



The Relationship Between Leadership Communication and Employee Trust: A Cross-Sectional Survey Study

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ABSTRACT

Leadership communication is a central organizational process through which supervisors clarify expectations, share relevant information, explain decisions, provide feedback, and sustain workplace relationships. Although communication is widely recognized as important for organizational functioning, further empirical evidence is needed on how employees' perceptions of everyday supervisory communication relate to trust in immediate leaders. This study examined the relationship between leadership communication and employee trust among corporate professionals and individuals with internship experience. Guided by Motivating Language Theory and symmetrical communication principles, the study used a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive-correlational design. Primary data were collected from 152 respondents through an anonymous electronic questionnaire distributed online through convenience recruitment channels. Leadership communication was assessed through message clarity, timely sharing of important information, listening to employee opinions, and explanation of decisions. Employee trust was assessed through respondents' trust in their immediate leader and perceptions of leader honesty and fairness. The leadership communication scale demonstrated good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .835$), while the employee trust scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .782$). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive association between leadership communication and employee trust ($r = .713$, $p < .001$). OLS regression showed that leadership communication significantly predicted employee trust, $F(1,150) = 155.30$, $p < .001$, explaining 50.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .509$; adjusted $R^2 = .505$). The findings suggest that clear, timely, responsive, and explanatory supervisory communication is associated with stronger employee trust. The study offers implications for leadership development, feedback systems, transparent decision communication, and organizational trust-building practices. Given the cross-sectional design, this relationship should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence of a causal effect.

Keywords: Leadership communication; Employee trust; Supervisory communication; Organizational behavior; Motivating Language Theory

INTRODUCTION

Leadership communication forms the backbone of organizational life. Supervisors rely on daily communication to coordinate tasks, clarify expectations, share crucial information, justify decisions, offer feedback, and build meaningful relationships with their teams [1, 2]. While formal authority grants managers the right to assign work, communication determines how employees perceive and respond to that authority. When supervisory messages are transparent, consistent, timely, and responsive, employees gain a clearer picture of their leader's priorities and expectations. Consequently, communication is far more than a routine administrative task it functions as a relational practice that directly defines the quality of supervisor-employee dynamics. Within this relational framework, employee trust plays a vital role. Trust shapes an employee's willingness to rely on their manager, speak up about concerns, share creative ideas, cooperate with broader business goals, navigate uncertainty, and adapt to change. Following the classic framework by Mayer et al. [3], trust is defined as the willingness to remain vulnerable based on the belief that another party possesses ability, benevolence, and

integrity. These three dimensions surface continually in day-to-day managerial interactions. For instance, clear and logical communication conveys managerial competence; prompt, honest updates demonstrate integrity; and active listening reflects benevolence and genuine respect [3, 4]. The demands of today's modern workplace make these communicative behaviors even more essential. Modern employees frequently navigate organizational restructuring, rapid technological shifts, hybrid or remote work arrangements, fast-moving information streams, and a growing expectation for employee voice. When supervisory communication becomes delayed, vague, contradictory, or strictly top-down, employees are left in the dark regarding their roles and the strategic direction of the company. This ambiguity rapidly erodes confidence in leadership. Conversely, research consistently shows that high-quality communication fosters greater employee engagement and strengthens managerial trust, proving that daily dialogue is the primary bridge through which trust is built [5]. Although existing literature offers valuable insights into organizational communication, transparency, and engagement, several key gaps persist. Much of the research centers on broad enterprise-wide announcements, corporate PR, or formal channels, often overlooking the direct, daily communication behaviors of line managers [1, 2]. Furthermore, many empirical models rely on overly complex frameworks that offer little practical guidance for managers seeking actionable improvements. Organizations need straightforward evidence evaluating whether fundamental supervisory practices, such as communicating clearly, sharing timely updates, actively listening, and explaining rationale, are associated with employee trust. To address this gap, the present study conducts a targeted quantitative survey assessing the relationship between a four-item composite of supervisory communication and employee trust among 152 professionals and interns. By focusing on essential, real-world behaviors, this research provides an applied, accessible framework for communication management and organizational behavior. Specifically, this paper tests the following central hypothesis:

H1: Perceived leadership communication is positively and significantly associated with employee trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Communication

Leadership communication refers to the messages and interactional behaviors through which supervisors guide employees, clarify tasks, coordinate activities, share information, explain decisions, and sustain working relationships. De Vries et al. [1] showed that leaders' communication styles are connected to leadership styles, knowledge sharing, and leadership outcomes. This supports the idea that communication is not separate from leadership; instead, communication is one of the primary ways leadership is experienced by employees.

Clear communication is a fundamental component of supervisory effectiveness. It helps employees understand what is expected, why work is important, how performance will be assessed, and what actions should be taken. Ambiguous messages can create role uncertainty and confusion. By contrast, explanations of work processes and decisions can give employees the information needed to coordinate their efforts and respond constructively to change. Timeliness is also meaningful because delayed information may leave employees dependent on informal rumors or speculation.

Symmetrical communication provides an additional perspective. It emphasizes two-way dialogue, mutual understanding, employee participation, and responsiveness rather than purely one-way dissemination of information [2]. A supervisor who invites questions, listens to employee opinions, and explains how decisions are made creates opportunities for employee voice. These behaviors do not require leaders to accept every recommendation, but they can demonstrate that employee perspectives are treated seriously.

Thomas et al. [5] found that information quality predicted trust in coworkers and supervisors, while information adequacy predicted trust in top management. This distinction suggests that employees assess workplace relationships partly through the usefulness and quality of information available to them. The present study extends this line of reasoning by focusing on four observable communication behaviors that are directly relevant to everyday supervisor employee interaction.

Employee Trust

Employee trust reflects an employee's willingness to rely on a manager, supervisor, coworker, or organization under conditions of uncertainty. In the influential integrative model of organizational trust, Mayer et al. [3] identify ability, benevolence, and integrity as the main antecedents of perceived trustworthiness. Ability refers to whether a leader has the skills and judgment needed to perform effectively. Benevolence refers to whether the leader is perceived as caring about the employee's interests. Integrity refers to whether the leader is viewed as honest, fair, and guided by appropriate principles.

The model is particularly useful for studying supervisory communication because communication provides repeated evidence about these dimensions. A leader who explains decisions clearly may appear knowledgeable and capable. A leader who shares relevant information in a timely way may be seen as open and honest. A leader who listens attentively to employees may be interpreted as respectful and concerned about employee welfare. Schoorman et al. [19] later reaffirmed the importance of the ability benevolence integrity model and its role in explaining trust relationships.

Whitener et al. [4] proposed that managers initiate trust through behavioral consistency, integrity, communication, concern for employees, and the sharing of control. This framework places communication directly within the set of behaviors that can shape trustworthiness. Trust develops gradually through repeated experiences rather than a single favorable interaction. For this reason, everyday supervisor communication may have substantial implications for employee trust.

Meta-analytic research also highlights the organizational relevance of trust. Dirks and Ferrin [6] concluded that trust in leadership is associated with important employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance-related outcomes. Colquitt et al. [20] found that trust, trustworthiness, and trust propensity have distinct relationships with risk taking and job performance. McAllister [21] distinguished cognition-based trust, which is grounded in judgments about reliability and competence, from affect-based trust, which is grounded in emotional bonds and reciprocal care. These perspectives indicate that trust is both a cognitive evaluation and a relational outcome.

Motivating Language Theory

Motivating Language Theory explains how leaders' language can shape employee attitudes and work-related outcomes. Mayfield and Mayfield [8, 9] identify three types of leader language: direction-giving, empathetic, and meaning-making language. Direction-giving language clarifies performance expectations, tasks, procedures, rules, and rewards. Empathetic language communicates respect, appreciation, support, and concern. Meaning-making language connects daily work to larger organizational values, purpose, and decisions.

The theory is useful for the present study because the four communication items reflect these functions. Communication clarity and decision explanation can be understood as direction-giving and meaning-making practices. Timely sharing of important information can communicate openness and integrity, while listening to employees' opinions may demonstrate empathy. Together, these behaviors may give employees a clearer understanding of work and a stronger sense that their concerns are respected.

Empirical research supports the relevance of Motivating Language Theory to employee trust. Men et al. [10] found that direction-giving, empathetic, and meaning-making supervisory communication were positively associated with employee trust in a crisis context. The study showed that how supervisors communicate not only what they communicate may influence employees' perceptions of leadership. The present study examines this broader logic in a non-crisis survey context by using simple measures of routine leadership communication.

Transparency and Related Mechanisms

Transparency is closely related to leadership communication and trust. Rawlins [13] describes transparency as an important dimension of organizational relationships, while Schnackenberg and Tomlinson [14] conceptualize organizational transparency through disclosure, clarity, and accuracy. These components are relevant because

employees may evaluate the trustworthiness of leaders based on whether information is available, understandable, and credible.

Research on authentic leadership and transparent communication also supports the connection between communication and employee outcomes. Jiang and Men [11] found that authentic leadership and transparent organizational communication were related to employee engagement. Men and Stacks [12] linked authentic leadership to strategic internal communication and employee organization relationships. Yue et al. [18] further identified trust as a mechanism connecting transformational leadership, transparent communication, and employee openness to change.

Communication does not operate in isolation. Organizational justice may influence whether employees see management actions as fair [15]. Perceived organizational support reflects employees' beliefs that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being [16, 17]. These conditions may complement supervisor communication in shaping trust. They also help explain why communication alone is unlikely to account for all variance in employee trust.

Research Hypothesis

The reviewed literature suggests that employees may use communication clarity, information timeliness, active listening, and decision explanation to form judgments about supervisory competence, integrity, and benevolence. The present study therefore examines whether employees who report more positive leadership communication also report higher trust in their immediate leaders. H1: Perceived leadership communication is positively and significantly associated with employee trust.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive-correlational research design. This approach was chosen because it enables the observation of naturally occurring perceptions and the empirical evaluation of statistical relationships without experimental manipulation. The descriptive analysis summarized the respondents' demographic profiles and variable mean scores, while the correlational analysis examined the underlying relationship between perceived leadership communication and employee trust. Additionally, an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) linear regression was conducted to estimate the statistical association between leadership communication and employee trust.

Participants and Sampling

The target population comprised adults with current or previous professional or internship experience working under a formal supervisor, manager, or team leader. Following data cleaning, a total of 152 valid responses were retained for the final analysis. The sample reflected diverse employment backgrounds, encompassing full-time and part-time personnel, self-employed individuals, students with formal internship experience, and respondents identifying with other employment arrangements. Data were collected using a non-probability convenience sampling strategy via an anonymous online survey distributed between April and August 2026. Participation was entirely voluntary. Prior to completing the instrument, all participants reviewed an informed consent protocol detailing the study's academic purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality assurances. While this sample offers meaningful exploratory insights into supervisory communication dynamics, the use of convenience sampling limits broad generalizability across all organizational, industrial, geographic, or cultural contexts.

Measures

The survey included demographic questions and seven substantive Likert-scale items. Each substantive item used a five-point response scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. Higher scores reflected more favorable perceptions.

Leadership communication was measured using four items: “My leader communicates clearly”; “My leader shares important information on time”; “My leader listens to employees’ opinions”; and “My leader explains decisions well.” A composite leadership communication score was calculated by averaging the available responses to these four items. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .835$).

Employee trust was measured using two items: “I trust my leader” and “My leader is honest and fair.” A composite employee trust score was calculated by averaging the two item responses. The two-item scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .782$). The two trust items were positively correlated, $r = .642$, $p < .001$, providing additional evidence that they captured related aspects of trust in the immediate leader. A concise two-item measure was used to reduce respondent burden within a broader multi-construct survey and to capture the global evaluative core of trust (reliance and perceived honesty/fairness) rather than its full multidimensional structure. This approach is consistent with prior organizational research using brief global trust indicators in exploratory, single-source survey designs; however, it does not capture the ability, benevolence, integrity, and vulnerability-acceptance dimensions in Mayer et al.’s [3] full model, which is addressed as a limitation below.

The questionnaire also included the statement “Good communication from leaders increases employee trust.” This item was retained as a separate descriptive belief item and was not included in the employee trust composite. Including it in the trust outcome would create conceptual overlap because it asks respondents to endorse the general relationship tested by the research hypothesis rather than assess their own trust in their immediate leader.

Data Preparation

The original survey records contained text-based Likert responses, such as “1 = Strongly Disagree” and “5 = Strongly Agree.” These answers were converted into numerical scores from 1 to 5 using Python. The composite communication and trust scores were calculated as respondent-level means using available item responses. Missing values were not replaced or estimated.

There was one missing response for leadership communication clarity, two missing responses for timely information sharing, one missing response for listening to employee opinions, and one missing response for leader honesty and fairness. Composite scores were available for all 152 respondents because the available-item mean procedure was used. This approach retained observations while avoiding the introduction of invented values.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using Python with Pandas, NumPy, SciPy, Statsmodels, and Matplotlib. The analysis included frequency and percentage calculations for demographic variables; means, standard deviations, minimum values, and maximum values for the composite variables; Cronbach’s alpha reliability analysis; Pearson correlation analysis; and OLS regression analysis.

The regression model was specified as: $\text{Employee Trust} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Leadership Communication}) + \varepsilon$. In this equation, β_0 is the intercept, β_1 is the estimated association between leadership communication and employee trust, and ε is the error term. Statistical significance was assessed using a threshold of $p < .05$.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Before beginning the anonymous electronic questionnaire, respondents reviewed an informed-consent message explaining the academic purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the handling of survey responses. The questionnaire collected broad demographic categories and Likert-scale responses concerning leadership communication and employee trust. No direct personal identifiers, including names, email addresses, telephone numbers, identification numbers, home addresses, or employer names, were collected or analyzed. All findings are reported in aggregate form.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile

The final sample included 152 respondents. Female respondents accounted for 57.9% ($n = 88$), while male respondents accounted for 42.1% ($n = 64$). The largest age group was 26–30 years ($n = 65$, 42.8%), followed by 20–25 years ($n = 39$, 25.7%) and 31–35 years ($n = 34$, 22.4%). Regarding work status, 34.9% were full-time employees, 32.2% were part-time employees, 19.7% were self-employed, 9.9% were students with internship experience, and 3.3% selected another category. Most respondents had one to three years of work experience (45.4%) or four to six years of experience (30.3%).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 152)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	88	57.9
	Male	64	42.1
Age	Under 20	8	5.3
	20–25	39	25.7
	26–30	65	42.8
	31–35	34	22.4
	Above 35	6	3.9
Work status	Full-time employee	53	34.9
	Part-time employee	49	32.2
	Self-employed	30	19.7
	Student with internship experience	15	9.9
	Other	5	3.3
Work experience	Less than 1 year	23	15.1
	1–3 years	69	45.4
	4–6 years	46	30.3
	More than 6 years	13	8.6
	Missing response	1	0.7

Note: One participant did not report years of work experience. Percentages are based on the full sample.

Reliability and Descriptive Statistics

The four-item leadership communication scale had good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .835$). The two-item employee trust scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .782$). The trust items were positively and significantly correlated, $r = .642$, $p < .001$. Leadership communication had a mean of 3.306 ($SD = .878$), while employee trust had a mean of 3.431 ($SD = .963$). Both measures ranged from 1.00 to 5.00, showing that the full response scale was represented.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency Reliability

Variable	Items	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Cronbach's α
Leadership communication	4	152	3.306	.878	1.00	5.00	.835
Employee trust	2	152	3.431	.963	1.00	5.00	.782

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis showed a strong, positive, statistically significant relationship between leadership communication and employee trust ($r = .713$, $p < .001$). This result indicates that respondents who perceived their supervisors as clearer, more timely, more willing to listen, and better at explaining decisions also tended to report greater trust in their immediate leaders.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Between Leadership Communication and Employee Trust

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Leadership communication	3.306	.878	1.000	
2. Employee trust	3.431	.963	.713***	1.000

Note: N = 152. *** $p < .001$.

OLS Regression Analysis

A simple OLS regression analysis was conducted to estimate the association between leadership communication and employee trust. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(1, 150) = 155.30$, $p < .001$. Leadership communication explained 50.9% of the variance in employee trust ($R^2 = .509$; adjusted $R^2 = .505$). Leadership communication was positively and significantly associated with employee trust in the regression model, $B = .783$, $SE = .063$, $t = 12.462$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.659, .907]. The positive confidence interval does not include zero. Therefore, H1 was supported. A one-unit increase in perceived leadership communication was associated with an estimated .783-unit increase in employee trust.

Table 4. OLS Regression Predicting Employee Trust

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
Constant	.843	.215	3.925	< .001	[-.419, 1.268]
Leadership communication	.783	.063	12.462	< .001	[-.659, .907]

Note: Dependent variable: employee trust. N = 152. $R^2 = .509$; adjusted $R^2 = .505$; $F(1, 150) = 155.30$, $p < .001$.

Figure 1. Relationship Between Leadership Communication and Employee Trust



DISCUSSION

This study examined whether perceived leadership communication was associated with employee trust. The findings supported H1. Leadership communication was strongly and positively correlated with employee trust ($r = .713$, $p < .001$), and The OLS regression model showed a statistically significant positive association between leadership communication and employee trust ($B = .783$, $p < .001$). The model explained 50.9% of variance in employee trust, demonstrating that employees' perceptions of routine supervisory communication were strongly

related to their reported trust in immediate leaders. Because the design is cross-sectional, this predictive relationship should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence of a causal effect of communication on trust.

The result is consistent with Mayer et al.'s [3] model of organizational trust. Employees may interpret clear communication and well-explained decisions as evidence that supervisors are capable and competent. Timely sharing of important information may indicate integrity because it reduces the impression that leaders are withholding relevant information. Listening to employee opinions may signal benevolence because it demonstrates attention to employee concerns and respect for their perspectives. The findings therefore support the view that communication can be a mechanism through which employees assess ability, integrity, and benevolence.

The findings also align with Whitener et al. [4], who identify communication, behavioral consistency, integrity, employee concern, and sharing control as core managerial trust-building behaviors. In the present study, the communication measure captured clarity, timeliness, listening, and decision explanation. These are practical behaviors that supervisors can apply routinely. The result suggests that employees may not evaluate leadership only through outcomes or formal authority; they also form judgments through the quality of daily communication encounters.

Motivating Language Theory offers a complementary explanation. Clear communication and decision explanation correspond to direction-giving and meaning-making language. These behaviors help employees understand work requirements and organizational rationale. Listening to employee opinions reflects empathetic language because it indicates support and respect. The positive relationship found in this study is therefore consistent with research showing that direction-giving, empathetic, and meaning-making supervisory communication can foster employee trust [10].

The relationship also fits literature on transparency. Transparent communication emphasizes information disclosure, clarity, and accuracy [13, 14]. When leaders explain decisions and share relevant information promptly, employees may feel less uncertain and more able to judge managerial actions fairly. Research on authentic leadership, transparent communication, and openness to change similarly suggests that trust can connect leadership communication with positive employee attitudes [11, 12, 18].

The R^2 value of .509 is meaningful because the single composite measure of leadership communication accounted for 50.9% of the variance in employee trust in this sample. This does not mean that leadership communication is the only factor associated with employee trust. Rather, it indicates that communication is strongly associated with trust and should be treated as a major organizational resource. The remaining 49.1% of variance may be related to organizational justice, perceived organizational support, psychological safety, leadership style, fair rewards, ethical climate, organizational culture, past experiences with management, and leader competence [15–17].

Diagnostic results should be considered carefully. The Durbin–Watson statistic was 2.162, indicating no evident concern regarding residual autocorrelation. However, the Omnibus and Jarque–Bera tests from the initial regression output indicated some departure from perfect residual normality. The sample size of 152 supports the use of the model, but future research should repeat the analysis with robust standard errors, additional predictors, and diverse samples to assess the stability of the results.

Limitations And Future Research

Several methodological limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish definitive causal directionality. Although the analysis demonstrated a statistically significant association, cross-sectional data cannot establish temporal order or causal direction. Employees with higher pre-existing trust may evaluate managerial communication more favorably, and unmeasured workplace variables may also influence the observed relationship. Future studies utilizing longitudinal or panel designs are needed to determine whether changes in supervisory communication temporally precede shifts in employee trust.

Second, the reliance on a non-probability convenience sample limits the external validity of the results. Because respondents were recruited online, the sample may not fully reflect the demographic, industrial, geographic, or cultural diversity of the broader workforce. Consequently, these findings should be interpreted as exploratory evidence specific to this cohort rather than a universally generalizable estimate of the leadership communication–trust relationship.

Third, the construct measurements relied exclusively on single-source, self-reported data collected within a single survey administration, introducing the potential for common-method variance (CMV). Collecting responses for both the predictor and outcome variables simultaneously from the same source may artificially inflate observed relationships. To mitigate CMV and bolster construct validity, future research should incorporate multi-source designs such as pairing employee evaluations with supervisory self-reports, peer ratings, or objective organizational indicators or employ time-lagged data collection strategies.

Fourth, employee trust was operationalized using a brief two-item measure. Although the scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency reliability, a more expansive, multi-dimensional instrument could better capture the nuanced facets of trust outlined in foundational literature, including perceived ability, benevolence, integrity, and the willingness to accept vulnerability. Future empirical work should integrate broader measurement scales alongside exploratory or confirmatory factor analyses to strengthen structural validity. Relatedly, the regression model included a single predictor and did not statistically control for potentially confounding variables such as leadership style, organizational justice, employee tenure, industry sector, or work arrangement (remote, hybrid, in-person). The reported effect size should therefore be interpreted as an unadjusted association, and future studies should test the communication–trust relationship in multivariate models that account for these factors.

Finally, future research should extend this baseline model by investigating key mediating and moderating mechanisms that clarify the boundary conditions of supervisory communication. Researchers could examine potential mediators such as perceived organizational support, psychological safety, organizational justice, and employee voice to unpack the underlying pathways linking communication to trust. Additionally, investigating contextual moderators such as leadership style, employment arrangement (e.g., remote, hybrid, or in-person), organizational tenure, industry sector, and cultural dimensions would clarify why and under what conditions supervisory communication exerts stronger effects on employee trust.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between leadership communication and employee trust among 152 respondents with work or internship experience. Leadership communication was assessed through four observable supervisory practices: communicating clearly, sharing important information on time, listening to employee opinions, and explaining decisions. Employee trust was assessed through respondents' trust in their immediate leader and their perceptions that the leader was honest and fair.

The findings supported the research hypothesis. The leadership communication scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .835$), and the employee trust scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .782$). Leadership communication was strongly and positively associated with employee trust ($r = .713, p < .001$). OLS regression indicated a statistically significant positive association between leadership communication and employee trust, $F(1,150) = 155.30, p < .001$. Leadership communication accounted for 50.9% of the variance in employee trust ($R^2 = .509$, adjusted $R^2 = .505$). The positive regression coefficient ($B = .783$) indicates that a one-unit increase in perceived leadership communication was associated with an estimated .783-unit increase in employee trust.

The study contributes to organizational behavior and communication management by demonstrating that routine leadership communication is closely linked to trust in the immediate supervisor. The results reinforce the theoretical view that employees form trust judgments through perceived leader ability, integrity, and benevolence. Communication clarity and decision explanation may indicate competence; timely information sharing may indicate integrity; and listening may signal benevolence. The findings are also consistent with Motivating Language Theory, which highlights the importance of direction-giving, empathetic, and meaning-making leader language.

The practical implication is that organizations should treat communication as a central trust-building capability. Supervisors should be trained to communicate clearly, share relevant information promptly, provide credible explanations for decisions, listen actively, and respond respectfully to employee concerns. These practices may help reduce uncertainty and support employees' willingness to rely on leadership. Since communication does not explain all variation in trust, organizations should combine communication initiatives with fair procedures, ethical leadership, organizational support, transparent performance management, and inclusive workplace culture. These implications apply across organizational roles: supervisors can communicate the rationale behind decisions and hold regular one-to-one check-ins; HR departments can build communication clarity and active-listening into manager evaluations and coaching programs; and leadership development programs can adopt Motivating Language Theory's direction-giving, empathetic, and meaning-making language functions as a structured training framework rather than treating communication as an unstructured soft skill.

Although the cross-sectional design and convenience sample require caution, the study provides applied evidence that leadership communication is strongly associated with employee trust in the present sample. Future research can develop this evidence through longitudinal designs, broader trust measures, multi-source data, and comparisons across industries and cultures. Improving everyday supervisory communication may be an accessible and valuable strategy for organizations seeking more transparent, respectful, and trustworthy workplaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the study was cross-sectional and based on a convenience sample, the following recommendations should be interpreted as practical implications informed by the observed association rather than as evidence of a confirmed causal effect.

1. Establish regular two-way communication through one-to-one meetings, team discussions, feedback sessions, and safe channels for employee questions and concerns.
2. Train supervisors to communicate clearly, share relevant information promptly, listen actively, use empathetic responses, and explain decisions.
3. Require managers to communicate the rationale for important operational, people-related, policy, and strategic decisions.
4. Create predictable schedules for organizational news, performance updates, policy changes, and team priorities to reduce uncertainty and informal rumors.
5. Use periodic anonymous employee surveys to monitor leadership communication and employee trust and identify areas for coaching or development.
6. Complement communication improvements with ethical leadership, fair procedures, employee support, transparent performance management, and inclusive organizational culture.

Declarations

Ethical Approval and Informed Consent

Participation was voluntary, and all respondents reviewed an informed-consent message before completing the anonymous electronic questionnaire. No direct personal identifiers were collected or analyzed, and findings are reported only in aggregate form.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Data Availability Statement

The anonymized survey data and Python analysis code are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to participant confidentiality and institutional requirements.

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