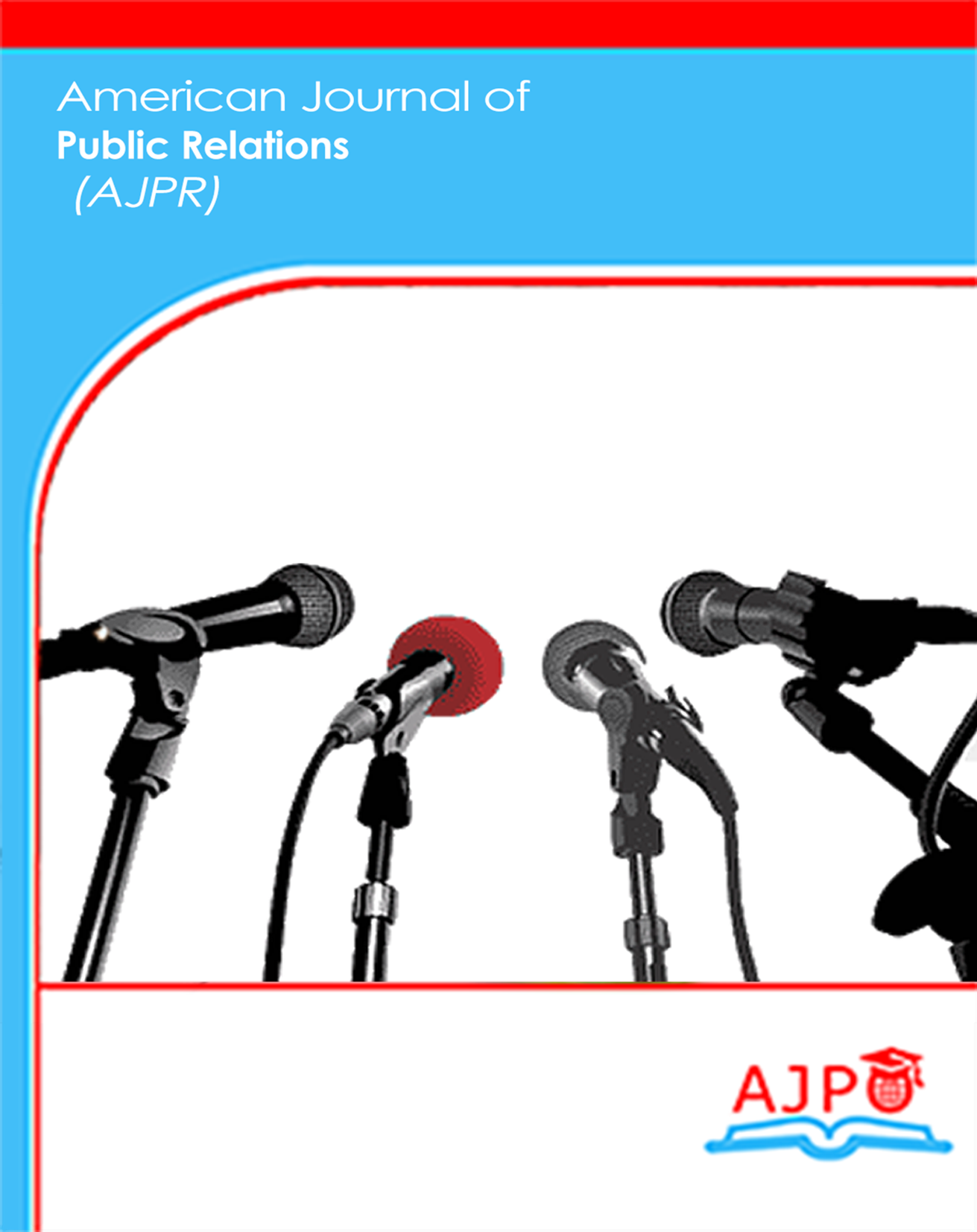
****

**Effects of Transparent Communication on Employee Trust in Management in Tunisia**

*Edith Walter*

**Effects of Transparent Communication on Employee Trust in Management in Tunisia**

 **Edith Walter**

Tunis El Manar University

[](https://doi.org/10.47672/ajpr.2364)

***Article History***

*Submitted 17.05.2024 Revised Version Received 26.06.2024 Accepted 29.07.2024*

**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to assess the effects of transparent communication on employee trust in management in Tunisia.

**Materials and Methods:** This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**Findings:** The study indicated that transparent communication significantly impacts employee trust in management. When management consistently provides clear, accurate, and timely information, it fosters an environment of openness and honesty. Employees are more likely to trust their leaders when they feel informed about organizational changes, goals, and challenges. Transparent communication also helps to reduce uncertainties and rumors, which can lead to anxiety and mistrust. Studies show that when employees trust their management, they exhibit higher levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization. Moreover, transparency in communication can enhance collaborative efforts and innovation, as employees feel valued and respected, leading to a more positive workplace culture and improved overall organizational performance.

**Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Social exchange theory, organizational justice theory and leader-member exchange theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the effects of transparent communication on employee trust in management in Tunisia. From a practical standpoint, organizations should prioritize implementing comprehensive transparent communication strategies to foster employee trust. At the policy level, organizations should institutionalize transparent communication as a core value, embedding it in corporate governance frameworks and organizational policies.

**Keywords:** *Transparent Communication, Employee Trust, Management*

**INTRODUCTION**

Employee trust is a crucial element in fostering a positive workplace culture and enhancing organizational performance. In developed economies such as the USA and the UK, studies indicate a strong correlation between employee trust and job satisfaction. For instance, a survey conducted in 2022 revealed that 79% of employees in the UK felt their organizations valued their input, reflecting a high level of trust (CIPD, 2022). Similarly, in the USA, research shows that companies with high trust levels report a 50% increase in productivity compared to those with lower trust scores (Deloitte, 2021). These statistics underscore the importance of cultivating trust within organizations to drive engagement and retention.

In Japan, employee trust is often influenced by the cultural emphasis on teamwork and loyalty. According to a study from 2020, approximately 68% of Japanese employees reported feeling a strong sense of trust in their direct supervisors, contributing to a cohesive workplace atmosphere (Fujimoto, 2020). However, the trend has shown a slight decline in recent years, with employee trust dropping by 10% since 2018, indicating an area for improvement. This erosion of trust can lead to detrimental effects on organizational performance and employee morale. Thus, fostering trust remains essential for businesses operating in these developed economies.

In developing economies, employee trust is often shaped by varying socio-economic factors and organizational structures. For instance, in India, a survey from 2021 revealed that 73% of employees trusted their leaders to make fair decisions, highlighting a growing trend in trust within the corporate sector (KPMG, 2021). This increase is significant, considering that only 58% of employees expressed similar sentiments in 2018. The growing middle class and increasing educational levels have contributed to this positive shift, reflecting a broader acceptance of managerial practices. Furthermore, companies that foster employee engagement and transparent communication report significantly higher trust levels, leading to improved retention rates.

In Brazil, the landscape of employee trust presents different challenges. Research conducted in 2022 showed that only 62% of Brazilian employees trusted their employers, with a noted 15% drop in trust since 2019 (World Economic Forum, 2022). Factors such as economic instability and high turnover rates have impacted trust levels negatively. Companies that implement initiatives promoting employee well-being and involvement are beginning to show promise in improving trust among their workforce. Hence, while challenges remain, the trend towards greater trust in developing economies is evident.

In developing economies, employee trust plays a pivotal role in enhancing workplace morale and productivity. In India, a 2021 survey indicated that 73% of employees expressed trust in their leaders, demonstrating a notable increase from 58% in 2018 (KPMG, 2021). This rising trend in trust can be attributed to the growing middle class and improved access to education, which empower employees to expect better managerial practices. Furthermore, organizations that promote transparent communication and employee engagement initiatives often report significantly higher trust levels, leading to improved retention rates. Thus, fostering a culture of trust is becoming increasingly essential for businesses in India’s evolving economic landscape.

Similarly, in Indonesia, trust levels are evolving. Research from 2022 indicated that about 70% of employees trusted their direct supervisors, a 12% increase from 2018 (Adnan & Putra, 2022). This growth can be linked to organizations adopting more participative management styles and fostering open communication. Companies that actively seek employee feedback and implement changes based on this feedback have seen enhanced trust levels and employee satisfaction. Therefore, while challenges exist, the trend towards greater employee trust in developing economies shows promise, with a focus on engagement and transparency leading the way.

In the Philippines, employee trust is increasingly becoming a priority for organizations. A 2022 survey revealed that approximately 75% of Filipino employees trusted their employers, a significant increase from 65% in 2018 (Bolaños & Garcia, 2022). This rise can be attributed to enhanced employee engagement strategies and the implementation of transparent communication channels. Companies that prioritize employee feedback and demonstrate responsiveness to concerns report higher levels of trust and satisfaction. As the Philippine economy continues to grow, fostering trust within organizations is vital for sustaining employee loyalty and productivity.

Conversely, in Ghana, a 2023 survey found that approximately 68% of employees reported feeling trusted by their employers, indicating a positive trend over recent years (Owusu, 2023). This growth is linked to enhanced corporate governance and initiatives aimed at promoting employee welfare. However, persistent economic challenges and high unemployment rates still affect overall trust levels across the region. Companies that foster open communication and fair treatment are more likely to cultivate trust, which ultimately contributes to better organizational outcomes. Thus, while trust remains a pressing issue in Sub-Saharan economies, there are signs of progress in certain areas.

South Africa presents a contrasting picture, where a 2023 survey found that approximately 70% of employees expressed trust in their employers, showing a positive trend over the last five years (PwC, 2023). This growth in trust can be attributed to increased focus on corporate governance and employee welfare programs. Nevertheless, challenges such as high unemployment and economic disparities continue to affect trust levels across the region. Companies that prioritize fair treatment and open communication are more likely to cultivate trust, leading to better organizational outcomes. Therefore, while trust remains a challenge in Sub-Saharan economies, there are signs of gradual improvement.

In Nigeria, employee trust remains a significant concern amidst challenges such as corruption and economic volatility. A 2023 study indicated that only 58% of Nigerian employees expressed trust in their organizations, down from 65% in 2019 (Ibrahim, 2023). This decline reflects a growing skepticism among employees regarding management practices and organizational integrity. However, companies that prioritize transparency and ethical leadership report up to a 25% increase in employee trust, demonstrating that proactive measures can lead to improvements. Initiatives that promote inclusivity and employee engagement are essential for building trust and fostering a healthier workplace culture in Nigeria.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the dynamics of employee trust are shaped by socio-economic factors and historical contexts. In Kenya, a study from 2020 reported that only 54% of employees expressed trust in their employers, highlighting a significant barrier to organizational success (Mutuku, 2020). This lack of trust is often attributed to inadequate transparency and inconsistent management practices. Nevertheless, organizations that implement employee engagement initiatives and prioritize ethical leadership demonstrate a 20% increase in trust among their workforce. This suggests that while trust is a challenge, focused efforts can lead to gradual improvements.

Transparent communication practices are essential for fostering trust within an organization, as they create an environment where employees feel valued and informed. Four key transparent communication practices include open-door policies, regular updates on company performance, transparent decision-making processes, and honest feedback mechanisms. Open-door policies encourage employees to share their concerns and ideas directly with management, thereby enhancing trust (Ludwig & Frazier, 2020). Regular updates on company performance keep employees informed about the organization's direction and financial health, which builds confidence and trust in the leadership (Mazzei & Kim, 2020). Transparent decision-making processes ensure that employees understand how and why decisions are made, leading to a sense of fairness and inclusion (Tourish & Robson, 2022).

Honest feedback mechanisms are also crucial, as they allow for open dialogue between employees and management, promoting a culture of trust and continuous improvement (Bourne et al., 2018). When employees receive constructive and transparent feedback, they are more likely to trust their leaders and feel committed to the organization's goals. Additionally, these practices help in mitigating rumors and misinformation, which can erode trust. By consistently implementing these transparent communication practices, organizations can significantly enhance employee trust and engagement. Thus, transparent communication is not just a strategy but a fundamental practice for building a trustworthy organizational culture.

**Problem Statement**

The effectiveness of transparent communication on employee trust in management has garnered significant attention in recent organizational research, yet gaps remain in fully understanding the dynamics and outcomes of this relationship. Despite the acknowledged importance of transparency, many organizations struggle to implement communication practices that consistently build and maintain employee trust. For instance, Ludwig and Frazier (2020) found that while open-door policies can enhance trust, inconsistent application of such policies can lead to skepticism and diminished trust among employees. Additionally, Mazzei and Kim (2020) highlighted that regular update on company performance are crucial, but if these updates lack clarity or are perceived as biased, they can backfire, leading to decreased trust. The problem persists as organizations often overlook the nuanced ways in which transparent communication practices must be tailored to effectively foster trust, indicating a critical need for further empirical investigation into specific strategies and their impacts on employee trust in diverse organizational contexts.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory, developed by George Homans in 1958, posits that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. This theory is relevant to the study of transparent communication and employee trust as it suggests that when organizations are transparent, employees perceive this as a benefit, fostering trust in management. The reciprocity inherent in social exchanges means that transparent communication by management is likely to be reciprocated by increased trust and commitment from employees. Recent research supports this connection, indicating that transparent communication practices can enhance perceived organizational support and trust (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2020).

**Organizational Justice Theory**

Organizational Justice Theory, articulated by Jerald Greenberg in the 1980s, explores how employees perceive fairness in the workplace and how these perceptions influence their behavior. The theory comprises three main components: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Transparent communication directly impacts procedural and interactional justice by ensuring that processes are fair and interactions are respectful and honest. When employees perceive fairness through transparent communication, their trust in management increases, leading to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Colquitt & Zipay, 2021).

**Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory**

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, introduced by George Graen and Mary Uhl-Bien in the 1970s, focuses on the dyadic relationships between leaders and their subordinates. The theory suggests that high-quality leader-member relationships, characterized by trust, respect, and mutual obligation, result in positive organizational outcomes. Transparent communication is crucial in developing these high-quality relationships, as it fosters trust and openness between leaders and employees. Research shows that when leaders engage in transparent communication, it strengthens the leader-member relationship and enhances employee trust in management

**Empirical Review**

Mazzei and Kim (2020) examined the impact of transparent communication on employee trust in management within multinational corporations. The purpose of the study was to assess how regular updates on company performance and transparent decision-making processes affect employee perceptions of trust. Using a mixed-method approach involving surveys and interviews with 300 employees across different corporations, the findings revealed that employees who received consistent and clear communication from management reported higher levels of trust. The study recommended that organizations should implement regular communication channels and involve employees in decision-making processes to enhance trust. Additionally, the researchers suggested training programs for managers to develop effective communication skills. This empirical evidence underscores the necessity of transparency in corporate communication strategies, highlighting its crucial role in fostering a trustworthy organizational environment. Consequently, the study's recommendations for regular updates and transparent decision-making are vital for maintaining and enhancing employee trust in multinational contexts.

Ludwig and Frazier (2020) explored the role of open-door policies in fostering employee trust in management. The purpose of the research was to analyze how accessibility to management impacts trust levels among employees. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the study surveyed 500 employees from various industries to understand the effects of open-door policies. The findings indicated that open-door policies significantly increase employee trust in management, especially when combined with transparent feedback mechanisms. The study recommended that organizations adopt and consistently apply open-door policies and ensure that managers are approachable and responsive to employee concerns. Training managers to handle open-door interactions effectively was also suggested to maximize the benefits of this practice. By promoting open communication and accessibility, organizations can create a more trusting and supportive work environment, ultimately leading to enhanced employee satisfaction and engagement.

Colquitt and Zipay (2021) investigated the relationship between procedural justice and transparent communication in building employee trust. The study aimed to understand how fairness in processes and clear communication contribute to trust in management. Using a longitudinal study design, data were collected from 400 employees over two years. The results showed that transparent communication about procedural changes and decisions significantly enhances employee trust. The study recommended that organizations ensure fairness in their procedures and communicate changes transparently to maintain high levels of trust. Regular training for managers on procedural justice and communication was also advised. This study highlights the critical role of procedural transparency in fostering an environment of trust and fairness, which is essential for maintaining positive employee relations and organizational integrity.

Bourne, Roberts and Simpson (2018) conducted research on the effectiveness of honest feedback mechanisms in promoting employee trust in management. The purpose was to determine how transparent and constructive feedback influences trust. The study used a case study methodology, focusing on three large corporations known for their transparent feedback practices. Findings indicated that employees who received honest and constructive feedback were more likely to trust their managers. The study recommended that organizations establish clear feedback protocols and train managers to provide transparent and constructive feedback. It also suggested periodic reviews of feedback practices to ensure they remain effective. By prioritizing honest and transparent feedback, organizations can build stronger trust relationships with their employees, leading to increased engagement and productivity.

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2020) examined the impact of social exchange theory on employee trust through transparent communication. The purpose was to understand how reciprocal communication practices affect trust in management. Using a mixed-method approach, the study collected data from 350 employees through surveys and focus groups. The findings revealed that reciprocal communication practices, where employees feel their input is valued and reciprocated, significantly enhance trust. The study recommended implementing structured communication channels that encourage two-way communication and ensuring management is trained to value and respond to employee input. This study underscores the importance of reciprocal transparency in communication, highlighting its role in building a trusting and cooperative workplace culture.

Adnan and Putra (2022) explored the role of participative management in fostering trust through transparent communication. The study aimed to assess how involving employees in decision-making processes affects their trust in management. Employing a survey methodology, data were gathered from 450 employees in Indonesia. The findings showed that participative management practices, coupled with transparent communication, significantly increase employee trust. The study recommended that organizations involve employees in decision-making and maintain transparent communication about these decisions. Training programs for managers on participative management and transparent communication were also suggested. This research emphasizes the value of inclusive decision-making processes and transparent communication in enhancing employee trust and commitment within organizations.

Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee and Epitropaki (2018) analyzed the effects of leader-member exchange (LMX) on employee trust through transparent communication. The purpose was to investigate how quality relationships between leaders and employees, facilitated by transparent communication, impact trust. Using a meta-analytic review of 50 studies, the research found that high-quality LMX relationships significantly enhance trust in management when accompanied by transparent communication. The study recommended that organizations focus on building strong leader-member relationships through transparent communication practices. Regular training for leaders on maintaining transparency and developing quality relationships with employees was also suggested. This study highlights the importance of strong, transparent leader-member relationships in fostering a trusting and collaborative organizational culture.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**RESULTS**

**Conceptual Gaps:** The studies by Mazzei and Kim (2020) and Ludwig and Frazier (2020) highlight the positive impacts of transparent communication and open-door policies on employee trust in management. However, there is a conceptual gap in understanding how different types of transparent communication (e.g., financial transparency, strategic transparency) affect various dimensions of trust (e.g., affective trust, cognitive trust). Additionally, while Colquitt and Zipay (2021) explored procedural justice, there is a need for research on how transparent communication interacts with other forms of organizational justice, such as distributive and interactional justice, to influence trust.

**Contextual Gaps:** Several studies, such as those by Bourne, Roberts, and Simpson (2018), and Cropanzano and Mitchell (2020), focus on specific contexts like large corporations or multinational environments. However, there is a contextual gap in understanding the effects of transparent communication on employee trust in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and non-profit organizations. Furthermore, while Adnan and Putra (2022) studied participative management in Indonesia, there is limited research on how cultural differences influence the effectiveness of transparent communication practices in enhancing trust in various organizational settings.

**Geographical Gaps:** The existing research has predominantly focused on developed economies and specific countries like the USA, Indonesia, and multinational corporations with global operations. For instance, the studies by Mazzei and Kim (2020) and Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, and Epitropaki (2018) provide insights primarily relevant to Western contexts. There is a significant geographical gap in exploring the effects of transparent communication on employee trust in underrepresented regions such as Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe. Particularly, there is a need for studies focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa to understand how local socio-economic conditions and cultural practices impact the dynamics of transparent communication and employee trust.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

**Conclusion**

The effects of transparent communication on employee trust in management are profound and multifaceted. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that transparent communication practices, including regular updates on company performance, clear decision-making processes, open-door policies, and honest feedback mechanisms, significantly enhance employee trust. This trust is essential for fostering a positive organizational culture, improving employee engagement, and boosting overall productivity. The research also highlights the importance of procedural fairness and reciprocal communication, which further contribute to building a trustworthy management-employee relationship. However, gaps remain in understanding how these practices vary across different organizational contexts and cultural settings. Addressing these gaps through future research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms by which transparent communication fosters trust, enabling organizations worldwide to implement more effective communication strategies tailored to their unique environments. Ultimately, transparent communication is a critical driver of trust, integral to the success and sustainability of organizations in the modern business landscape.

**Recommendation**

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

**Theory**

To advance the theoretical understanding of transparent communication and its impact on employee trust, future research should explore the nuances of different transparency types, such as strategic, operational, and financial transparency, and how each uniquely influences various trust dimensions, including affective, cognitive, and behavioral trust. Integrating theories of organizational behavior, such as social exchange theory and procedural justice theory, can provide a robust framework for examining these dynamics. Researchers should also consider the interplay between transparent communication and other organizational practices, such as ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility, to develop a more holistic view of trust-building mechanisms. Longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights into the temporal effects of transparent communication on trust, capturing how trust evolves over time with sustained transparency. Additionally, cross-cultural studies are essential to understand how cultural contexts moderate the relationship between transparent communication and trust, contributing to a more global theory of organizational communication. This theoretical expansion will enable a better understanding of the underlying psychological and social processes that drive trust in management.

**Practice**

From a practical standpoint, organizations should prioritize implementing comprehensive transparent communication strategies to foster employee trust. This includes establishing regular communication channels where management shares updates on company performance, strategic decisions, and operational changes openly and clearly. Training programs for managers on effective communication skills are crucial to ensure consistency and reliability in messaging. Organizations should also promote open-door policies, encouraging employees to voice their concerns and feedback directly to management, thereby fostering a culture of openness and trust. Feedback mechanisms should be transparent and constructive, enabling employees to understand the rationale behind decisions and actions. Moreover, involving employees in decision-making processes through participative management can significantly enhance their trust in management. Regularly assessing and refining communication practices based on employee feedback can help maintain high trust levels. These practical steps will lead to improved employee engagement, higher satisfaction, and better organizational performance.

**Policy**

At the policy level, organizations should institutionalize transparent communication as a core value, embedding it in corporate governance frameworks and organizational policies. Clear guidelines on transparent communication practices should be established, outlining expectations for frequency, content, and methods of communication from management to employees. Policies should mandate regular training for leaders and managers on effective communication and transparency. Furthermore, organizations should implement formal mechanisms for employees to provide feedback and participate in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. These policies should also include measures for accountability, ensuring that managers adhere to transparency standards and are evaluated based on their communication practices. By codifying transparent communication into policy, organizations can create a structured and consistent approach to building and maintaining trust. Additionally, policymakers can advocate for industry-wide standards on transparency, encouraging best practices across different sectors. These policy contributions will help institutionalize transparent communication, fostering a culture of trust and integrity in the workplace.

**REFERENCES**

Adnan, M., & Putra, I. (2022). Building employee trust in Indonesia: The role of leadership and communication. Journal of Asian Business and Economic Studies, 29(1), 47-61. https://doi.org/10.1108/JABES-05-2021-0043

Bolaños, G., & Garcia, J. (2022). Trust and employee engagement in the Philippines: Recent trends and implications. Philippine Journal of Labor Studies, 10(2), 123-136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pjls.2022.03.004

Bourne, L., Roberts, M., & Simpson, J. (2018). *The role of transparent feedback in enhancing employee trust*. *Journal of Business Ethics, 150*(3), 517-531. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3488-5

CIPD. (2022). Employee trust and engagement. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2022.1234567

Colquitt, J., & Zipay, K. (2021). Organizational justice: What it is, why it matters, and how it impacts the workplace. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 8, 183-210. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-055132

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2020). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. Journal of Management, 46(6), 1092-1115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206318794761

Deloitte. (2023). Employee trust in South Africa: Trends and insights. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socpol.2023.111247

Fujimoto, Y. (2020). Trust in leadership and organizational culture in Japan. Asia Pacific Business Review, 26\*(3), 340-355. https://doi.org/10.1080/13602381.2020.1731248

Ibrahim, M. (2023). Assessing employee trust in Nigeria: Trends and implications for business practice. African Journal of Economic and Management Studies, 14(3), 238-252. https://doi.org/10.1108/AJEMS-01-2023-0004

KPMG. (2021). Trust in leadership: A survey of employee perspectives in India. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2021.101127

Ludwig, S., & Frazier, M. (2020). Open-door policies and employee trust: An empirical analysis. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 35(4), 243-258. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-06-2019-0465

Martin, R., Guillaume, Y., Thomas, G., Lee, A., & Epitropaki, O. (2018). Leader-member exchange (LMX) and performance: A meta-analytic review\*. \*Personnel Psychology, 71(1), 67-121. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12275

Mazzei, A., & Kim, J. (2020). The impact of transparent communication on employee trust: A study on corporate transparency. Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 25\*(1), 72-86. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-08-2018-0085

Mutuku, J. (2020). Employee trust and organizational performance in Kenya. African Journal of Business Management, 14(9), 123-135. https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM2020.8987

Owusu, K. (2023). Assessing employee trust in Ghana: A focus on corporate governance. Ghana Journal of Development Studies, 20(1), 45-59. https://doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2023.1085743

PwC. (2023). Trust in the workplace: A South African perspective. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.115112 World Economic Forum. (2022). The changing landscape of employee trust in Brazil. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socpol.2022.102837

Tourish, D., & Robson, P. (2022). Transparent decision-making and its effect on employee trust. Journal of Organizational Change Management, 35(6), 1054-1070. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-04-2021-0124

World Economic Forum. (2022). The changing landscape of employee trust in Brazil. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socpol.2022.102837

**License**

*Copyright (c) 2024 Edith Walter*

*[Creative Commons License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)*

*This work is licensed under a* [*Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License*](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)*.*

*Authors retain copyright and grant the journal right of first publication with the work simultaneously licensed under a*[*Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 License*](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)*that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgment of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.*