine the information in the shape of concepts and theories that have already been established (Hirschheim, 2008). This form of research enables the development of theories unrestrained by empirical generalisation requirements (Jaakkola, 2020; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Even though conceptual articles lack data, they include empirical insights since they rely on

ideas and concepts established and demonstrated via empirical research (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). This paper aims to synthesise knowledge from prior studies and presents it in a new context to provide a platform for new research that will address the gaps in the existing body of communication effectiveness research.

Finally, conceptual papers vary from theoretical or review papers in several important ways. The question “what’s new?” differentiates a conceptual paper from a review (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015, pp 127). A review paper concisely summarises recent progress in a particular study. Still, it is not the primary emphasis of the paper, as it is wholly dependent on other published and existing works (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). In contrast, a conceptual paper often seeks to bridge the gaps in theories and link across disciplines (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015; Jaakkola, 2020). Beyond demonstrating the limitations of previous studies, this paper provides a bridge or link in explaining how to better predict organisational outcomes by refining the conceptualisation of employee communication effectiveness and organisational performance. A conceptual model with formal propositions from the logical arguments, as in Figure 1, depicts the salient constructs and their relationships.

### **Literature Review**

This section focuses on relevant research results and the principle of best practices in employee communication and engagement related to organisational performance. An in-depth investigation of how employee communication and engagement are intertwined with the success of an organisation is explained based on appropriate theoretical underpinnings. The discussion in the context of the pandemic age, Covid-19 or crisis is occasionally highlighted to describe the present business situation. Finally, it discusses an all-encompassing conceptual paradigm that connects and unites all three.

### **Employee Communication and Organisational Performance**

Employee communication, also known as internal communication or internal public relations (Men, 2021), has long been identified as a critical component of current business operations and has facilitated the development of positive relationships with the external public (Chmielecki, 2015; Cutlip *et al.*, 2005). Information and ideas are shared between senior management and the organisation’s most critical constituency, the employees (Dolphin, 2005). It is also a social connection that indicates how well management can build relationships with internal stakeholders at all levels of the organisation via communications (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Formal and informal employee communication has evolved in reaction to business and marketing environment changes, resulting in a trend toward strategically aligning with the organisation’s aims and values. For instance, Welch and Jackson (2007) placed employee communication within strategic public relations. Their model portrays internal corporate communication as a process between an organisation’s strategic leaders and internal members of the organisation. Its goal is to foster a sense of commitment and belongingness among employees while raising their awareness of the organisation’s changing environment and its ever-changing internal goals. As a result, an improvement in strategic employee communication is related to its effectiveness with a higher level of engagement, leading to an increased market value of that specific organisation (Morris, 2010) and organisational performance (Men, 2014a).

Organisational performance, one of the most commonly used terms in management research that describes “performance” as one of the effectiveness indicators (Richard *et al.*, 2009, pp 4), consists of a system valued, the productive output of products or services (Swanson & Holton, 2009). The two types of performance, financial and non-financial, concern each other (Capon *et al.*, 1990) because their measures affect organisational successes (Bahtiar *et al.*, 2018; Garg & Ma, 2005; Harold & Darlene, 2004; Kaplan & Norton, 1992;) and deliver more extensive findings (Rose *et al.*, 2008).

Financial performance can be described as the measurable variables encompassing levels, growth and variability of profit commonly associated with assets, investment or owner’s equity (Bahtiar Mohamad *et al.*, 2018). For the last few decades, measuring and improving financial performance has been necessary because organisations constantly search for efficiency, productivity, excellence, and total quality. Academics and managers need to evaluate the specific activities of organisations and employees, where organisations stand with their competitors, and how organisations change and succeed through age (Richard *et al.*, 2009). In addition to marketing, operations and human resources, financial measures like return on investment (ROI), sales, and earnings per share have been used to assess the success of communication (Verghese, 2017; Meng & Berger, 2012). Other measures include return on assets (Mubeen *et al.*, 2014; Rashid *et al.*, 2003), return on equity (Mubeen *et al.*, 2014; Meng & Berger, 2012), revenues (de Vries *et al.*, 2020; Mishra & Mishra, 2014), and market price (Meng & Berger, 2012; Yates, 2006).

Non-financial performance is evaluated from three viewpoints: management, human resources, and marketing (Bahtiar Mohamad *et al.*, 2018). Most research in communication and organisational effectiveness examines non-financial organisational performance from a human resource viewpoint centred on work performance (Martinez & Hurtado, 2018; Cowan, 2017; Holá & Pikhart, 2014) and employee productivity measurements (Martinez & Hurtado, 2018; Yildiz, 2015). Literature demonstrated several non-financial performances of human resource practices such as employee-organisation relations (Kang & Sung, 2017), organisational productivity (Men *et al.*, 2020; Ruck & Welch, 2012), employee retention and recruitment (Špoljarić & Verčič, 2022; Yates, 2006), and low rates of absenteeism (Komodromos, 2020; Antony, 2018), are consistently linked to excellent communication and engagement between employees and their organisations.

The above studies imply that financial and non-financial indices measure effective employee communication. In their study of excellent public relations and communication management functions, Grunig *et al.* (2002) strongly argued that organisational leaders or public relations professionals cannot use a single measure to evaluate the financial return on each investment in public relations or internal communications. Instead, the combination of non-financial and financial indicators can improve the expectations of stakeholders and investors and contribute to the ultimate return on investment (ROI) (Stacks & Michaelson, 2010), that is, organisational performance (Meng & Berger, 2012).

Researchers and communication professionals have been concerned with measuring communication regarding financial or non-financial performance as it can efficiently track an organisation’s business development. An organisation’s current and future expansion plans are aided by this crucial information, which acts as a starting point for the organisation’s system and a new expansion plan’s goals. The demands of interpreting communication actions and performance outcomes into money-related and organisations value effects (Rust *et al.*, 2004)

have increased the study of one of the financial terms, return on investment (ROI), related to communication effectiveness in fostering organisational development (Meng & Berger, 2012). However, despite a large body of research demonstrating a correlation between effective employee communication and organisational performance, the association between communication and financial success in organisations remains unknown (Bahtiar Mohamad, 2018).

Another aspect of communication researchers' concern is the influence of employee communication on organisational performance in a pandemic and crisis framework. Despite the pandemic, organisations focusing on redesigning their businesses should also be concerned with their employees' ongoing support. Recent studies indicate that organisations have prioritised rebuilding communication with employees and the external public to protect their non-financial performance, like reputation and trust, through crisis response strategies (Mazzei, 2015; Kim, 2020; Gomes *et al.*, 2021). To allow businesses to move forward financially, organisations have resorted to innovation and the use of technology as a medium of communication via remote working to increase productivity and achieve organisational improvement (Meirinhos & Barreto, 2018). In this sense, the specific communication roles played by employees may fulfil their contribution to organisational survival and performance (Verhoeven & Madsen, 2022).

Grunig's symmetrical communication model helps explain the effectiveness of employee communication as the mechanism and its linkage to organisational performance (Grunig, 2001). The model indicates that clear and comprehensive dialogue in two-way communication promotes mutual understanding between employers and employees and is advantageous to both parties. Based on the model, this study proposes that employee communication's attributes of two-way (Grunig, 2001), transparent (Men, 2014), and consistent (Lockwood, 2007) can be further comprehended if examined from the management perspective of Human Resources' Theory Y (McGregor, 1960). The theory emphasises constant and two-way communication between management and employees. It creates open communication between the organisation and employees, establishing trust and fostering mutual understanding, respect, and a healthy relationship. This will decrease risks and uncertainties and retain the organisation's high investment returns (Meng & Berger, 2012). More importantly, this communication flow and mutual understanding between the upper-level management and the staff and vice versa makes the organisation moves on the right track and ultimately leads to the organisation's success and enhances business performance (Abdullah, 2012).

In light of the preceding discussion, the existing literature suggests that the characteristics of employee communication are two-way (Grunig, 2001), transparency (Men, 2014), and consistency (Lockwood, 2007), while the indicators of organisational performance are financial performance and non-financial performance as categorised by Capon *et al.* (1990) and Stacks and Michaelson (2010).

Therefore, taking into account the association between employee communication and organisational performance, this paper proposes that:

P1: Employee communication is positively related to organisational performance

### **Employee Communication and Engagement**

Kahn (1990), a prominent scholar in engagement, described personal engagement as affiliating one's self with one's professional duties whereby, through engagement, individuals use and

express themselves physically, intellectually, and emotionally while acting out their role performances. Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) defined engagement from the view of organisational behaviour as a positive, rewarding, and work-related emotional state characterised by vigour, devotion, and absorption. Engaged employees are always passionate, vested in their work activities, and confident in their ability to complete those duties (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2008). Truss *et al.* (2006) supported Kahn (1990) by experimentally developing three different degrees of engagement: emotional (deep involvement in job tasks), cognitive (intense attention on job duties), and physical (willingness to exert more effort). In other words, when people are engaged in role performance, they act and express themselves physically, intellectually, and emotionally. In fact, in sequence with role performance, Truss *et al.* (2006) believed employee communication is needed to drive their sense of engagement. Through communication, employees can share their views and ideas with management, understand what is happening within the organisation, and believe their manager is dedicated to the organisation's success.

The perspective of employee communication as the mechanism is consistent with Kang and Sung (2017) by citing Kress (2005) and Lockwood (2007) that the benefits of efficient internal communication have been recognised in improving employee relations and enhancing employee engagement through effective employee communication mechanisms. Consequently, many researchers report that effective employee communication is crucial for raising employee engagement (Men & Vercic, 2023; Vercic & Vokic, 2017; Jiang & Men, 2015; Karanges *et al.*, 2015).

Kang and Sung (2017) later improved the employees' preference for communication with their organisation by suggesting that symmetrical internal communication is essential for positive employee communication behaviour, specifically engagement. Adopting Grunig's symmetrical communication model (1992), Kang and Sung argued that organisations must implement a communication approach that is symmetrical, employee-centric, and two-way as part of their day-to-day communication management to promote positive organisational communication.

The integration of two-way symmetrical communication and employee engagement is based on social exchange theory. Engaged employees are more likely to reciprocate the favourable benefits they experience (Saks, 2006) through interactions that cultivate their responsibility, satisfaction, and trust (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Ruck & Welch, 2012). It is assumed that when employees feel a part of their organisation and show their commitment, they tend to create effective relationships with other parties inside and outside the organisation (Mishra *et al.*, 2014).

In a pandemic crisis like COVID-19, employee communication and engagement activities become more critical to an organisation (Einwiller *et al.*, 2021; Lee *et al.*, 2021; Tao *et al.*, 2022; Dhanesh & Picherit-Duthler, 2021). Organisations need their employees' ongoing work engagement (Mani & Mishra, 2020) to effectively maintain communication and collaboration and avoid unfavourable economic effects (Heide & Simonsson, 2019). The engagement can be improved and strengthened through two-way communication and appropriate communication technologies, especially in handling the overwhelming pressure of remote work. In a way, such improvements benefit organisations and employees mutually (Dhanesh & Picherit-Duthler, 2021).

Social exchange theory suggests that relationships are founded on reciprocity regarding employee communication and engagement (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Employees are obliged to return the favourable advantages they obtain (Saks, 2006) through optimal involvement in interactions that have created their commitments, respect, and trust (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Ruck & Welch, 2012). In turn, highly emotionally engaged employees may need the information to facilitate their contributions to organisational goals (Welch, 2011) and lead to greater engagement with their organisation. Indeed, cognitive and emotional resources are crucial, specifically in a crisis scenario (Einwiller *et al.*, 2021; Blau, 1964).

Concerning the above evidence and existing literature, the attributes of employee engagement can be referred to by Kahn (1990) and Truss *et al.* (2006), which are: emotional (deep involvement in job tasks), cognitive (intense attention on job duties), and physical (willingness to exert more effort).

Given the above review, this paper proposes that:

P2a: Employee communication is positively related to employee engagement

### **Employee Engagement and Organisational Performance**

Employee engagement is gaining significant importance for an organisation's sustainability and business growth in today's global marketplace. A growing body of literature demonstrates a correlation between employee engagement and organisational performance results, such as employee retention, work innovation, and profitability (Kapoor & Meachem, 2012). The concept of engagement has also been applied in research to anticipate individual employee productivity, organisational achievement, and business outcomes (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Anitha J., 2014).

Employee engagement significantly improves performance (Anitha J., 2014). The positive contribution has been cited in numerous employee engagement studies. It is because engaged employees demonstrate various productive behaviours that strengthen collaborative team efforts toward the organisation's objectives (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Bakker *et al.*, 2006) and foster their more extraordinary achievements (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Bakker *et al.*, 2008).

Measuring employee engagement and its effects on organisational performance may help business strategy increase employees' engagement level and indirectly increase their motivation for every organisational success. Gallup's (2012) study revealed that organisations with outstanding employee engagement ratings are more profitable. The following year's study (Gallup, 2013) reaffirmed that organisations with engaged employees exhibited lower turnover rates, higher returns, greater productivity, and low absenteeism. In a similar vein, Harter *et al.* (2002) proved that organisations with a high percentage of engaged employees not only performed better than other companies in terms of net income, growth, and share price but also achieved positive business results, such as increased profits, high customer satisfaction, and high productivity. Nevertheless, despite the recognised importance of engagement, there appears to be a lack of studies linking the construct with an organisation's financial performance. A large body of empirical, theoretical, and conceptual work has examined the concept of employee engagement and related it to various aspects of non-financial performance, including work performance, task completion, productivity, and affective commitment (Christian *et al.*, 2011; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Leiter & Bakker, 2010). However, studies demonstrating the link between employee engagement and organisational financial performance are still lacking.



A close attempt at the study of organisational financial performance by Rashid *et al.* (2003) discovered that organisational commitment significantly affected both profitability indicators, the return on assets and the return on investments. They argued that having a dedicated workforce would be helpful for an organisation since they are the ones that remain with the organisation through good and evil, consistently attend work, put in an entire workday, safeguard corporate assets, embrace company goals and, along with others (Meyer & Allen, 1997). However, a conceptual distinction between organisational commitment and employee engagement must be made.

Employee engagement is viewed as a rung above organisational commitment (Robinson *et al.*, 2004). While organisational commitment reflects the employees' attitude and attachment to their organisation, engagement refers to being focused and involved in fulfilling their roles (Saks & Rotman, 2006). The focus of commitment is on the affective component. In contrast, an engagement that considers employees' intellectual, psychological and behavioural conditions would undoubtedly result in positive and organisational outcomes for individuals (Kahn, 1992).

Organisations must first support their employees to gain extensive intellectual, psychological, and behavioural assistance during the pandemic because they are the ones who usually realise the organisation's decisions and diligently deal with the situations (Heide & Simonsson, 2019). Through innovative and constructive crisis communication (Lee *et al.*, 2019), leaders show their awareness by regularly checking their employees' challenges. They keep one-on-one coaching in providing more direction and redirecting work tasks. These supporting behaviours help employees perceive less stress, experience more favourable feelings toward organisations, and engage more fully in work, contributing to their sustainability in work-role performance and organisational resilience (Kim, 2020).

Social exchange theory, a fundamental theoretical framework for studying organisational relationships (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and performance (Gomes *et al.*, 2021), provides the best insight into employee engagement and organisational performance. When two parties (individuals or organisations) are engaged in mutually beneficial interactions, their behaviours and attitudes are likely to be positively affected (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). With a feeling of security and confidence in organisations, particularly in a pandemic crisis, employee behaviour is predictably improved and strongly contributes to organisational performance (Park *et al.*, 2020). In other words, when employees receive economic and socio-emotional resources from their organisation, their desire to reciprocate favours toward their organisation makes them perform well on their duties and responsibilities. Such favourable relationships result in improved financial performance and cost-effectiveness (Armir & Buckley, 2009; Robertson-Smith & Markwick, 2009; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009).

Given the association observed between employee engagement and organisational performance, this paper proposes the following:

P2b: Employee engagement is positively related to organisational performance

### **The mediating role of employee engagement**

Generally, research results support that employee communication and engagement are correlated with higher organisational performance and profit and the cultivation of positive relationships (Kang & Sung, 2017; Men, 2014a; Morris, 2010; Garnet *et al.*, 2008). Likewise, the positive effects of employee communication strategies (e.g. symmetrical, transparent and

consistent communication) and employee engagement contribute to positive business outcomes and performance, including during times of crisis and challenging economic situations or strategic changes (Kim, 2018 & 2020; Komodromos, 2020; Austin, 2009; Hakanen *et al.*, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

All the above studies provide potential explanations for how the correlation between employee communication and organisational performance could be understood through a mediating variable, i.e., employee engagement. Various variables may mediate the relationship between employee communication and favourable consequences within the workplace (Welch & Jackson, 2007). However, employee engagement has been highly commendable as a potential mediator between contributing factors to successful employee communication and favourable organisational performance either in times of stable economic situations (e.g., Jiang & Shen, 2020; Jiang & Men, 2017; Kang & Sung, 2017; Men & Stacks, 2014) or in time of economic instability (Kim, 2018 & 2020; Komodromos, 2020; Austin, 2009; Hakanen *et al.*, 2008; Schaufeli & Baker, 2004).

From the above discussion, this paper proposes that employee communication and engagement should occur concurrently, and a deliberate relationship between the concepts and organisational performance should be formed.

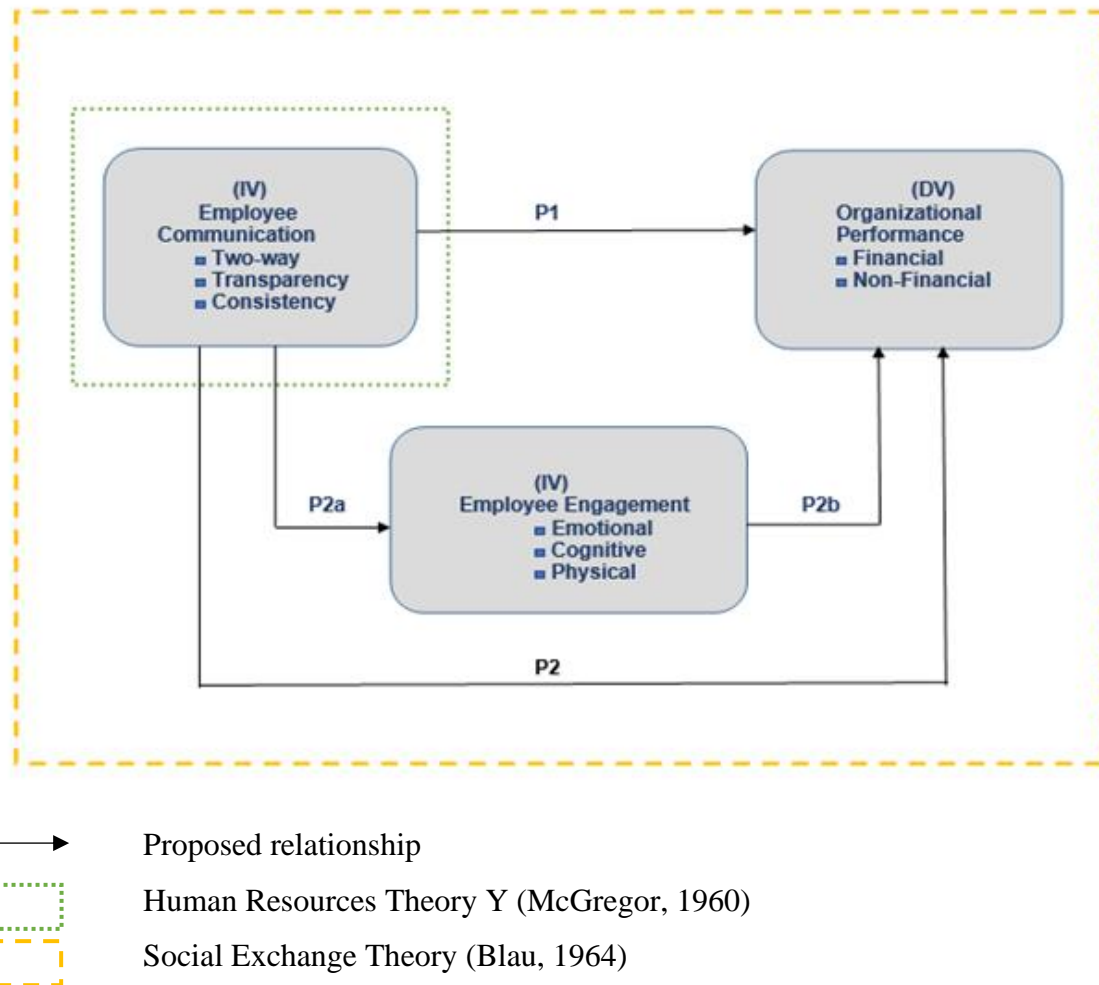
Given the relationship mentioned, this paper proposes that:

P2: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between employee communication and organisational performance.

## Results

In light of the overall review, supported by the four propositions and developed on Grunig's symmetrical communication model (Grunig, 2001), Human Resources' Theory Y (McGregor, 1960), and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), this paper proposes a conceptual model that addresses the attributes and actions required by employee communication and engagement to attain organisational performance and success. Employee communication attributes consisting of two-way communication, transparency, and consistency influence employees' psychological, intellectual, and physical engagement, thereby affecting the financial and non-financial measures of organisational performance, either during the age of pandemics or non-pandemics. The integrative connections showing engagement mediates the relationship between employee communication and organisational performance tend to contribute more to increasing organisational values.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual model suggests that the relationship between employee communication, engagement and organisational performance can be viewed from the perspective of employee-communication behaviour and provides a platform for future communication research.



**Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of Employee Communication, Employee Engagement and Organisational Performance**

**Propositions:**

P1: Employee communication is positively related to organisational performance  
(Sources: Chmielecki, 2015; Men, 2014a; Meng and Berger, 2012; Grunig et al., 2002; Morris, 2010;:)

P2a: Employee communication is positively related to employee engagement  
(Sources: Men & Vercic, 2023; Kang and Sung, 2017; Vercic & Vokic, 2017; Jiang & Men, 2015; Karanges et al., 2015)

P2b: Employee engagement is positively related to organisational performance  
(Sources: Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Anitha J., 2014; Kapoor & Meachem, 2012; Saks, 2006)

P2: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between employee communication and organisational performance.  
(Sources: Kang and Sung, 2017; Men, 2014a; Morris, 2010; Garnet et al., 2008)

### Significance of the Study and Conclusion

This paper is particularly significant as previous studies demonstrated numerous relationships between employee communication, engagement, and organisational performance. Still, however, each relationship had been discussed as an independent construct rather than an integrated concept. Studies on integrating employee communication and engagement still need to be improved (Ruck & Trainor, 2011; Welch, 2011), where both concepts are mostly treated as unidimensional (Karanges *et al.*, 2015).

As employee communication has long been identified as the primary driver of engagement, contributing to an organisation's productivity, performance, and positive financial returns, this paper proposes a model that integrates both concepts that may lead to better organisational effectiveness. Specifically, the model recommends that the effective influence of the integrative relationship between employee communication, engagement, and organisational performance can be viewed from positive employee-communication behaviour and the effective influence of the two concepts on organisational performance. Thus, it provides a platform for future generations' communication research.

More importantly, this paper acknowledges that scholars now recognise the importance of assessing communication and employee engagement in financial performance as an essential way of keeping track of the progress of the organisational business. They realise the assessment helps them to provide critical information about current events, determine the beginning point for a system or new expansion plan's goal-setting, and implement the growth plans strategically. Above all, measuring and improving performance in recent decades has been necessary because organisations constantly search for efficiency, productivity, excellence, and total quality. As Richard *et al.* (2009) emphasised, evaluating performance is crucial for scholars and managers to analyse the particular business activities of organisations and managers, where organisations stand with their competitors, and how they progress and perform through the years.

Studies need further investigations as the Covid-19 global health crisis has caused employee engagement to become particularly fragile during crises (Lee *et al.*, 2021). Employees' work environment is burdened with ambiguities, while organisations focusing on business transformation are also curious about their continued support to employees. Besides prioritising rebuilding communication with employees and the external public to protect their non-financial performance like reputation and trust through crisis response strategies (Gomes *et al.*, 2021; Kim, 2020; Mazzei, 2014), organisations look for more research to help their businesses to move forward financially. Studies on using technology as a communication tool in a remote working environment will help them increase productivity and accomplish organisational improvement (Meirinhos & Barreto, 2018).

This study's theoretical contribution provides logical arguments on which empirical predictors and hypotheses are recognised and can be tested to verify the established conceptual model. Drawing on Grunig's two-way symmetrical communication model supported by Human Resources' Theory Y, this study presumes employee two-way communication affects their engagement. Concurrently, as explained by the Social Exchange theory, employee communication and engagement affect organisations' financial and non-financial performance. Employees with effective internal communication and a higher level of engagement tend to contribute more to increasing their organisations' values.

Pragmatically, organisational leaders may use the new conceptual model to develop plans to build a proficient and dedicated workforce that is fully engaged with the organisation and delivers one-upmanship. Using this concept, leaders may improve organisational performance by concurrently managing aspects of communication (e.g., employee communication) and engagement. An organisation's overall effectiveness and competitiveness might be jeopardised if one of the criteria is overlooked. As Rana *et al.* (2014) suggested, managers may improve employee engagement by working with them to understand better and meet each employee's specific needs. Indeed, creating employee engagement is an endless, continuing activity that requires managers to encourage regular contact and communication with their employees (Saks, 2006).

In conclusion, it is believed that the conceptual model will fill the gap in the research on the organisational effectiveness of integrated employee communication and engagement and elicit different responses and conversations from academics and business practitioners. Above all, it would be more advantageous for them to expand this model to build and adopt appropriate employee communication and engagement programmes for long-term sustainable organisation growth.

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