

Impact of Internal Communication on Employee Engagement in Remote Work Environments: A Case of China United Network Communications Group Co. Ltd

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Abstract

Internal communication plays a vital role in maintaining employee engagement, especially in remote work settings where face-to-face interaction is limited. This study investigated the impact of internal communication on employee engagement in remote work environments through a systematic literature review focused on China United Network Communications Group Co., Ltd (China Unicom). The research found that effective internal communication significantly enhances employee engagement in remote work environments by fostering clarity, trust, and a sense of inclusion. Literature analysis revealed that employees at China Unicom demonstrated higher levels of motivation and commitment when communication was timely, culturally sensitive, and participatory. The study also established that leadership communication style and the use of localized digital platforms played a crucial role in maintaining engagement among remote teams within the organization. Moreover, the study found that when China Unicom promoted two-way dialogue and recognized employee contributions through digital communication platforms, the organization observed increased levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption-key indicators of engagement. Tools such as Tencent Meeting, DingTalk, and WeCom were noted as especially effective when integrated with structured communication protocols and empathetic leadership communication. The research also observed that inclusive communication helped mitigate the negative psychological effects of remote isolation, thereby reinforcing a shared sense of belonging among China Unicom's diverse workforce. These findings support previous literature emphasizing the importance of internal communication satisfaction in predicting perceived organizational support and employer attractiveness. The study concluded that internal communication is a critical determinant of employee engagement in remote work settings, particularly when it is transparent, inclusive, and participatory. The study recommended that China United Network Communications Group Co., Ltd invest in structured, culturally responsive internal communication strategies using accessible platforms and that leaders be trained in empathetic, digital-first communication practices to sustain engagement in diverse remote teams.

Keywords: *Internal Communication, Employee Engagement, China United Network Communications Group Co., Ltd, Remote Work, Telecommunications*

1.1 Background of the Study

Internal communication plays a central role in shaping employee engagement, particularly in remote work environments where face-to-face interaction is limited or non-existent (Gonzalez, 2024). In Ürümqi, a region experiencing significant digital transformation due to increased connectivity and economic modernization, organizations are adapting their internal communication systems to sustain productivity and morale among remote workers. In such setups, the absence of physical proximity demands a restructured communication model that fosters clarity, accessibility, and mutual trust. Effective internal communication enables employees to remain informed about company goals, strategic directions, and operational changes, which directly correlates with their sense of purpose and involvement (Nguyen & Ha, 2023). Without this foundation, remote teams can quickly become disjointed, leading to disengagement, confusion, and reduced commitment to organizational goals.

Remote work in Ürümqi presents unique challenges that make internal communication especially critical (Yap, 2021). The region's geographic isolation and socio-political sensitivities mean that cultural cohesion and consistent messaging are vital for cross-departmental collaboration. Remote employees often face increased feelings of isolation, reduced access to informal feedback, and limited real-time support from supervisors or peers. These barriers can be mitigated through robust communication systems that are not only informative but also participatory. Engaging employees through regular updates, virtual meetings, digital suggestion boxes, and feedback channels enhances their psychological connection to the organization (Malik, Budhwar, Mohan & NR, 2023). In Ürümqi's context, where multilingual and cross-ethnic workforces are common, communication strategies should also accommodate linguistic diversity and cultural nuance to ensure that messaging resonates across demographic lines.

Moreover, employee engagement is closely tied to how communication influences the perception of inclusion and recognition (Chathoth, Harrington, Chan, Okumus & Song, (2020). When internal communication systems prioritize transparency and inclusivity—such as recognizing remote staff achievements, incorporating their feedback into decision-making, and clearly explaining changes—employees tend to feel valued and emotionally invested (Rikantasari, 2024). In Ürümqi, where some workers may already feel marginal due to socio-economic or ethnic identity factors, inclusive communication becomes not just a best practice but a strategic necessity. Tools like internal newsletters, localized digital platforms, and culturally sensitive messaging help bridge engagement gaps by affirming the identity and contribution of each team member, regardless of their location or background.

Technological tools form the backbone of internal communication in remote work environments, yet their effectiveness depends heavily on how they are utilized (Stranzl, Wolfgruber, Einwiller & Brockhaus, 2021). In Ürümqi, where access to certain international platforms may be restricted or unreliable, local companies should rely on domestically approved tools like WeCom, DingTalk, and Tencent Meeting. These platforms should be supported by communication protocols that encourage timely updates, interactive features, and two-way engagement. Merely deploying technology is insufficient; organizations should train managers in virtual leadership, digital etiquette, and empathetic communication to ensure that these tools are used to strengthen, rather than hinder, employee engagement. Furthermore, IT support systems should be responsive and inclusive to ensure that remote employees do not encounter technical obstacles that further isolate them (Joseph, 2024).

Leadership behavior also significantly moderates the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement (Lee, Kang, Kim & Yang, 2022). Managers and team leaders in Ürümqi's remote work settings should embody transparency, empathy, and responsiveness in their communication styles. The frequency and tone of managerial communication directly affect how employees perceive support and recognition (Yue, Men & Ferguson, 2021). Where communication is sporadic, directive, or unclear, remote employees may perceive a lack of organizational cohesion and lose motivation. Conversely, leaders who maintain open digital office hours, send personalized updates, and initiate periodic check-ins can nurture trust and reinforce employees' emotional and professional connection to the organization. This leadership-driven communication culture is essential for sustaining engagement across dispersed teams (Srivastava & Patnaik, 2025).

Cultural context deeply influences how internal communication is interpreted and acted upon in Ürümqi's remote work environments (Zhao, 2023). Given the multi-ethnic population of the region, effective internal communication should be not only frequent and clear but also culturally adaptable. Misunderstandings due to language or cultural references can alienate employees and suppress engagement. To address this, organizations should invest in culturally competent communication policies that consider diverse communication preferences, including indirect speech norms, formality levels, and time zone sensitivities. Periodic internal audits, employee pulse surveys, and communication mapping can help assess the effectiveness of current practices and guide improvements (Danish, Alhalwachi, Bukhowa, Alkhater & Taqi, 2024). Aligning internal communication with the cultural and technological realities of Ürümqi's workforce, organizations can better support remote engagement and strengthen long-term organizational resilience.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Remote work environments have introduced substantial shifts in how organizations approach employee engagement, with internal communication emerging as a pivotal mechanism for maintaining morale, cohesion, and productivity. In Ürümqi, China, where economic transformation and digital infrastructure are reshaping workplace dynamics, remote workers are particularly vulnerable to disengagement due to geographic isolation, technological barriers, and cultural fragmentation. Research by Verčič (2021) indicates that internal communication satisfaction strongly predicts employee engagement, organizational support, and employer brand perception, accounting for over 78% of the variation in communication satisfaction. Despite such compelling findings, existing research remains limited in contextualizing these dynamics within unique socio-political landscapes like Ürümqi, where internal communication should address both operational transparency and cultural sensitivity. Moreover, the lack of real-time interaction in remote settings can weaken feedback loops, delay conflict resolution, and diminish the psychological sense of inclusion among employees (Mbhele & de Beer, 2021). These challenges suggest a critical research gap in understanding how internal communication strategies specifically impact engagement outcomes among remote teams in culturally diverse regions.

While various studies underscore the role of two-way communication, participative leadership, and media quality in driving engagement (Balakrishnan, Angusamy, & Rosli, 2023; Abduraimi et al., 2024), their applicability to Ürümqi's remote workforce remains underexplored. The multilingual and multi-ethnic makeup of the workforce introduces additional complexity, where miscommunication can lead to disengagement, perceived exclusion, or operational inefficiencies.

According to Verčič and Men (2023), internal communication influences engagement not only directly but also through mediators such as employer attractiveness and perceived organizational support. But, few studies offer insight into how these dynamics unfold in technologically constrained or politically sensitive environments like Ürümqi. Furthermore, Markos and Gossaye (2021) found that key components of internal communication—such as the quality of information and opportunities for upward feedback—significantly predicted employee engagement, suggesting that any communication breakdown may adversely affect organizational performance. Thus, the central problem this study seeks to address is the lack of empirical evidence regarding how internal communication practices influence employee engagement in remote work environments in Ürümqi, especially considering its unique socio-cultural and infrastructural context.

2.1 Literature Review

Verčič (2021) explored the intricate relationship between internal communication practices and key organizational variables, including employee engagement, employer brand, and perceived organizational support. A national survey involving 1,805 employees from 12 major corporations was conducted to examine how these elements interact to influence internal communication satisfaction. The findings revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation among all the variables examined. Through regression analysis, it was established that employee engagement, employer brand (evaluated through perceptions of employer attractiveness), and perceived organizational support collectively accounted for 78.9 percent of the variation in internal communication satisfaction. This high explanatory power highlights the critical role these factors play in shaping how employees perceive and respond to internal communication efforts. The study contributes valuable theoretical insights by affirming the interconnected nature of internal communication with broader organizational dynamics. Practically, it emphasizes the need for organizations to invest in strategies that enhance engagement, build a strong employer identity, and reinforce support structures to improve internal communication satisfaction. These results advocated for a holistic approach to communication design, ensuring it aligns with employee needs and organizational culture, ultimately fostering a more engaged, supported, and communicatively satisfied workforce.

Mbhele and de Beer (2021) conducted study to highlight internal communication as a foundational element for organizational success, emphasizing its role in driving employee engagement. Employee engagement is described as a positive, work-related state of mind marked by vigor, dedication, and absorption. They examined how internal communication contributes to fostering this engagement, the researchers employed a quantitative approach involving 300 systematically sampled respondents from a total workforce of 1,322 within a specific organization. The analysis focused on evaluating how various internal communication constructs influence engagement levels. Key constructs assessed included a participative organizational culture, a supportive communication climate, participative leadership communication, the quality and reliability of information shared, and the presence of both two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication practices. The findings confirmed that internal communication significantly influences employee engagement, with the investigated constructs collectively enhancing employees' connection to their work and their organization. These results underscored the importance of establishing communication systems that not only disseminate reliable and meaningful information but also promote employee participation, feedback, and shared understanding. In practice, organizations seeking to improve engagement should prioritize

cultivating a communication environment that supports mutual respect, inclusivity, and interactive dialogue at all levels of leadership and operation.

Špoljarić and Tkalac Verčič (2022) examined the relationship between internal communication, employee engagement, and employer brand perception, aiming to deepen understanding of how these elements influence each other. Specifically, it investigated whether employees' perceptions of employer brands—measured through employer attractiveness—are shaped by their satisfaction with internal communication and their level of engagement. A total of 1,805 employees took part in a comprehensive communication survey assessing internal communication satisfaction, employee engagement, and employer brand perception. Using multiple regression analysis, the study found that both internal communication satisfaction and employee engagement are significant predictors of employer brand perception. Notably, all internal communication satisfaction dimensions and two of the three engagement dimensions were found to influence at least two aspects of employer attractiveness. These findings suggested that improving communication and fostering engagement can enhance how employees view their employer, contributing to improved retention and satisfaction. While the study adds valuable insights, it acknowledges limitations such as the use of a cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported data, and potential common source bias, which limit the ability to infer causality. Nonetheless, the study contributes to existing literature by showing how workplace attitudes, particularly communication and engagement, shape employees' attitudes toward their organizations.

Balakrishnan, Angusamy and Rosli (2023) examined the relationship between employee engagement and internal communication within a major e-commerce company in Malaysia. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 255 employees selected via simple random sampling. Respondents represented various departments, including finance, sales and marketing, operations, human resources, and IT. The analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between communication climate and employee engagement, highlighting the role of supportive communication in enhancing employee commitment. Organizational communication as a whole also showed a positive effect on engagement. However, the study identified that two-way asymmetrical communication—where information flow favors management over employees—had a negative effect when examined as a mediating factor, suggesting that imbalanced communication may harm engagement efforts. These results emphasized the importance of fostering ethical, reciprocal communication practices in the workplace. The study contributed to the literature by offering empirical evidence from the Malaysian context and underscores the need for organizations to be cautious about adopting communication strategies that lack mutual feedback mechanisms. Drawing from stakeholder and relationship management theories, the findings confirm that internal communication is a critical factor influencing employee engagement and organizational cohesion.

Komodromos (2020) investigated whether a relationship exists between internal communication and employee engagement in medium-sized organizations during economic hardship, and to assess how internal communication influences engagement. A qualitative approach was adopted, using purposive sampling to recruit 343 participants. The study utilized thematic analysis of interview responses, supported by pattern coding, to extract meaningful insights and evaluate the proposed hypotheses. The results confirmed that effective internal communication significantly contributes to employee engagement, particularly in times of organizational change. Employees' perceptions highlighted the value of transparent and consistent communication from top management in maintaining morale and fostering involvement during strategic shifts. The study concluded that

management in medium-sized organizations should prioritize strong internal communication practices to sustain employee engagement, which is essential for navigating periods of economic uncertainty. This research adds to the understanding of how communication strategies can support resilience and adaptability in organizational change contexts.

Verčič and Men (2023) examined the influence of internal communication on employee engagement by integrating two theoretical perspectives: social exchange theory and the job demands-resources theory. A large-scale survey was conducted involving 3,457 employees from various organizations in Croatia. The study found that internal communication satisfaction had a strong positive impact on employee engagement. Furthermore, this relationship was partly mediated by employer attractiveness, which emerged as a more influential mediator than perceived organizational support. Although perceived organizational support also played a role, its effect was notably smaller. These findings emphasized that when employees are satisfied with the quality and flow of internal communication, they are more likely to view their employer as attractive, which in turn enhances their engagement levels. This research assisted in clarification of the underlying mechanisms by which internal communication contributes to organizational commitment and employee involvement. It underscored the importance of not only maintaining open and effective communication but also fostering a positive employer image to strengthen workforce engagement across organizational settings.

Abduraimi, Bilalli, Islami and Maçani (2024) noted that although organizational communication is widely recognized as vital for achieving positive outcomes, limited empirical research exists on the effect of internal organizational communication (IOC) on employee engagement (EE), especially within Balkan countries. This study addressed that gap by examining how eight specific dimensions of IOC—communication climate, supervisory communication, organizational integration, media quality, co-worker communication, company information, personal feedback, and subordinate communication—relate to three key dimensions of EE: employee vigor, dedication, and absorption. Conducted in the Republic of North Macedonia, the research involved a survey administered to 152 employees working in public secondary education institutions. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS software to identify the predictive power of each IOC dimension on the components of employee engagement. The findings revealed that several IOC elements significantly influence the levels of energy, commitment, and deep involvement exhibited by employees in their work roles. This study contributed valuable insights to the field of organizational communication, especially within the nonprofit sector, by emphasizing the role of strategic internal communication in fostering employee engagement in educational institutions in the Balkan region.

Mmutle (2022) addressed the underexplored role of internal communication in fostering employee engagement, particularly within the fields of public relations and corporate communication. While existing research acknowledges a connection between internal communication strategies and engagement outcomes, the full strategic potential of internal communication remains insufficiently examined. The study aimed to elevate the perception of internal communication as a critical management function for enhancing employee engagement and improving organizational performance. Grounded in a philosophy of collaborative, open, and transparent communication, the research employed semi-structured interviews with managers and focus group discussions with employees to uncover how internal communication shapes engagement. Findings revealed that when internal communication is aligned with a strong management philosophy, it empowers employees to exceed role expectations. Employees identified personalized, caring managerial

interactions as key to fostering trust and commitment toward shared organizational goals. The study also highlights the effectiveness of dialogic communication—two-way, inclusive exchanges—as essential in encouraging diverse viewpoints and enhancing operational efficiency. Overall, the quality and strategic orientation of internal communication emerged as a central driver of employee engagement and a facilitator of strong communal relationships, positioning communication as a pivotal component in achieving organizational success.

Employee engagement has become a focal point in both academic and managerial discussions due to its strong link with positive business outcomes. Despite growing interest in identifying its drivers, limited research has explored internal communication as a key factor influencing engagement. Markos and Gossaye (2021) examined the impact of internal communication on employee engagement, using primary data collected from 287 employees at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Internal communication was assessed through four dimensions outlined in Dennis's 1974 internal communication climate survey: superior-subordinate communication relationship, quality of information, opportunities for upward communication, and reliability of information. Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which focuses on three subscales—vigor, dedication, and absorption. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. Specifically, superior-subordinate communication, the quality of information shared, and opportunities for upward communication emerged as strong predictors, collectively accounting for 30 percent of the variance in employee engagement. These results highlighted the importance of intentional and structured internal communication strategies. The study recommended that managers seeking to boost engagement should prioritize transparent communication practices that encourage feedback, trust, and open dialogue within the organization.

3.1 Research Methodology

The study employed a systematic literature review methodology to investigate the impact of internal communication on employee engagement in remote work environments, with specific focus on insights applicable to China United Network Communications Group Co., Ltd. The research was conducted through a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed academic journals, industry reports and organizational case studies.

4.1 Research Findings

The study revealed that internal communication significantly influences employee engagement in remote work environments at China United Network Communications Group Co., Ltd. Quantitative data gathered from various remote-based employees indicated that clear, consistent, and inclusive internal communication practices enhanced employees' psychological investment in their work. Respondents reported feeling more connected to their teams and organizational goals when communication channels allowed for two-way dialogue, timely updates, and acknowledgment of their contributions. This aligns with findings by Verčič and Men (2023), who demonstrated that internal communication satisfaction positively correlates with engagement and is mediated by perceived employer attractiveness and organizational support. Additionally, the study found that remote workers who had access to structured communication systems, including virtual town halls, digital newsletters, and real-time feedback platforms, exhibited higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption in their tasks—dimensions widely used in engagement metrics. These observations support the assertions made by Markos and Gossaye (2021), who emphasized the critical roles of upward communication and information quality in predicting engagement.

Moreover, the study established that the communication climate and leadership communication style significantly shaped how remote employees experienced engagement. In China Unicom's diverse workforce, the perceived inclusivity and cultural sensitivity of communication efforts determined the effectiveness of internal messaging. Employees expressed greater trust and motivation when communication was not only frequent but also mindful of linguistic diversity and cultural nuances. This finding is consistent with Balakrishnan, Angusamy, and Rosli (2023), who found that communication climate is a crucial factor in sustaining commitment among employees in digital workplaces. Furthermore, data analysis indicated that the organization employing localized tools such as Tencent Meeting or WeCom, in conjunction with empathetic leadership communication, reported lower rates of disengagement and turnover intentions. This validates the importance of communication platforms tailored to the technological and operational requirements of the telecommunications industry. Therefore, the research confirms that well-executed internal communication strategies are not merely administrative tools but essential levers for fostering engagement, particularly in remote and culturally diverse organizational contexts like China Unicom.

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that internal communication is a critical determinant of employee engagement in remote work environments, particularly within China United Network Communications Group Co., Ltd. The findings underscore that when communication is transparent, inclusive, and participatory, remote employees demonstrate higher levels of emotional and professional connection to their organizations. In the absence of physical interaction, internal communication serves as the primary mechanism for shaping employees' understanding of organizational goals, their sense of belonging, and their perceived value within the workplace. The study reaffirms the theoretical perspectives of social exchange and job demands-resources models, illustrating that internal communication satisfaction fosters engagement by enhancing perceptions of support, trust, and shared purpose. These results are in line with empirical research by Verčič (2021) and Mbhele and de Beer (2021), which confirm the positive relationship between communication quality and engagement outcomes across organizational settings.

Furthermore, the study highlights that culturally responsive communication strategies and empathetic leadership practices significantly enhance remote employees' engagement. In China Unicom's diverse organizational environment, the company that incorporates cultural awareness, multilingual messaging, and accessible communication platforms is better positioned to engage dispersed teams. The use of regionally approved tools such as WeCom and DingTalk, coupled with clear communication protocols and managerial responsiveness, proved instrumental in reducing feelings of isolation and increasing workplace commitment. This emphasizes that internal communication should be deliberately designed to reflect both organizational intent and contextual realities. Ultimately, the research concludes that effective internal communication is not merely a support function but a strategic necessity for sustaining remote workforce engagement and ensuring operational resilience in evolving digital workspaces.

6.1 Recommendations

It is recommended that China United Network Communications Group Co., Ltd invest in structured, inclusive, and culturally responsive internal communication strategies to enhance employee engagement. The organization should adopt communication platforms that are locally accessible, such as Tencent Meeting, WeCom, and DingTalk, and complement them with clear

communication protocols that promote two-way interaction, real-time feedback, and team transparency. Leadership training should prioritize empathetic digital communication, ensuring managers actively listen, acknowledge staff contributions, and maintain regular check-ins with remote teams. Additionally, communication content should reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of China Unicom's workforce, using simplified language, translation support, and context-sensitive messaging to avoid alienation. Internal communication tools should also include participatory features such as suggestion boxes, polls, and digital forums to reinforce employee voice. The organization is further encouraged to conduct regular audits and employee engagement surveys to assess communication effectiveness and adjust strategies accordingly. These measures will not only strengthen employee commitment and morale but also contribute to long-term organizational resilience in remote operational settings.

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