

Circular Leadership Communication and Employee Engagement: Trends, Gaps, and Future Pathways

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is central to organizational success yet sustaining it in today's dynamic work environment remains challenging. While ethical and communicative leadership has been well studied, recent shifts—digitalization, hybrid work, and sustainability—demand a broader perspective on leadership communication. This paper reviews emerging and enduring themes linking leadership communication and employee engagement. Three consistent drivers are identified: (1) ethical leadership that builds trust and integrity; (2) engagement in remote and hybrid work supported by digital proficiency and inclusiveness; and (3) the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to personalize communication and provide timely feedback. A novel direction is the integration of circular economy principles, showing how sustainability-oriented communication can motivate employees and align engagement with environmental and social goals. These findings extend traditional leadership and communication models by adding digital and sustainability perspectives. Practically, the study emphasizes the need for leaders to adopt inclusive and dialogic communication, cultivate ethical conduct, and apply AI carefully to support belonging and performance without losing authenticity. It also outlines pathways for aligning employee engagement strategies with sustainability goals through circular leadership communication. Overall, the review suggests that both well-established and emerging approaches to leadership communication are critical for maintaining engagement in increasingly digital and globally connected workplaces. By integrating trust-building, technology, and sustainability, organizations can develop resilient, adaptable, and committed workforces prepared for the future of work.

Keywords: leadership communication, employee engagement, ethical leadership, hybrid work, artificial intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership communication is a key driver of employee engagement and organizational success. Yet today's workplace is more complex due to globalization, rapid technological change, and new ways of working. Leaders are therefore expected to communicate with flexibility, openness, and inclusivity rather than relying on one-way, top-down styles (Dordunoo, 2025). Leadership communication does more than transfer information; it builds trust, collaboration, and a sense of belonging that supports commitment and motivation (Kumar et al., 2025). In this context, circular leadership communication openness, mutual respect, and continuous feedback has emerged as a promising route to stronger engagement.

Recent research shows a strong link between leadership communication and employee engagement, especially under transformational and communicative leadership. Higher engagement is often associated with transformational leadership, which includes motivation of employees, providing recognition and promoting open dialogue (Dordunoo, 2025).

In addition, communicative leadership enhances involvement by turning communication supportive, open, and

participatory, which creates shared understanding and dedication (Kumar et al., 2025). These effects are only intensified by the application of technology because digital platforms, collaboration tools, and internal social media provide a novel avenue through which leaders and employees can engage (Ewing et al., 2019; Sievert and Scholz, 2017; Woods, 2021). Similarly, the development of e-leadership shows that virtual communication and shared sense-making are the central aspects to involve employees in remote and hybrid work environments (Hooi and Chan, 2025).

Despite these developments, there are still some gaps in the studies. To begin with, the impact of working remotely and hybrid on employee engagement is not clear yet, with existing literature presenting both positive and negative outcomes regarding its long-term effects (Hooi & Chan, 2025). Second, the idea of cultural and organizational differences implies that the leadership communication might not be equally effective across fields and areas, and the studies of this phenomenon are scarce (Al Maqbali and Khudari, 2024; Kuczman et al., 2024). Third, psychological and emotional variables including resilience, adaptability, and creativity, also referred to as psychological capital are increasingly relevant in maintaining the engagement of employees when things get bleak, but are not thoroughly researched (Davis et al., 2024). These gaps indicate that a wider, context-sensitive, and futuristic perspective of circular leadership communication is necessary to enhance employee engagement.

This paper attempts to address these research gaps by analyzing trends, concepts, and opinion of experts on the topic of circular leadership communication and employee engagement. The review summarizes what is known, on a concept map and evidence to point to the important themes and other domains where additional research is needed. By this, the research assists in the literature as well as offer practical recommendations to leaders who could wish to adopt an inclusive and technology-based communication strategy to realize a superior engagement.

There are three contributions of this paper. To begin with, it collects and integrates the available literature into a body of resourceful information to scholars and practitioners. Second, it identifies critical gaps and problems, especially in such areas as technology usage, cultural variations and psychological resilience. Third, it suggests the further directions, too, suggesting the consistent strategies and research prospects that could improve the involvement of the employees with the assistance of circular leadership communication. All the rest of the paper will be structured as follows: Section 2 will be the review of leadership communication and employee engagement theories; Section 3 will deal with the methodology with the help of bibliometric and concept-map approaches; Section 4 will involve the discussion of the main findings and themes; Section 5 will discuss the gaps and research directions; and the paper will be concluded with the Section 6 and both theoretical and practical implications.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a systematic review supported by Scopus AI Analytics to map and synthesize the literature on leadership communication and employee engagement. The search process in the Scopus AI service offered a broad overview of the published literature, thematic groups, and experts' contributions. The contextual direction of the methodology was dictated by the goal of the research: to examine tendencies, ideas, and the opinions of specialists, as well as define new themes directing the further research in this discipline.

Data Collection and Search Strategy

The Scopus AI platform was used to gather the data, and automated text mining, clustering, and knowledge mapping tools were used to perform bibliometric analysis (Suarez-Amaya et al., 2024). This Boolean operator search ("circular leadership" OR "participative leadership" OR "collaborative leadership" OR "shared leadership") AND (communication OR dialogue OR interaction OR discourse) AND ("employee engagement" OR "workplace engagement" OR "staff involvement" OR "employee participation") AND (motivation OR satisfaction OR commitment OR performance) was used to find relevant studies. The search criteria in this search were to locate articles which investigated leadership styles which are circular or participatory in style, communication practices adopted by the leaders and their impacts on employee engagement and performance. This search led to the list of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, or conference papers found in Scopus, as of September 2025.

Scopus AI Outputs

The Scopus AI platform provided five outputs of systematic review, namely, Summary, Expanded Summary, Concept Map, Topic Experts, and Emerging Themes.

Summary and Expanded Summary

The Summary indicated keywords, research contexts and methodologies that occurred frequently. The Expanded Summary had more in-depth information on interwoven themes, such as the usefulness of transformational and participative leadership in engagement (Dordunoo, 2025), the increasing relevance of communicative leadership in the digital context (Kumar et al., 2025), and the middleman role of technology in the interaction between leaders and employees (Woods, 2021). These products lay the foundation of placing the current study in the context of greater academic discussion.

Concept Map

Scopus AI's Concept Map illustrated keyword co-occurrences and thematic clusters. Four clusters dominated: transformational and participative leadership, digital and e-leadership communication, psychological capital and employee resilience, and technology-based engagement. Employee engagement appeared at the centre, strongly linked to trust, collaborative leadership, and motivation, indicating that sustained engagement depends on trust-building, participatory decision-making, and motivational support (Hooi & Chan, 2025).

Topic Experts

The platform selected the most prominent topic experts in the area, according to the frequency of publication, the influence of citations, and their position in the research community. Among colleagues who have made significant contributions were researchers who investigated such topics as communicative leadership and employee involvement (Kumar et al., 2025), leadership practices that are technology-based (Ewing et al., 2019; Sievert and Scholz, 2017), and the topics of organizational culture and leadership within the scope of SMEs (Kuczman et al., 2024). These scholars are the voices of authority; the voices whose works form the basis of much of the discussion of circular leadership communication.

Emerging Themes

The Emerging Themes feature highlighted new forms of research that were becoming popular in the last five years. Among the themes were (a) integration of artificial intelligence into leadership communication, especially, the use of ChatGPT-like applications to facilitate dialogue (Kumar et al., 2025), (b) effects of remote and hybrid work ecosystems on employee engagement (Hooi and Chan, 2025), and (c) the intersection of cultural diversity and participative leadership to influence organizational performance (Al Maqbali and Khudari, 2024). These themes demonstrate how the field has developed to be technology empowered, context sensitive and psychologically enriched modes of engagement.

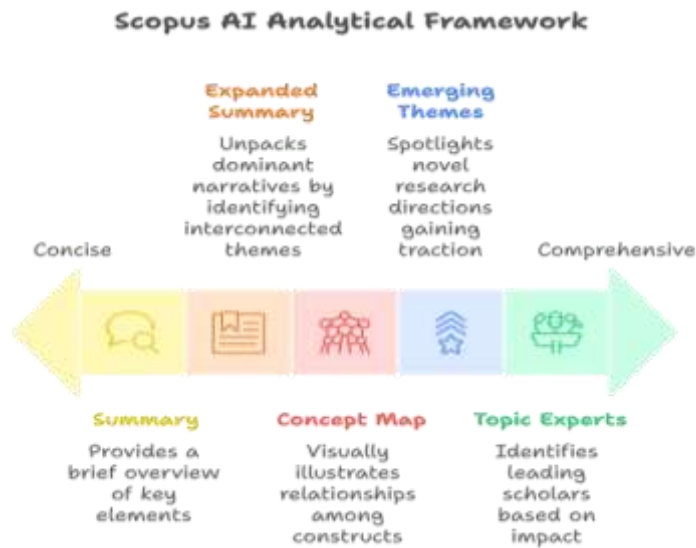
Analytical Approach

Qualitative thematic synthesis was applied to study outcomes of the Scopus AI. Especially, the Summary, Expanded Summary, and Concept Map were taken into consideration, and thematic overlaps, gaps in research, and theoretical links were found. The Topic Experts section took into consideration considerations to incorporate those in the Emerging Themes section which represented new directions and proposed future research directions. This triangulated practice deserved the same point of view of the research environment, generating prior knowledge and traveling possibilities.

Following the search query, Scopus AI has given a structured result within four key areas of analysis (see Figure 1): (1) Summary, (2) Expanded Summary, (3) Concept Map, and (4) Topic Experts and Emerging Themes. All these outputs provided the multi-dimensional view of the literature and connected the current trends with the opportunities of the future. In general, the tool of methodology which relied on Scopus AI analytics offered the

systematic, repeatable and prospective study of the problem of circular leadership communication and employee engagement. Such research synthesis, identification of gaps, and projections of potential directions contribute to the research literature in addition to the effective organizational practices to improve the organizational engagement into the dynamic communication environment.

Figure 1: 5 core elements of Scopus AI



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The AI data analysis carried out on Scopus as of 25 September 2025 resulted in detailed information about the academic environment of circular leadership communication and employee engagement. The products, including the Summary and Expanded Summary, Concept Map, Topic Experts and Emerging Themes, gave an overview of the past, present, and future of research in this area. These findings, as a group, provide a descriptive summary of the available scholarship as well as a platform on which to conduct the discussion on theoretical and practical implications. 3.1 Key Trends in Circular Leadership Communication and Engagement Openness, inclusivity, and continuous communication (Scopus AI summary, expanded summary, 25 September 2025) are the key drivers of engagement among employees as outlined in the Scopus AI summary and expanded summary as a contributor to employee engagement. One of the most important trends is the increasing attention to transformational and authentic leadership when transparency and trust become the basis of effective communication. Research indicates that employees feel greater belonging, commitment, and involvement in their companies due to leaders who communicate in an evident, trustworthy, and inclusive way (Jiang and Shen, 2023; Willett et al., 2023).

At the same time, the importance of the communicative leadership as a key tool of interaction has become eminent. Leaders that concentrate on developing motivation, satisfaction, and greater organizational identification by encouraging unceasing communication and amplify voices of workers (Kumar et al., 2025). Using technology in leadership communication has been the other trend. The heightened application of communication and collaboration technologies (CCTs) particularly during and after the COVID-19 has altered the practice of interaction both in the physical and remote working environment. Digital collaboration tools and internal social media, as well as interactive platforms, have facilitated better connection relations and knowledge sharing and influence employee engagement positively (Ewing et al., 2019; Sievert and Scholz, 2017; Woods, 2021). At the same time, the introduction of e-leadership and virtual models of communication underline the importance of shared meaning-making in the worlds of distributed work. Research shows that this skill of leaders to develop a feeling of mutual understanding when working in remote and hybrid environments is relevant to the engagement process and minimization of isolation (Hooi and Chan, 2025).

Gaps in Current Research

There are still important gaps in the research. Much of the current evidence comes from limited settings—such

as the banking sector, remote work, or single cultural contexts—making it difficult to generalize. Another challenge is helping leaders manage communication across different cultures and generations, as expectations vary widely. More studies are also needed to understand how engagement changes as technology evolves, especially when communication involves artificial intelligence (AI). Overall, circular leadership communication is not just another modern leadership style; it is a new way of thinking that can help organizations build strong, adaptable, and committed workforces in today's digital and global world. Next-generation Research and Practice. The fact points to a few possible ways of future research and organizational practice. First, it is significant that the combination of leadership communication with the aspects of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and organizational support are elaborated as the holistic engagement strategies that guarantee the engagement in the long term (Suarez-Amaya et al., 2024). Second, businesses should continue to think about the technology-based engagement technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) applications, like ChatGPT, which can enhance the real-time communication process, decision-support, and employee response process (Kumar et al., 2025). Third, integrating sustainability and the idea of the circular economy into communication practices will present the possibility to align the employee engagement with the larger environmental and social goals, which will, in turn, increase the organizational legitimacy and resilience (Kuczman et al., 2024).

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings highlight the fact that circular leadership communication is a relational and technological phenomenon. Leaders that embrace dialogic, open, and technology-based communication behaviors are in a better position to interact with employees, especially when working in dynamic and hybrid environments. Simultaneously, the need to study a gap in remote work communication, digital fatigue, and application of the principles of sustainability provides significant guidelines on future research. Closing these gaps can enhance theory and practical knowledge that can aid organizations to develop resilient and engaged workers in digital transformation as well as sustainable development.

The thematic landscape in the circular leadership communication and employee engagement represented in the concept map created by Scopus AI (25 September 2025) is structured into the visual representation. The map identifies four broad thematic areas Future Pathways, Challenges and Gaps, Employee Engagement Strategies, and Trends in Leadership Communication, each further divided into subthemes that represent the current issues and directions of the scholarly discussion and future study

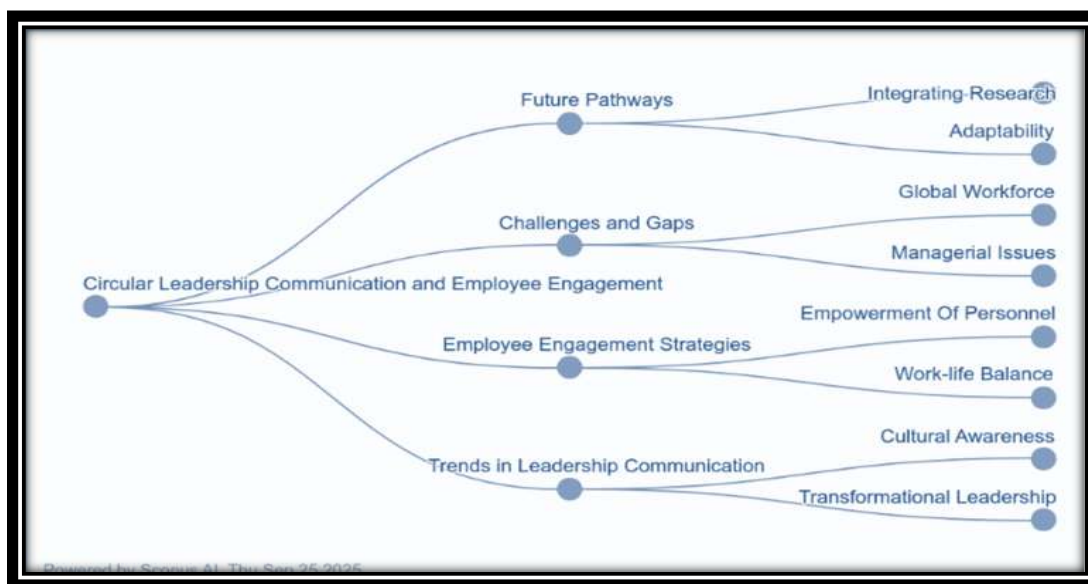


Figure 2: Concept Map of Circular Leadership Communication and Employee Engagement

The Relationship of Leadership Communication and Employee Engagement

The Leadership Communication and Employee Engagement Relationship. The literature under analysis can easily affirm that the openness of and dialogue and respect and feedback loop typify circular leadership

communication, which is a significant determinant of making sure that employees are engaged. Feelings of belonging and mutual commitment in general among employees are enhanced because of engaging leadership with communication founded on reciprocal relationship and participatory decision-making process hence making employees more engaged (Kumar et al., 2025). This demonstrates the more generalized concept that the entire forms of leadership communication are not only transactional, but inherently relational, which characterizes psychological contract between leaders and employees. Among the trends is the emphasis on the respectful working conditions and welfare of the employees in which leadership communications play the primary role. Respectful engagement that was incorporated into organizational practices was also shown to increase morale, trust, and overall satisfaction (Willett et al., 2023).

This shows that circular communication is growing not only to share information, but also to promote dignity, inclusion, and mutual respect — values that can directly shape how engaged employees feel. In this regard, research from the Saudi Arabian banking sector found that when leaders focus on shared purpose and use dialogue-based interaction, employees report higher satisfaction, stronger commitment, and better engagement (Ahmad & Aldakhil, 2012). Remote work has also increased transparency and made communication more visible. One of the most effective ways to strengthen the relationship between leaders and employees in virtual settings is by building and keeping trust through the different channels leaders can use (Qin, 2025).

There are still important gaps in the research. Much of the current evidence comes from limited settings, such as the banking sector, remote work, or single cultural contexts, which makes it difficult to apply the findings more broadly. Another challenge is helping leaders manage communication across different cultures and generations, as people often have very different expectations. More studies are also needed to understand how employee engagement changes as technology develops, especially when communication involves artificial intelligence (AI). Overall, the evidence suggests that circular leadership communication is not just another modern leadership style — it is a new way of thinking that can help organizations build strong, adaptable, and committed workforces in today's digital and global world.

The Relationship Between Leadership Communication, Employee Engagement, and Future Pathways

The relationship between leadership communication and employee engagement has gained increasing attention, especially during organizational crises, uncertainty, and digital transformation. Research shows that effective communication not only rebuilds trust but also shapes organizational culture, which increases employee commitment and interest (Davis et al., 2024). Leaders who communicate a shared purpose and remain open during difficult times, such as layoffs or pandemics, help maintain morale and reduce disengagement. These findings highlight the important role of leadership communication in supporting and motivating employees, which is central to engagement outcomes. The role in engagement of communication and collaboration technologies (CCTs) is one of the trends. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people are using digital platforms more frequently, and so, leadership communication became more based on virtual tools (Woods, 2021). Research indicates that the use of circular communication technology (CCTs) enhances transparency, leadership and cross-border cooperation, and it facilitates the existence of virtual teams. Nevertheless, there are such issues as information overload, the absence of non-verbal information, and digital fatigue. This implies that the future leadership communication process must be circular and must be equipped with technological competencies and flexibility to allow employees to get involved.

It is also important the role of communicative leadership, where there are active listening, openness and feedback. Raising employee satisfaction and commitment are assisted by leaders engaging in reciprocal communication (Kumar et al., 2025). As the recent trends hint, the application of artificial intelligence (AI) by leaders can further advance the communication process by providing the timely, personalized, and inclusive messages. This establishes an environment in which human interaction and technology interact to generate more vibrant and fluid patterns of interaction.

The engagement mechanisms that engage in motivationally speaking the facilitating, strengthening, connecting and inspiring engagement behaviors have been identified as positively related to work engagement (Schaufeli, 2021). These behaviors not only satisfy the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, but also contribute to how the communication during the process of the circular leadership process can be

informational and relational process. The elements of respect, dialogue and mutual trust can be instilled in the leader's communication practices to create an atmosphere that assists in sustaining interest of the different workforce demographics in the long-term.

Circular leadership communication is not a frequently examined construct, and most of the research has been carried out on disjointed topics of authentic, communicative, or engaging leadership. These views should be combined in a model of the circular communication in the perspective of the future research. Moreover, longitudinal and cross-cultural studies are needed to investigate the transformation of communication strategies used by the global workforce and multi-generational workforce, particularly in the hybrid and distant work environment.

As a continuation, the further avenues will be the research of the interaction of digital communication tools and AI-driven technology and human-centered practices as the key to the creation of sustainable employee engagement. Those who are in charge will not only be expected to be communicative but also be flexible, culturally sensitive and capable of leading global and diverse teams. The integration of the circularity of the communication approaches to integrate the technological, relational, and sustainability level in its definition is a hopeful new direction of making sure that the level of engagement of the employees corresponds to the level of organizational performance and social goals.

The Relationship Between Leadership Communication and Employee Engagement: Challenges and Gaps

The interdependence of circular leadership communication and employee engagement indicates that there are various unresolved research gaps and issues especially in the balance of styles of leadership and effective performance of communication practices. Research indicates that explicit and reciprocal communication enhances trust, motivation, and job satisfaction, and top-down, hierarchical models frequently create dissatisfaction and inefficiency (Kuczman et al., 2024). However, most organizations still use traditional leadership approaches; this points to an absence of institutionalization of dialogic and inclusive communication practices at all levels.

The COVID-19 pandemic also altered the dynamics of communication and exacerbated the problem of isolation, fragmented information flow, and the lack of spontaneous interaction (Kuczman et al., 2024). Even though the use of circular communication plans that focus on transparency, feedback, and emotional connection is essential to the crisis, not many models directly deal with these pandemic-specific obstacles. The gap highlights the necessity to modify circular leadership communication patterns to extreme and highly dynamic settings.

The other urgent challenge is virtual leadership and digital fatigue. Although the flexibility of remote and hybrid setups encourages flexibility, workers are growing progressively burdened with cognitive loads due to incessant on-line conference calls and digital collaboration imperative (Dixit et al., 2024). This makes leadership communication less effective, undermining the engagement in the long term. There are also current strategies that present potential, like online family engagement, virtual team building, and e-learning (Singh et al., 2023), which have not been studied enough regarding their long-term sustainability and scalability.

Lastly, transformational leadership and circular communication have opportunities and gaps of intersection. Transformational leadership brings about autonomy, intrinsic motivation and work life balance (Dordunoo, 2025) and its combination with systematic circular communication systems is still underdeveloped. Further studies ought to be offered on developing integrated frameworks that encompass workforce diversity worldwide, digitalization and emerging employee demands. These will be significant in ascertaining sustainable employee participation in the ever-involved organizational ecosystems.

Leadership Communication and Employee Engagement Strategies

One of the primary elements of creating the employee engagement strategies is the circular leadership communication that creates trust, collaboration, and collective responsibility. Research indicates that communicative leadership enhances engagement as employees feel more affected and dedicated when communication is outstanding, transparent, and active (Kumar et al., 2025). Circular practices, including the

emphasis on feedback, inclusivity, and respect, can assist leaders in developing strategies of engagement that can become both organizational-oriented and employee-oriented.

The recent studies also reveal that the difference between the leadership style and the engagement is conditional upon the perceptions of the employees on communication. Being perceived as friendly and open leaders promote shared decision-making and sense of responsibility, which enhances engagement (Kumar et al., 2025). That indicates the importance of engagement strategies not just employing participative communication but also considering the diversity of the workforce since cultural and personal differences influence the reactions of the employees to the leadership initiatives. Leadership communication that revolves around AI is a developing field. Leaders can assist in achieving better engagement with the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, which will allow offering swift feedback, streamline the process of sharing knowledge, and customize the message to everyone (Kumar et al., 2025). Nevertheless, excessive use of digital tools may undermine the role of human interaction, which is why it is important to find a balance between technology and interpersonal communication.

Strategies of employee engagement should also be modified to the realities of organization, including remote or hybrid work and a more diverse workforce. According to Dordunoo (2025), engagement initiatives should also be assessed frequently to create relevance. Long-term engagement is significant because of such strategies as promotion of autonomy, work-life balance promotion, and transformational leadership. The issue is how to change these strategies as employees evolve in terms of their expectations, technology, and workplace dynamics. Despite these advances the literature continues to be short of integrated models that incorporate circular leadership communication with strategies of employee engagement.

Although communicative leadership and digital innovations are identified as powerful, studies have not been able to bundle such factors into structured scalable models that can be embraced by organizations. Future research should be aimed at creating all-inclusive engagement models that combine communication principles of leadership with technological resources and cross-cultural responsiveness so that their sustainability across industries and culture is maintained.

Leadership Communication, Employee Engagement, and Emerging Trends

As part of active and hybrid working environments, the emphasis on leadership communication as the primary source of employee engagement is emphasized by recent scholarship. One of the trends is the emphasis placed on communication as the key to the creation of respectful organizational cultures and employee welfare maintenance. Willett et al. (2023) discovered that a leader who makes it a habit to communicate in a consistent and respectful way creates trust and inclusion that directly improve engagement and satisfaction. On the same note, Kumar et al. (2025) showed that communicative leadership enhances organizational communication, which creates more commitment and loyalty in the employees. These results imply that the type of leadership communication that is becoming more important in the development of employee engagement strategies is circular communication that has characteristics of dialogue, reciprocity, and feedback.

The transition to remote and hybrid work has only increased the significance of an effective communication. Qin (2025) demonstrated that direct communication and effective use of online space enhance the leader-member interactions, hence making remote teamwork stronger. In line with this, Qin, Men, Akanbi, and He (2025) discovered that the quantity of motivating language used by supervisors has a strong impact on supportive behaviors of employees in hybrid setting, which explains the importance of purposeful and empathetic messages. Collectively, this research suggest that virtual and hybrid communication measure is now an essential requirement that leaders in post-pandemic workplaces are to endure.

Another trend that supports the leadership and engagement relationship is two-way communication. Kuczman et al. (2024) showed that open information flows and participative leadership styles enhance employee satisfaction and organizational performance, especially in SMEs. This is in line with the findings of Ahmad and Aldakhil (2012) in banking industry where communication based on similar purpose and conversation was positively associated with engagement and commitment. Altogether these studies point to a larger change: effective engagement strategies are becoming more rooted in communication practices based on the principle of transparency, reciprocity, and inclusivity.

Although there have been such improvements, there exist a few gaps. The studies on digital communication focus frequently on the immediate gains, and while a challenge in digital communication, including digital exhaustion, excessive messages, and lack of authenticity in online communication remain under-researched. In addition, a big portion of the evidence is industry- or region-specific, which is concerning, as it would be difficult to apply to diverse cultural and organizational settings (Kuczman et al., 2024). These gaps indicate that further longitudinal and cross-cultural research is required to support and expand existing knowledge.

In the future, it is believed that the future of leadership communication will entail a combination of both technological creativity and people-oriented activities. According to Kumar et al. (2025), artificial intelligence applications, like ChatGPT, can help improve the effectiveness of communication by promoting real-time feedback, facilitating the transfer of knowledge, and promoting personalized interactions. Nevertheless, the excessive use of these tools creates the possibility of reducing authenticity and interpersonal richness. Accordingly, the future of circular leadership communication requires the development of hybrid strategies to utilize digital technologies and maintain a genuine, human interaction, to make the work environment more complex but ensure that employees are engaged on a sustainable basis.

EMERGING THEMES DISCUSSION

According to academic literature conducted by Milhem, Al Astal and Ateeq, leadership communication is a major motivating factor in employees, and this is more so in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry. Milhem (2020) emphasizes the presence of a mediation role of the relationship between transformational leadership practices and job performance of employees through the interaction of psychological empowerment. This style demonstrates that leadership communication is more than transactional and lies at the heart of motivation and engagement. These results indicate that circular communication, in which feedback is ongoing and dialogue in an interactive process, can be used to retain the employees in an active organizational setting.

Similarly, the works of Al Astal demonstrate that transformational leadership is a major factor in employee performance, whereby it builds psychological empowerment among the employees (Al Astal, 2021). His findings reveal that a culture of trust and dedication is built once the leaders have a shared vision and the employees are given a chance to be part of the decision-making process. This is in line with the concepts of the circular communication whereby leadership is not one-way but interactive and iterative. The lessons are indicative of a growing trend in the literature of leadership that highlights communication as an effective power of employee engagement and not a facilitative process.

This line of thought is also developed by Ateeq who frames transformational leadership within the framework of the ICT industry, stating that the deficiencies in employee engagement and organizational performance may be addressed through the efficient communication process within leadership (Ateeq, 2021). In his work, the notion of communication as one of the most vital tools to empower the employees, enhance the resilience, and reduce the gap between organizational expectations is supported. The similarity between the conclusions that Ateeq and Milhem and Al Astal have made depicts a trend in research where empowerment, communication, and engagement are represented as inseparable elements of leadership performance. In general, these sources represent a continuation of research where it is described that communication and empowerment are essential components of increasing employee engagement in the multifaceted workplace.

Even with this level of contribution there remain great gaps in the literature. Firstly, the phenomenon of psychological empowerment is not a secret as the mediator, but the situational factors that may positively or negatively impact the connection between leadership communication and worker involvement are uncharted. As an example, remote and hybrid work models have led to the emergence of new challenges of maintaining engagement that compel the leaders to resort to digital communication tools that facilitate two-way engagement. Besides, the research available is narrowed to ICT sector and therefore it would not be easy to apply in other organizational environments such as healthcare, education, and government. To address these gaps, there is a need to subject the leadership communication strategies in the industries and various cultural settings to more diverse research.

Going forward, the evolution of circular leadership communication and employee engagement should be aimed at using technology-based communication devices yet should not overlook the human component of leadership. As the workplace becomes increasingly digital, the leaders are expected to create the right equilibrium between the productivity of the communication technologies and the importance of sensitive, transparent, and empowering communications. The second study is based on the concepts of Milhem, Al Astal, and Ateeq to identify how the power of circular leadership communication could be enhanced by using digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and virtual collaboration tools. With the creation of such pathways, organizations will be able to establish organizational cultures in which employee engagement is not only maintained but fostered through the creation of dynamic, inclusive and feedback-driven leadership practices.

Emerging Theme

The use of ethical leadership as the means of increasing employee engagement is one of the themes that can be found consistently throughout the literature. Trust, integrity, and harmonious work passion are fostered by ethical leadership, which is important in maintaining managers to a high commitment and high level of performance of the employees (Bedi et al., 2016; Den Hartog, 2015). Ethical leaders ensure that there are more employee satisfaction and lower turnover intentions by establishing transparent and fair organizational climates. The fact that this theme has continued to live through the years is a testimony to the significance of this issue as a pillar of employee engagement practices. In these terms, it is possible to formulate two hypotheses (H1) Ethical leadership practices positively affect the level of employee engagement due to the presence of a culture of trust and integrity; (H2) The higher level of employee retention and satisfaction in organizations with strong ethical leadership practices.

The other theme is the one related to employee engagement in the remote work environment, which was particularly popular during the COVID-19 pandemic and is highly topical in a hybrid workplace. It is established that leadership communication, the ability to use digital skills, and dialogic interaction play an essential role in engaging in virtual workplaces (Qin et al., 2025; Kniffin et al., 2021). Such practices of inclusive leadership like actively seeking employee feedback and maintaining even-handed communication can be most essential in reducing feelings of isolation and disconnection. This implies that the leadership approaches should keep on developing with the technological and cultural shifts in modern work patterns. Based on these findings, two hypotheses are as follows: (H3) Leaders are able to use digital communication skills to increase employee engagement in the distant workplace; (H4) Inclusive leadership practices play a significant role in ensuring that employee engagement is high in the virtual workspace.

The third common theme is the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) into employee engagement practices. Artificial intelligence devices, including chatbots and analytics systems, are being actively taken up to offer personalized services, simplify the conversation, and offer real-time feedback. Studies emphasize that AI-powered projects enhance employee satisfaction, company performance, and establish more responsive HR (Kumar et al., 2025; Meijerink et al., 2021). The growing fascination with digital transformation comes from a deeper awareness of technology as a powerful way to improve interaction and connection within organizations. Building on this understanding, two hypotheses are proposed. First (H5), the use of AI-driven tools is expected to enhance employee engagement by offering personalized support and feedback. Second (H6), organizations that adopt AI-driven human resource practices are likely to see higher employee satisfaction and retention.

Novel Theme

At the crossroads of circular economy principles and leadership communication, a new theme has emerged as compared to the uniform themes. According to recent findings, leaders who promote sustainability and circular practices get the employees more involved in green efforts (Murray et al., 2017; De Angelis, 2021). This point of view highlights that leadership is crucial in aligning the organizational strategies to both environmental and social objectives which not only promotes sustainability but also motivates employees and makes them feel their purpose. In comparison to the time-tested themes of ethics, digitalization, and AI, the application of the concept of a circular economy to the employee engagement concept remains only in its inception phase, which presents a promising field of investigation. Based on this new view, it is possible to make two hypotheses: (H7) Leadership commitment to circular economy principles leads to employee engagement through sustainability

and innovation; (H8) Organizations that apply the principles of the circular economy will experience higher levels of employee engagement and involvement in the green initiatives.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the connection between circular leadership communication and employee engagement through the synthesis of the evidence presented in the recent literature, experts on the topic, and emergent themes. These three themes were consistent across the review: ethical leadership, interaction in remote and hybrid work environments, and integration of artificial intelligence (AI) were identified as the key drivers of employee engagement. These themes point out to the fact that trust and fairness-based leadership based on digital communication strategies and technological advancements can always promote greater rates of commitment, satisfaction, and performance amongst employees. Moreover, a new theme was introduced that connects the principles of the circular economy with the communication of leadership with an emphasis on the potential of sustainability-oriented leadership to inspire the employees and align the practice of the organization with the interests of the larger society.

Conceptually, the findings have applicability in the leadership and communication discipline since they are going to expand the scope of the engine of employee engagement beyond the classical model. The combination of the principles of the circular economy introduces a new conceptual layer, meaning that the degree of effectiveness of leadership can be evaluated not only in terms of interpersonal trust and communication efficiency but also in terms of how the organizational practice is connected to the need of sustainability.

Conceptually, this underscores the value of integrating the communication, leadership and sustainability theories to enable us to describe the dynamic nature of engagement within modern organizations. Regarding practical implications, the results can be helpful to leaders and practitioners of organizations. Ethical and communicative leadership approaches cannot be replaced when it comes to creating trust, respect and commitment at the physical and virtual workplace. The leaders should focus on inclusive and dialogic communication, as well as effective digital skills in remote and hybrid environments to reduce the isolation of employees and increase the engagement level. Adoption of AI offers plausible opportunities of enhancing the experience of employees by providing customized feedback, streamlining HR activities and enhancing real-time interactions. In addition, leaders who integrate the concept of a circular economy into their corporate communication approach can encourage employees to be more sustainable in their actions, which contributes to the organizational resilience and its social legitimacy.

The study is not without limitations despite these contributions. To begin with, much of the reviewed literature concentrates on certain sectors, especially the ICT and service industries and this might not be representative of different organizational settings. Second, unlike the Scopus AI data and expert profiles used in the study, the secondary sources based on the published abstracts and expert profiles might exclude more nuanced empirical insights. Third, the notion of circular leadership communication is comparatively under researched, i.e. theoretical frameworks and instruments of measurement are at their infancy.

To fill the identified gaps, a few recommendations to future research are proposed. The hypotheses put forward in terms of ethical leadership, digital communication, AI-enabled engagement, and circular economy practices in various organizational contexts should be tested by empirical studies. It is also possible to investigate longitudinally how leadership communication strategies change with time following the occurrence of crises (e.g., pandemics, technological disruptions, or sustainability pressure). Other future research ought to use mixed methodology approaches including surveys, interviews and big data analytics to present better results on employee perceptions and organisational performance. Lastly, researchers might concentrate on cross-cultural comparisons to learn the way leadership communication and engagement practices differ based on various cultural, institutional, and economic settings.

Overall, this paper highlights the fact that communication in the management of employees is at the heart of maintaining engagement amid digital transformation, remote work, and sustainability issues. The study combines the recurring and new directions to present the long-term and innovative functions of leadership communication in building engaged resilient and future-ready organizations.

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