

ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ
PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

**IMPACT OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ON EMPLOYEES' STRESS
EXPERIENCE AND RESILIENCE**

Katharina Kastner

University of Library Studies and Information Technologies

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Abstract: *Respectful, clear, and understandable internal communication is considered a key factor for the psychological well-being of employees in psychological research and communication science. Furthermore, high-quality communication is associated with fewer burnout symptoms and greater life satisfaction among employees. This article, based on a systematic literature review, aims to provide a theoretical overview of key aspects of stress perception and communication in the professional context, analyzing the essential factors of positively perceived internal communication. It also examines the impact of communication quality on stress perception and psychological resilience, addressing potential challenges such as information overload and communication deficits. The article highlights the high relevance of effective internal communication for employee mental health, employee satisfaction, and company success. Moreover, good internal communication is a crucial component of a health-promoting organizational structure. In addition to theoretical foundations, practical approaches to improving communication within companies are discussed.*

Keywords: *internal communication; stress experience; psychological resilience; employees; mental health*

INTRODUCTION

In light of rising job demands, increasing digitalization, and changing work patterns, the mental health of employees is gaining ever greater economic, social, and scientific importance. Work-related stress is among the most significant psychosocial burdens in the workplace. Numerous studies have shown that work-related stress can have long-term negative effects on the well-being, performance, and health of employees. Internal communication plays a crucial role in this context, influencing the perception of stress and the management of professional challenges. Nevertheless, research on communication has thus far primarily focused on business administration or management perspectives. The significance of internal communication for employees' stress experiences and resilience from a communication science perspective has received comparatively little systematic attention.

While the literature points to connections between communication quality and psychological well-being as well as business success, it lacks an integrative analysis of how different forms of internal communication affect employees' stress levels and resilience. This results in a research gap at the intersection of communication science, organizational communication, and health communication.

For this reason, this article focuses on internal communication within companies. The various forms and processes of communication, as well as the quality of communication within organizations, are the central focus. The subjects of this study are employees, whose experience of stress and their psychological resilience in the professional context are examined.

The aim of this article is to present, based on a systematic literature review, the current state of research on the effects of internal communication on employees' stress levels and resilience, and to contextualize this research within the field of communication science. The analysis will examine which communicative factors can promote or reduce stress, the role of communication processes in developing resilience, and the characteristics of health-promoting internal communication. This article thus contributes to the understanding of the interactions between internal communication, mental health, and workplace well-being from a communication science perspective.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is based on a systematic literature review with the aim of summarizing the current state of research on the effects of internal communication on employees' stress levels and resilience, and classifying it from a communication science perspective.

The literature review was conducted between May and June 2026. Scientific publications from 2015 to 2026 were included to encompass both fundamental theoretical works and current research findings. Scientific databases and search platforms such as Google Scholar, PubMed, and Web of Science, as well as available library catalogues, were used for the search.

The search was conducted using various German and English search terms. Key search terms included, among others, "internal communication," "internal company communication," "organizational communication," "employee communication," "workplace communication," "stress," "occupational stress," "psychological well-being," "resilience," "employee resilience," and combinations of these terms using the Boolean operators AND and OR.

The analysis included only scientific articles, monographs, edited volume contributions, and reports from recognized scientific institutions that addressed internal communication, work-related stress, mental health, or resilience. German- and English-language publications were considered. Non-scientific sources, press reports, blog posts, and publications without a clear connection to the research question were excluded.

After identifying relevant literature, a content review of the titles, abstracts, and full texts was conducted. The sources were then analyzed and thematically categorized with regard to their theoretical approaches, key findings, and relevance to the research question. The evaluation took the form of a qualitative content analysis with the aim of identifying recurring correlations between communication quality, perceived stress, and employee resilience.

The analysis focused on communication science findings regarding internal corporate communication, as well as interdisciplinary research from the fields of work psychology, organizational research, and health communication. Based on this foundation, the key factors influencing internal communication on the psychological well-being of employees were systematically presented and discussed.

RESULTS

Why is it important to look at the stress levels of employees?

Mental health is an essential aspect of overall health and is far more complex than simply the absence of mental illness. Good mental health can be understood as a state of emotional equilibrium that enables people to cope with stress and challenges, maintain stable and fulfilling relationships, pursue their work, and reach their full potential (World Health Organization). Therefore, mental health can be seen as a cornerstone of a self-determined and happy life. Furthermore, it is an essential component of individual and collective well-being.

Surveys show that the burden of mental health problems is very high in the population and has even increased in recent years (World Health Organization 2022). Depression and anxiety disorders are the most common mental illnesses. In 2025, approximately 332 million people worldwide were affected by depressive disorders alone, representing about four percent of the total global population (World Health Organization 2025). Besides the suffering of those affected, mental illnesses also cause significant economic damage through sick leave or inability to work (OECD/European Union 2018). Persistent stress caused by unclear information, lack of transparency, missing feedback, or misunderstandings in internal communication can contribute to the development of mental health problems in employees (Ferreira et al. 2023; Kersten and Junghanns 2022). Inadequate communication is associated with increased stress, conflict, or insecurity in the workplace (Backhaus et al. 2024; Pavlista et al. 2024). Furthermore, poor communication structures can lead to a decrease in employee trust and motivation. This can negatively impact the mental health and resilience of employees and weaken job satisfaction and performance within companies.

Various findings highlight the importance of positive, appreciative and clear internal communication for the mental health of employees (EU-OSHA 2022; Qin and Men 2023). When inter-

nal communication is perceived positively by employees, it correlates with fewer burnout symptoms and higher life satisfaction (Gallup, 2026; Qin and Men 2023). Companies also benefit from high-quality communication. Various studies have shown that internal communication perceived as positive increases a company's likelihood of success (George and Jones 2006). Furthermore, employees who are satisfied with the communication within the company are less likely to want to end their employment (Duarte and Silva 2023).

What is internal communication

The literature uses a variety of terms for internal communication, i.e., communication with internal target groups, such as employee communication, corporate communication, internal PR, or internal public relations. These terms are sometimes used synonymously and originate from various communication and business administration disciplines (Buchholz 2015). Regardless of the term used, it essentially refers to how information is exchanged or passed on within organizations or companies, or how communication generally takes place within the organization or company (Mast 2019; Schmid and Lyczek 2006).

Forms of internal communication

Internal communication processes can take place *top-down*, *bottom-up*, or *in-between* (Mast, 2014; Szyszka and Malczok 2016). *Top-down* communication involves the transfer of information from higher to lower hierarchical levels. For example, managers communicate decisions, instructions, or strategic goals to employees (Urbancová et al. 2023). Conversely, *bottom-up* communication describes the flow of information from employees to management. This direction of communication is primarily used for sharing experiences or providing feedback (Miller et al. 2025). *In-between* communication refers to communication between individuals or departments at the same hierarchical level. It primarily serves the purpose of coordination, cooperation, or the exchange of information (Robbins and Judge 2024).

Furthermore, internal communication processes can be formal, informal, or instrumental in nature (Mast 2014; Szyszka and Malczok 2016). Formal internal communication takes place via defined channels, adheres to hierarchies and institutional rules, and encompasses all official and organizationally defined communication processes within an organization or company. Typical examples of this form of communication include official emails, employee information, circulars, and annual reports (Cornelissen 2023). Informal communication, on the other hand, usually develops spontaneously in the daily work routine and arises outside of official communication structures. It often serves as a means of personal exchange between employees or the rapid dissemination of information. Conversations during breaks are a common form of informal communication (Cornelissen 2023; Miller et al. 2025). Instrumental internal communication refers to the targeted use of communication measures for the efficient dissemination of information or corporate goals. Its purpose is to support organizational objectives. Newsletters, intranets, feedback systems, or employee apps are typically used for this purpose (Cornelissen 2023; Men and Bowen 2016).

The different forms of communication influence both the way information is shared and the experience of organizational support and security. Therefore, the various forms of internal communication have a key impact on employees' stress levels and psychological well-being.

Advantages and disadvantages of different forms of communication

Clear and transparent formal communication can create role clarity, orientation, and security, thereby minimizing employee stress levels. Karasek (1979), in his Job Demand-Control model, points out that stress for employees arises primarily when high demands are placed on them, coupled with uncertainty and low control. According to this model, structured communication can alleviate stress and reduce strain.

However, in addition to the positive effects of structured, formal communication, this one-sided and hierarchical communication can also generate psychological pressure. The lack of opportunities for participation or information overload can lead to a feeling of insufficient autonomy among employees, which in turn promotes stress (Maslach and Leiter 2016).

Informal communication is based on social interactions and usually takes place outside of formal communication structures. These mostly casual and informal conversations can promote

knowledge sharing and strengthen the working atmosphere. This type of communication fosters a sense of belonging and contributes to a stronger company culture. Since social support is an important protective factor for mental health, informal communication can reduce perceived stress. Studies have shown that emotional support and positively perceived collegial relationships contribute to coping with work-related stress. Furthermore, they reduce the perception of job demands, act as a resource for dealing with stress, and promote emotional recovery (Gerhardt et al., 2021; Pauli and Lang 2021).

However, informal communication, often referred to as “the grapevine,” can also give rise to rumors, spread misunderstandings, or simply lead to miscommunication. Especially during times of change, restructuring, or downsizing, uncontrolled informal communication can cause stress and anxiety (Backhaus et al. 2024; Miller et al. 2025).

Instrumental communication can facilitate work processes and reduce stress for employees through quick and easy access to information. However, there is evidence that digital communication, with its high communication density, constant availability, and information overload, can promote persistent stress, mental exhaustion, or an *information overload* effect (Ferreira et al. 2023; Kersten and Junghanns 2022).

When considering the advantages and disadvantages of different communication methods, it becomes clear that they offer both opportunities and risks for employees. While well-structured, clear, and respectful communication facilitates work processes and can provide orientation and security for people within the company, inadequate or poor-quality communication structures can lead to stress, uncertainty, a lack of autonomy, and psychological strain. Since the way people communicate within a company has a significant impact on the development of stress and the level of psychological resilience among employees, the following chapters will define the terms stress and resilience more precisely and examine their significance in the work context in greater detail.

Stress – a definition

The term “stress” originally referred to the testing of materials for their physical resilience. Biochemist Hans Selye transferred the term to medicine and psychology. In his research, he discovered that the human organism reacts to strong environmental stressors, such as cold or heat, with a non-specific alarm response. Accordingly, Selye defined stress as an activation of the body in response to a stimulus. This stimulus can be perceived as either positive or negative (Selye 1974).

In scientific literature, the term eustress is used for positively perceived stress. This occurs when activation is triggered by a pleasurable event, such as the anticipation of a trip or solving a tricky but exciting problem. In contrast, negative stress, termed distress, is perceived as overwhelming, threatening, or burdensome. Distress arises, for example, from time pressure, constant digital availability, or conflicts. If sufficient recovery periods are lacking, this type of stress can lead to mental and physical illnesses (Kaluza 2023; Selye 1974).

Stress management through internal communication

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define stress management as “a constantly changing cognitive and behavioral effort to cope with external or intrapsychic challenges which are assessed by the individual as challenging or exceeding their own resources” (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, p. 141).

In addition to individual stress management skills and the ability to cope with challenging situations, the way communication takes place within a company can significantly influence employees’ stress management. Social support from colleagues and managers, in particular, is an important protective factor against work-related stress. Several research studies have shown that good social relationships and emotional support in the workplace have a beneficial effect on reducing work-related stress. These factors have both a direct stress-reducing effect and an indirect one, as they serve as a resource for coping with stress. Furthermore, they reduce emotional exhaustion (Garmendia et al. 2023; Gerhardt et al. 2021).

Besides coping with stress, internal communication can also contribute to strengthening the psychological resilience of employees.

Resilience and internal communication

The term resilience is used in the literature to describe pronounced psychological resilience. It

refers to the ability to successfully cope with stressful situations, burdens, and crises, and to remain psychologically healthy despite adverse circumstances or difficult events (Bonanno 2021; Kaluza 2023). In the workplace, resilience is considered an important factor for the performance and long-term mental health of employees. Transparent, reliable, and open communication can foster the development of both individual and collective resilience. Qin and Men (2023) concluded that supportive communication among colleagues was associated with greater psychological well-being among employees. Furthermore, the authors found that employees who feel informed, valued, and involved in organizational processes exhibited greater resilience to stress.

The preceding discussion highlights the influence of internal communication on stress management, resilience, and the mental health of employees. The following paragraph addresses the question of which aspects constitute successful internal communication and which measures are suitable for improving communication within companies.

Aspects of successful internal communication and practical input for improving communication in companies

In light of the economic, political, and social developments of recent years, such as increasing digitalization, rising job demands, and the rise of hybrid work arrangements, the demands placed on employees have increased significantly. In this context, appreciation has proven to be a key socio-emotional resource. Those who feel valued at work experience more positive emotions and perceive themselves as part of the company. Furthermore, employees who frequently experience appreciation are more engaged at work. Stranzl and Ruppel (2025) demonstrated in their study that employees place particular value on forms of appreciation. Above all, employees want to be seen and taken seriously by managers and company leadership. Experiencing appreciation is fostered when employees perceive that their manager or the company is genuinely striving to recognize and treat them as indispensable and valuable employees. Crucially, employee performance must be acknowledged. Furthermore, when employees feel valued, this strengthens their self-efficacy and self-esteem in performing their professional roles.

Besides appreciation, transparency and clarity of information are essential aspects of successful internal communication. Consistent information, clear responsibilities, and comprehensible decisions can prevent stress and uncertainty among employees. Particularly in crisis situations, it has been shown that transparent communication can reduce the emotional burden on employees and thereby strengthen trust in the company. The quality and credibility of the communication are more important than the quantity (Hamid et al. 2024; Liu-Lastres et al. 2024).

Another key aspect of internal communication is social support. Both within teams and through management, social support contributes to well-being and reduces stress. Studies have shown that, especially in digital and hybrid work environments, regular communication and emotional support are important for reducing workloads and technology-related stress (Kräft et al. 2024; Marsh et al. 2024; Wahl et al. 2024).

When employees are more involved in communication and decision-making processes, they feel heard and valued, which has a positive effect on their resilience. This also increases their identification with the company. Furthermore, respectful communication and opportunities for participation foster a positive work environment (Roeder and Bisel 2024; Stranzl and Ruppel 2025).

Another noteworthy aspect of successful internal communication is the targeted optimization of digital communication structures within companies. On the one hand, the increasing use of digital information and communication technologies can facilitate collaboration, but on the other hand, it can also lead to constant availability and information overload. This so-called technostress can be minimized through clear communication guidelines and transparent digital processes (Kräft et al. 2024; Marsh et al., 2024; Rigotti et al. 2024).

CONCLUSIONS/DISCUSSION

Mental health is increasingly becoming the focus of social and economic discussions, as the number of people with mental illnesses has risen steadily in recent years. This leads not only to the personal suffering of those affected but also to economic problems. Internal communication plays

a significant role in maintaining the mental health of employees, as opaque or inadequate communication can contribute to stress, conflict, or uncertainty in the workplace. Conversely, studies have shown that clear, respectful, and supportive communication promotes job satisfaction, motivation, and psychological stability. Furthermore, internal communication perceived as positive fosters both employee retention and company success.

The stress levels of employees are influenced in different ways by the various forms of communication. Formal communication, with its clear structure, can provide orientation; however, the lack of opportunities for participation can also lead to a feeling of insufficient autonomy. A clear advantage of informal communication is social exchange. This increases the sense of belonging and can help cope with stress. However, uncontrolled exchange also promotes the emergence of misunderstandings and rumors. Instrumental communication can help make processes more efficient, but at the same time, it also carries the risk of digital overload.

Considering the advantages and disadvantages of different communication methods, it is beneficial for companies to ensure a balanced communication system. For the sake of employees' mental health, transparency, participation, and social support should be given equal consideration, because a lack of these can promote the development of negative stress.

In short, the term stress describes the physical and psychological reaction to a stimulus. Stress can be perceived as either positive or negative. Negative stress arises primarily when demands are perceived as too high and one's own resources are considered insufficient to meet these demands. In everyday work life, unclear information, a lack of support, and an overall negative perception of internal communication can be stressors that negatively impact employees. Transparent, open, and appreciative communication, on the other hand, can help employees cope with work-related stress and strengthen their resilience.

Open, transparent, and supportive internal communication proves crucial for reducing employee stress and increasing resilience and job satisfaction. Companies that strategically develop their communication structures and promote social support and participatory processes create a healthy work environment in the long term, which sustainably supports performance. For this reason, companies should prioritize high-quality internal communication, both for their own benefit and for the mental health of their employees.

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ВЛИЯНИЕ НА ВЪТРЕШНОФИРМЕНАТА КОМУНИКАЦИЯ ВЪРХУ ПРЕЖИВЯВАНЕТО НА СТРЕС И ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКАТА УСТОЙЧИВОСТ НА СЛУЖИТЕЛИТЕ

Резюме: В психологическите изследвания и науката за комуникацията уважителната, ясна и разбираема вътрешнофирмена комуникация се счита за ключов фактор за психологическото благополучие на служителите. Освен това висококачествената комуникация се свързва с по-малко симптоми на прегаряне и по-голяма удовлетвореност от живота сред служителите. Настоящата статия, основана на систематичен литературен преглед, има за цел да предостави теоретичен преглед на ключовите аспекти на възприемането на стреса и комуникацията в професионалния контекст, като анализира основните фактори за положително възприемана вътрешна комуникация. Тя разглежда също така влиянието на качеството на комуникацията върху възприемането на стреса и психологическата устойчивост, като обръща внимание на потенциални предизвикателства, като информационно претоварване и комуникационни дефицити. Статията подчертава голямата значимост на ефективната вътрешнофирмена комуникация за психичното здраве на служителите, удовлетвореността на служителите и успеха на компанията. Добрата вътрешнофирмена комуникация е ключов компонент на организационна структура, насърчаваща здравето. В допълнение, се обсъждат и практически подходи за подобряване на комуникацията в рамките на компаниите.

Ключови думи: вътрешнофирмена комуникация; преживяване на стреса; психологическа устойчивост; служители; психично здраве

Катарина Кастнер, докторант
Университет по библиотекознание и информационни технологии
София, България
E-mail: kastner-katharina@gmx.at