

Impact of Organizational Communication on Employee Relations with Trust as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between organizational communication, employee relations, and organizational trust in a multinational company setting, focusing on PT. Sumiden Serasi Wire Products. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), this research explores how organizational communication fosters trust, which in turn strengthens employee relations. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0 to analyze data collected from 110 employees, based on Hair et al.'s (2019) indicator-based sampling formula. The findings indicate that organizational communication positively influences employee relations, with organizational trust playing a significant mediating role. Employees who perceive transparent communication are more likely to develop trust, leading to increased job satisfaction, lower turnover intention, and stronger organizational commitment. The study highlights the critical role of trust in mediating the impact of communication on employee relations, providing valuable insights for multinational companies managing diverse workforces. These results underscore the importance of effective communication strategies in enhancing trust and employee engagement, contributing to organizational success and sustainability in a global business environment.

Keywords: *Organizational Communication, Employee Relations, Organizational Trust, Social Exchange Theory*

INTRODUCTION

Effective human resource management (HRM) plays a vital role in fostering positive organizational communication and building trust, which are key factors in enhancing employee relations. Studies show that transparent organizational communication significantly improves employee welfare, with trust acting as a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between communication and performance (Yuwono et al., 2023). Moreover, organizational trust also mediates the relationship between commitment and performance, highlighting its importance in improving employee engagement and organizational success (Kim & Park, 2022; Qin & Men, 2022; Shah, 2021). Building trust through communication is crucial for improving job satisfaction,

loyalty, and retention in organizations, ultimately leading to higher performance and organizational sustainability (Dai et al., 2022).

The management of human resources is critical in multinational companies (MNCs) like PT. Sumiden Serasi Wire Products, as it influences not only operational efficiency but also employee relations and corporate growth. These companies face unique challenges due to cultural diversity, geographical dispersion, and varying local regulations. Effective HR management can help overcome these challenges by fostering an inclusive organizational culture and ensuring that employees from diverse backgrounds are engaged and motivated. The complexity of managing such a workforce highlights the importance of strategic human resource management in MNCs, which can directly impact productivity and the overall success of the business (Katamadze & Davitadze, 2024; H. Zhao et al., 2024). For PT. Sumiden Serasi Wire Products, managing its human resources effectively across borders is essential to maintaining competitiveness in a globalized market. By addressing these challenges, multinational companies can build stronger teams, foster innovation, and contribute to sustainable economic growth (Solodkov, 2021).

Managing human resources in multinational companies (MNCs) such as PT. Sumiden Serasi Wire Products highlights the complexities of navigating cultural differences, diverse legal environments, and operational challenges across borders. As MNCs expand globally, they face the need to adapt management practices to accommodate different nationalities, work ethics, and communication styles. This can result in friction if not handled strategically. Effective HR management in these companies is crucial, as it ensures alignment between organizational culture and the diverse workforces, while fostering an environment of trust and collaboration. The increasing globalization of business operations emphasizes the importance of creating adaptable human resource strategies that can respond to these challenges, driving innovation and maintaining competitiveness in a constantly evolving global market (Katamadze & Davitadze, 2024; H. Zhao et al., 2024).

Effective employee relations are fundamental to the success of multinational companies (MNCs), as they ensure a harmonious work environment and improve organizational performance. Research shows that employee relations practices in MNCs are shaped by the cultural and legal environments of both the home and host countries, which may lead to diverse management strategies (Sambharya & Goll, 2021; Song, 2021; Triantafillidou & Koutroukis, 2022; Yadav & Hazarika, 2021). A crucial challenge is balancing different labor expectations, such as employee participation, union interactions, and work-life balance, which vary across regions and can impact overall employee satisfaction and retention (Aruldoss et al., 2021; Boamah et al., 2022; Yu, 2021). Effective management of these relations through strategic HR policies not only enhances performance but also builds trust and commitment among employees, which is critical in a competitive global market (Farmanesh et al., 2023; Liao et al., 2023; Qiao et al., 2024).

Organizational trust plays a crucial role in enhancing employee performance, innovation, and overall organizational success. Recent studies show

that high levels of organizational trust are directly linked to increased employee satisfaction, engagement, and commitment to the company (Gordelyeva & Markova, 2021; Johannsen & Zak, 2021; Khouya & Benabdelhadi, 2021). Trust within organizations has been shown to foster stronger teamwork, more effective communication, and better problem-solving capabilities, leading to higher productivity and reduced employee turnover (Bylok, 2023; Richards et al., 2024). The presence of organizational trust also influences the organizational culture, where trust in leadership enhances the alignment between employees and organizational goals, improving long-term performance (Arghode et al., 2021; Bijalwan et al., 2024; Felstead & Cromer, 2023; Georgescu et al., 2024; Muralidhar et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Thus, fostering trust at all levels of the organization is not just beneficial but essential for cultivating a productive, innovative, and committed workforce (Ahsan, 2024).

Recent studies have highlighted the crucial role of organizational communication (OC) in fostering employee relations (ER), with organizational trust as a key mediator. For example, one study found that transparent organizational communication significantly influences employee welfare by enhancing trust, which in turn positively affects overall employee engagement and performance (Yuwono et al., 2023). Additionally, research in the hospitality sector demonstrated that organizational communication positively impacts organizational trust, which then mediates the relationship between leadership and employee engagement (Zanabazar et al., 2024). Furthermore, a study examining the role of organizational trust in the workplace confirmed that trust mediates the effect of organizational justice on employee performance (Mubashar et al., 2022). These studies demonstrate that organizational communication and trust are integral in shaping positive employee relations and enhancing performance (Shah, 2021).

Some studies suggest the opposite or a weaker relationship between organizational communication, employee relations, and trust. For example, one study found that job demands negatively influenced employee engagement and psychological well-being, which ultimately affected organizational trust, suggesting that organizational trust does not always act as a positive mediator (Widanti & Sunaryo, 2022). Similarly, research on leadership and employee loyalty found that although organizational trust positively influenced loyalty, leadership itself had a negative effect on employee loyalty, questioning the effectiveness of trust in all leadership contexts (Sudiarditha et al., 2022). Additionally, some research found that organizational culture could weaken the relationship between trust and employee decision-making, particularly when leaders' ethical behavior was influenced by negative organizational culture or personal traits (Fragouli, 2020). These studies highlight a potential gap in understanding the universally positive effects of organizational communication and trust across various organizational contexts.

In this research, Social Exchange Theory (SET) will serve as the theoretical foundation, offering a robust framework to understand the dynamics of organizational communication, employee relations, and trust as mediating variables (Casper Ferm & Thaichon, 2021). SET, introduced by George Homans

in 1958, posits that human relationships are based on reciprocal exchanges where individuals assess the costs and benefits of their interactions with others (Ren et al., 2025). This theory has been widely applied to organizational settings, emphasizing the role of communication in fostering trust and enhancing employee relations (Nachmias et al., 2021). It suggests that positive organizational communication strengthens trust, which mediates employee engagement and performance (Li & Cao, 2020; Qin, 2024). The novelty of this study lies in proposing purchase decisions as a mediating variable, which could offer insights into how trust formed through organizational communication impacts consumer behavior (Zhao et al., 2020). This gap in the literature is addressed by incorporating trust not just as a driver of employee relations, but also as a key factor in influencing consumer decisions, highlighting the interplay between internal organizational dynamics and external purchasing behaviors (Pathardikar et al., 2023). Thus, the study will contribute to both the theoretical understanding of SET and its practical application in organizational decision making.

METHOD

This study will involve all employees of PT. Sumiden Serasi Wire Products to analyze the relationship between organizational communication, employee relations, and organizational trust as a mediating variable. The research will employ a quantitative approach, with data collected through questionnaires distributed to all employees of the company. The collected data will be analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the assistance of the software SmartPLS 4.0. SEM-PLS is chosen for its capability to handle complex relationship models and to measure the direct and mediating relationships between organizational communication, employee relations, and organizational trust. The goal of this study is to provide a better understanding of how organizational communication impacts employee relations and how organizational trust functions as a mediating variable in the context of the company (Hair et al., 2019).

This study will involve a sample size calculated using the formula provided by (Hair et al., 2019), which suggests multiplying the number of indicators by 10. In this case, there are 11 indicators, so the total sample size will be 110. The study will focus on three main variables: X1 Organizational Commitment (Hayati et al., 2020), which includes three sub-indicators: Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment; Y Employee Relations (Silva et al., 2022), consisting of three sub-indicators: Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention, and Employee Trust; and Z Organizational Trust (Robbins & Judge, 2008), which includes five sub-indicators: Integrity, Competence, Consistency, Loyalty, and Openness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis will be presented and discussed in relation to the hypotheses proposed in the study. The findings will focus on the relationships between organizational communication, employee relations, and organizational trust, with particular emphasis on how organizational trust mediates the impact of

communication on employee relations. The analysis, conducted using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0, will provide insights into the direct and indirect effects of each variable and their respective indicators. The results will be compared with previous literature to identify consistencies, contradictions, or new contributions to the field of organizational behavior. Additionally, the implications for theory and practice will be discussed, particularly how organizations can leverage communication and trust building strategies to enhance employee relations and improve overall organizational performance.

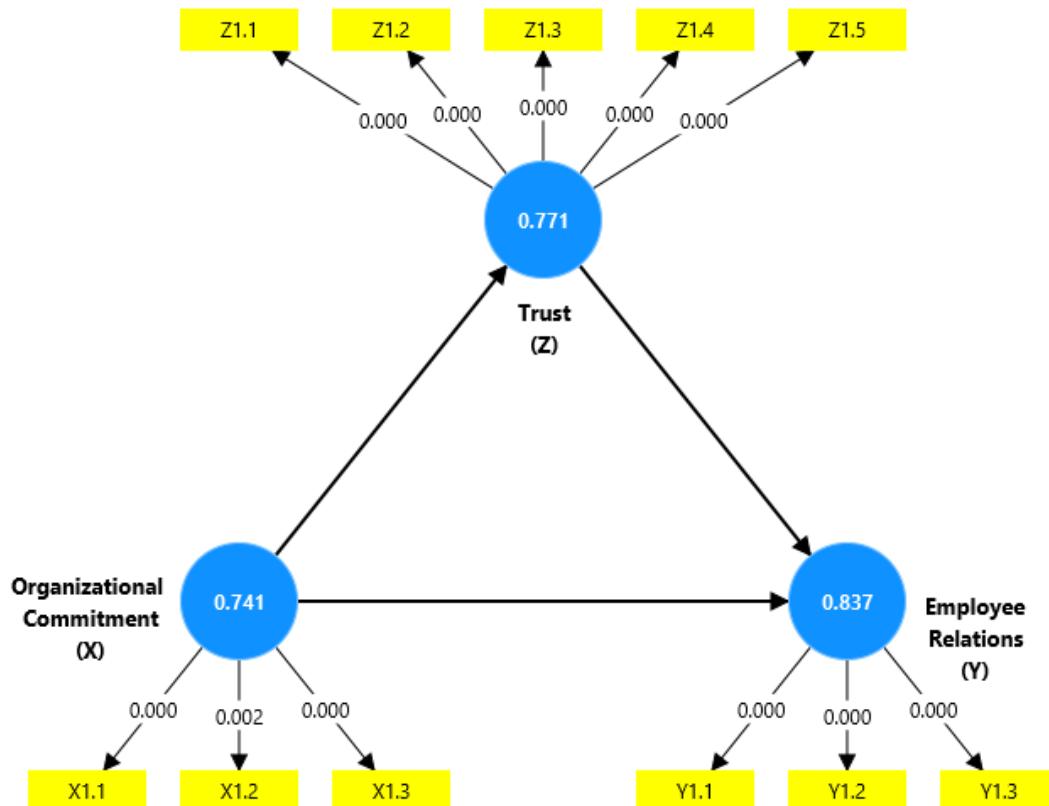


Figure 1. Outer Model

This structural model evaluates the relationships between Organizational Commitment (X), Trust (Z), and Employee Relations (Y), focusing on their internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's Alpha (CA). All three constructs demonstrate strong reliability, with CA values of 0.741 for Organizational Commitment, 0.771 for Trust, and 0.837 for Employee Relations, all exceeding the generally accepted threshold of 0.7. This indicates that the indicators used for each construct consistently measure the same underlying dimension, confirming the robustness and reliability of the measurement model. Additionally, the outer loadings, represented by values 0.000 or 0.002, indicate the strength of the relationship between each indicator and its respective latent variable, further supporting the model's validity.

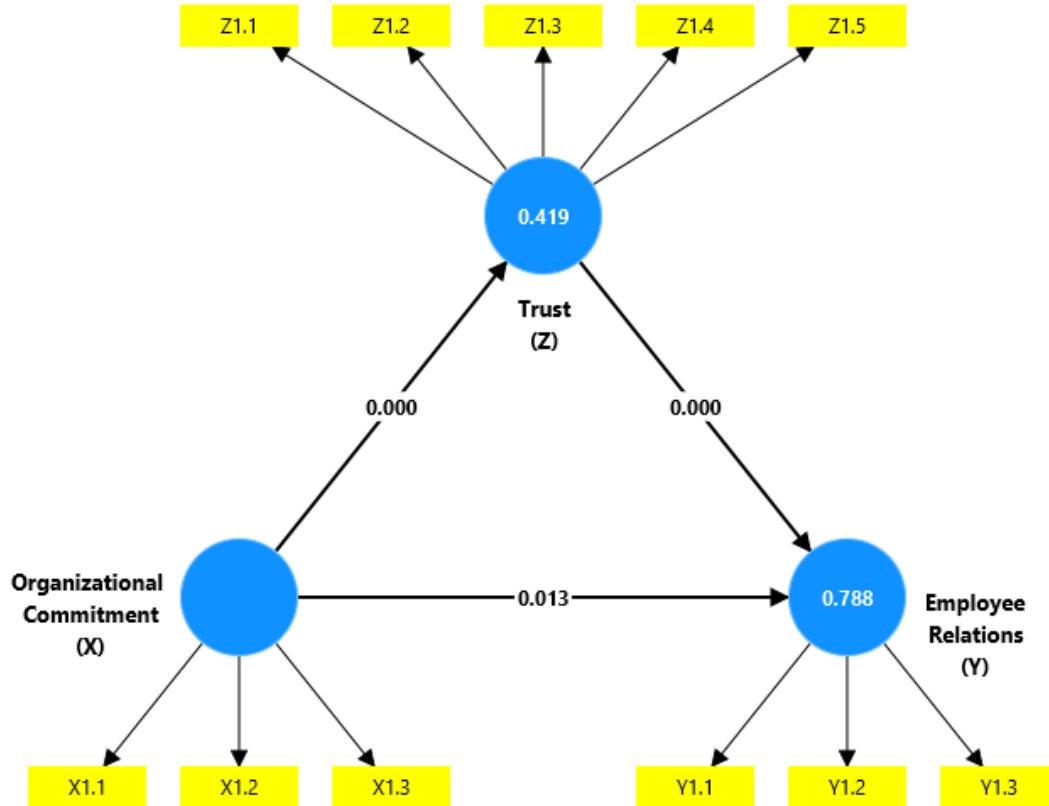


Figure 2. Inner Model

This inner model examines the relationships between Organizational Commitment (X), Trust (Z), and Employee Relations (Y), with the adjusted R-squared values indicating the variance explained in the endogenous variables. Specifically, Trust (Z) exhibits an adjusted R-squared of 0.419, suggesting that 41.9% of its variance is explained by Organizational Commitment (X). Similarly, Employee Relations (Y) shows an adjusted R-squared of 0.788, indicating that 78.8% of its variance is explained by both Organizational Commitment (X) and Trust (Z). These values illustrate a substantial explanatory power of the model, particularly in predicting Employee Relations, highlighting the significant role of the independent and mediating variables in influencing the dependent variable. Additionally, the path coefficients of 0.000, 0.013 and 0.000 represent the strength and direction of the relationships between the constructs, further detailing the model's structural pathways.

Table 1. Path Analysis

Path	Coefficient t	(M)	(STDEV)	(O/STDEV)	P values
(X) -> (Y)	0.195	0.189	0.079	2.487	0.013
(X) -> (Z)	0.651	0.657	0.056	11.709	0.000
(Z) -> (Y)	0.750	0.756	0.072	10.368	0.000
(X) -> (Z) -> (Y)	0.488	0.498	0.072	6.772	0.000

Source: Output Smart PLS 4.0 (2025)

The path analysis results indicate significant relationships between the variables in the model. The direct effect of Organizational Commitment (X) on Employee Relations (Y) is positive and significant, with a coefficient of 0.195, a p-value of 0.013, and a t-statistic of 2.487, suggesting a moderate effect. The direct effect of Organizational Commitment (X) on Organizational Trust (Z) is very strong, with a coefficient of 0.651, and a highly significant p-value of 0.000, which demonstrates that organizational commitment is a major driver of trust. The direct relationship between Organizational Trust (Z) and Employee Relations (Y) is also highly significant, with a coefficient of 0.750 and a p-value of 0.000, suggesting that trust plays a critical role in shaping employee relations. Furthermore, the indirect effect of Organizational Commitment (X) on Employee Relations (Y) through Organizational Trust (Z) is substantial, with a coefficient of 0.488, a p-value of 0.000, reinforcing that trust acts as a strong mediator in the relationship between organizational commitment and employee relations. These results collectively confirm the importance of trust as a key mediating factor in organizational dynamics.

This study examines the complex relationships between organizational communication, employee relations, and organizational trust, drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET) as its theoretical framework. The results of previous studies support the importance of these variables in shaping organizational success. For instance, research has consistently shown that organizational communication significantly influences employee relations by enhancing organizational trust, which in turn mediates the relationship between communication and employee performance (Yuwono et al., 2023; Qin & Men, 2022; Shah, 2021). As these studies suggest, trust plays a pivotal role in strengthening the link between organizational communication and employee welfare, fostering greater engagement, job satisfaction, and loyalty. This aligns with the core tenets of SET, which posits that positive social exchanges, such as clear and transparent communication, build trust and commitment between employees and the organization.

Additionally, organizational trust has been shown to improve organizational outcomes, including productivity, innovation, and employee retention (Gordelyeva & Markova, 2021; Johannsen & Zak, 2021). These studies demonstrate that when employees trust their organization, they are more likely to contribute meaningfully to the company, exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, and engage more actively with their work. However, some studies have presented a more nuanced view, suggesting that organizational trust may not always function as a positive mediator in certain organizational contexts. For example, Widanti & Sunaryo (2022) found that job demands negatively influenced employee engagement and psychological well-being, which in turn impacted organizational trust. This highlights the complexity of the trust-performance relationship, suggesting that factors such as work stress and leadership style may weaken the positive effects of trust (Sudiarditha et al., 2022).

In line with this, Social Exchange Theory offers a valuable lens through which to understand these dynamics. SET emphasizes that relationships within

organizations are based on mutual exchanges of benefits and costs, with trust serving as a critical component of these exchanges (Casper Ferm & Thaichon, 2021). In organizations like PT. Sumiden Serasi Wire Products, which operates as a multinational, the need for transparent communication becomes even more pronounced, as it helps bridge cultural differences and align diverse teams toward common organizational goals. As such, the management of organizational trust is especially crucial in MNCs, where employees often come from various cultural and regulatory backgrounds (Katamadze & Davitadze, 2024). The study's proposal to explore purchase decisions as a mediating variable between organizational communication and consumer behavior adds a novel dimension to the existing literature by linking internal organizational trust with external consumer dynamics (Zhao et al., 2020).

The findings of this study will therefore have significant implications for multinational organizations. By highlighting the role of organizational communication in enhancing employee relations through trust, organizations can develop better strategies for improving employee engagement, performance, and satisfaction. Moreover, understanding the mediating role of organizational trust in these relationships can help companies design more effective HR policies and communication strategies, especially in complex, cross-cultural environments where trust-building is crucial. This research also contributes to the broader application of SET in understanding not only internal organizational dynamics but also external factors such as consumer behavior, thereby broadening the scope of HR management research in the global marketplace.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of organizational communication, employee relations, and organizational trust in shaping the performance and success of multinational companies like PT. Sumiden Serasi Wire Products. The findings confirm that transparent communication is fundamental to building trust, which in turn enhances employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention. By employing Social Exchange Theory (SET), the research highlights how mutual exchanges of benefits, driven by communication and trust, contribute to a more committed and productive workforce. The results also emphasize that organizational trust plays a key mediating role in the relationship between organizational communication and employee relations, offering valuable insights for improving HR practices. However, the study also points to the complexity of these relationships, noting that organizational trust may not always function positively in every context, particularly when external factors such as job demands and leadership style are not aligned. The implications of these findings suggest that multinational companies must prioritize effective communication and trust-building strategies to navigate cross-cultural challenges and foster a positive organizational environment that drives long-term success.

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