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The Relationship Between Leadership Communication Strategies and Employee Productivity, Motivation, and Engagement

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Christopher David Tucker

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2026

Abstract

The Relationship Between Leadership Communication Strategies and Employee

Productivity, Motivation, and Engagement

by

Christopher David Tucker

MBA, Grantham University, 2021

BA, Grantham University, 2019

Quantitative Anonymous Survey Business Research Project Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2026

Abstract

Business leaders are concerned that change leaders' communication strategy impacts organizational productivity and performance. These challenges can be attributed to business leaders and human resources managers not understanding the relationship between employee motivation, engagement, productivity, and leaders' communication strategy. Grounded in the composite conceptual framework of Kotter's eight-step model for change and the Burke-Litwin causal model of organizational performance, the purpose of this quantitative correlational project was to examine the relationship between employee's motivation, engagement, productivity, and leaders' communication strategy. The participants were 77 human resources professionals in the United States with at least 5 years of experience in their role who completed items from the Multidimensional Work Motivational Scale, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, the Employee Productivity Scale, the Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire Other Rater. The multiple linear regression model predicted a statistically significant relationship between employee's motivation, engagement, productivity and leaders' communication strategy, $F(3,73) = 6.429$, $p < .001$ with an R^2 of .209 and an adjusted R^2 of .176. Among the predictors, employee engagement was the only significant variable ($\beta = .501$, $p = .013$). A key recommendation is for business leaders to build trust, improve everyday leader communication, utilize servant leadership, and apply the Johari Window to facilitate successful change efforts. The implication for positive social change includes the potential for business leaders to foster environments that allow for growth, acceptance, and trust, which leads to employees making contributions to their communities.

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Dedication

I would first like to dedicate this work to all my “tiny humans”: my lovely nieces, nephews, and godchildren. May the wonder in your eyes never fade. And no matter what the obstacle, know that you can achieve anything that you set your mind to. All dreams are possible. And know that you are always loved and supported.

Secondly, I dedicate this work to Jerry Dame. Although you aren't here with us today, I know that you are with me. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. Thank you for being the best dad, best friend, best mentor, best papaw, best everything in the world. Thank you for helping to shape me into who I am today.

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My entire life has been centered on “the village”. I would like to formally thank my village: my family, friends, especially Erica, John, and Meredith, and every person that took time to believe in me and for helping me reach my educational goals. For their support, guidance, and all the in-betweens that happened along the way. I could not do this without any of you.

I would like to thank Walden University for allowing me the opportunity to pursue my doctoral degree and the support that the faculty has provided has been outstanding and much needed and appreciated throughout the journey. Pamm Kemp, with Student Success, helped to keep me grounded and motivated. And to Dr. Meridith Wentz, my chair and mentor, thank you. I honestly cannot thank you enough for your dedication, support, encouragement, guidance, and voice of reason throughout this entire process. When the journey was tough, you kept me on course. May you forever be blessed.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank God. His strength and grace have been paramount, and it is through His will that I am here able to undertake and complete this journey. I would like to share the “Priestly Blessing” from the King James Bible, Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord makes his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

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Section 1: Project Foundation

Background of the Problem

Communication has been deemed a challenge to successful change initiatives for business leaders including human resource managers (Blackman et al., 2022). Blackman et al. (2022), Hughes (2011), and Leonard and Coltea (2013) reported that over 70% of change initiatives fail.

The composite theoretical framework that I used in this project was Burke and Litwin's (1992) casual model of organizational performance and change and Kotter's (1996) 8-step model of change. Kotter believed that credible communication is required to win the hearts and minds of employees. Kotter stressed the importance of communication, especially regarding the vision of the change initiative, as this act leads to motivating the work force. As progression through Kotter's steps occurs, organizations' leaders should celebrate short-term wins which implies productivity as there is an increase in performance which is needed in change efforts. Burke and Litwin (1992) established dimensions of the model that correspond with leadership/culture including leadership communication, motivation and performance, and the systems that focus on individual needs and values (employee engagement).

The independent variables were employee productivity, employee motivation, and employee engagement. The dependent variable was leaders' communication strategy. The constructs I measured were employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity and leaders' communication strategy.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem is that some businesses leaders do not understand the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy. The purpose of this quantitative correlational project was to examine the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy. The independent variables were employee productivity, employee motivation, and employee engagement. The dependent variable was leaders' communication strategy.

The population for this research project included human resource leaders. Human resource leaders are often described as being the guardians of organizational culture and are relied upon for fostering the positive organizational culture that allows for engagement and productivity.

A nonprobalistic, purposive sampling strategy was used for this research project. I used G*Power to calculate the minimum sample size. The sample included human resource managers in the United States with at least five years of experience in human resources management.

I used a quantitative methodology for this research project as a qualitative approach was deemed not suitable for the project. According to Henline-Hall (2024), quantitative research allows for the results of research studies to be generalized in other settings and the goal of quantitative research is to provide explanations and predict outcomes of specific variables when manipulated.

I used a correlational design for this research project. Seeram (2019) shared that the use of a correlational research design allows researchers to measure the relationship between two or more variables. The use of a correlational design means that independent variables will not be manipulated, cause and effect relationships are not established, and causation is not implied through correlation (Devi et al., 2023). There are three types of correlational designs (descriptive, predictive, and model testing). My work was descriptive and I focused on examining the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Seeram, 2019).

For my research I used numerous measurement tools. The surveys used in the project included the Multidimensional Work Motivational Scale (MWMS), the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), the Employee Productivity Scale, the Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire Other Rater (PLCQ-OR), in which all variables are interval. Likert scale variables can be ordinal or interval and as I assumed that there are equal intervals between each point on the scale, I treated the variables as interval. Cronbach's alpha can indicate interval scale if there is high reliability (Kemp & Grace, 2021). All surveys that I used have at least an alpha of .7. According to Kemp and Grace (2021), it is common practice for researchers to start with the assumption that variables are interval. Furthermore, Kemp and Grace shared that variables are likely interval scale measures when the measures are reliable and have replicable and meaningful relationships with other variables. As there is evidence that leaders' communication strategy (DV) has relationships with the IVs, I followed the guidance of

Kemp and Grace. I used Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability of my data along with utilizing multiple regression.

I used a composite theoretical framework that includes both Burke and Litwin (1992) casual model of organizational performance and change and Kotter's (1996) 8-step model of change. The Burke and Litwin model established dimensions such as leadership, structure, systems, and climate that can be used to manage organizational change. Utilizing Kotter's model may show that effective communication by leaders' effects how change is accepted within an organization.

Project Research Question and Hypotheses

Research Question (RQ): What is the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy?

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a statistically significant relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Simon and Goes (2013) defined assumptions as necessary beliefs needed in research that cannot be proven. For this project I assumed that the research participants would respond fairly and open-minded. I also assumed that my sampling method would

result in a representative sample. Coates (2020) believed that assumptions help the researcher to reduce bias.

Limitations

Ross and Bibler Zaidi (2019) defined limitations as weaknesses of a study that could influence the conclusions and outcomes of the research. Limitations to this project included self-reporting, exposure to research participants, and the selection criteria for participants. Because I only evaluated HR managers, the full spectrum of change management may not be fully represented. Wright (2023) explained that the use of online platforms to administer surveys can also be a limitation to research studies, this one included, as response rates can be low.

Business Project Ethics

The researcher has numerous purposes and responsibilities throughout the research process. Rana (2024) explained that researchers must be trustworthy, transparent, and have ethical practices, and that researchers are expected to advance theories and practices and make meaningful contributions. Ghanad (2023) shared that one objective of quantitative research was to correctly depict the qualities of a specific group or situation. As the researcher, I provided an unbiased approach to the project and the results. Baldwin et al. (2022) believed that one way to combat researcher bias was to preregister research plans, although my plans were not registered to a third party as recommended, they included defining an objective which was to answer the research question, establishing a methodology, conducting data collection, and performing data analysis. I did not believe that my existing knowledge of change management principles

would influence the project as I was unaware of how the human resources manager role functioned in the change management process. I also had no contact with the research participants as the survey was administered utilizing an online platform, where participant names or additional personal identifying information was not asked for. I gained permission from the original authors to use their surveys for my research project. Author permissions are located in Appendix A.

Informed consent is an integral part of the research process and as such my project will comply with the expectations of Walden University's IRB and the principles established in the *Belmont Report* written by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979). For the purposes of this project, participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and that they may end at participation at any time, that their participation is anonymous, that they will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Completion of the questionnaire indicated consent in lieu of a signature, and that there was minimal risk. The above information can be found on the informed consent form which was presented in the online survey before any information was collected from the participant. Mondal et al. (2023) shared that online consent is a valid method to recruit research participants if all elements of informed consent, information, comprehension, and voluntariness (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) are present and in a language that is understandable to the participants.

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979) established three ethical principles that should be

followed throughout the research process: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. As I used an online platform to administer the survey, I acknowledged the autonomy of the participants, and as the participants could choose how, when, and where they wish to complete the survey, the risks were mitigated. The demographic information being collected was used for descriptive and inferential statistics and participants had varying ages with the minimum age for participants being 18 years of age, which is the age of majority in the United States. No financial incentives will be offered for this project.

Data will be stored on a password protected device to which only I will have access to, and said data will be stored for five years. My IRB approval number for this project is 03-11-25-1164315 and this approval expires March 10, 2026. My survey instrument is located in Appendix A.

Evidence-Based Integrative Review

The evidence-based integrative review is composed of literature supporting the theoretical frameworks for my project which explain the change process. The review is composed of a composite theoretical framework, including Kotter's (1996) 8 step model and the Burke and Litwin (1992) model, a supporting theoretical framework for change, which is Lewin's (1947) model. A taxonomy table (see Table 1) is used to show key components of the three theoretical frameworks.

In the Business Problem Scholarship Evidence, I review literature on the variables associated with my project, employee productivity, employee motivation, employee engagement, and leaders' communication strategy. In this section, I address the problem

that some businesses leaders do not understand the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity and leaders' communication strategy. Along with addressing the business problem, this section will also serve to address the null and alternative hypotheses which are: there is no relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy, and there is a statistically significant relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy respectively.

For the review of literature, I used the keywords *change management, communication, leadership communication, employee productivity, employee engagement, and employee motivation*. I searched Walden's library, EBSCO, Google Scholar, and Google. The literature spans from 1947 to 2025 with the majority of the literature from 2023. The literature review is comprised of 122 works with over 55% of the literature spanning from 2021-2025. The evidence based integrative review is comprised of 66.39% of peer reviewed literature.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The purpose of this quantitative correlational project is to examine the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy.

The research question and hypotheses are as follows:

Research Question (RQ): What is the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy?

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a statistically significant relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy.

Theoretical Framework

Kotter's 8 Steps of Change Management

Kotter (1996) openly shared stories of organizational change failures and through this work established eight steps that leaders should follow in sequential order to implement change initiatives. Kotter's eight steps include (a) establishing a sense of urgency, (b) creating the guiding coalition, (c) developing a vision and strategy, (d) communicating the change vision, (e) empowering broad-based action, (f) generating short-term wins, (g) consolidating gains and producing more change, and (h) anchoring new approaches in the culture. These steps occur in three dimensions which are (a) creating a climate for change, (b) engaging and enabling the organization, and (c) implementing and sustaining the change (Graves et al., 2023; Onia, 2022).

The first step in Kotter's model of change management is creating a sense of urgency. Creating a sense of urgency and creating a climate for change are necessary for instilling a culture that supports change rather than resists it. Kotter (1996) shared nine ways to raise urgency levels in organizations and the primary takeaway from these suggestions is communication and the status quo. Kotter believed that 'happy talk' from senior management was not beneficial to change and that the utilization of consultants

that could lead honest discussions in organizational meetings was better to create the necessary urgency. McLaren et al. (2022) offered a rationale for why people stick to the status quo, being that people are attracted to the certainty of the status quo, and that people prefer what is known. Kotter's model of change hinges on the disruption of the status quo to move the organization forward. It is perhaps this premise that begins the dissent on Kotter's model of change.

Kotter's second step is creating the guiding coalition. According to Kotter (1996), a strong coalition has the right composition, trust, and a shared objective and to accomplish building the coalition there are four key characteristics that are necessary: (a) position power, (b) expertise, (c) credibility, and (d) leadership. Carreño (2024) believed that the coalition should be a cross-section of the organization which included executives, middle managers, and key influencers which would ensure engagement and incorporating different perspectives from within the organization. If the coalition is solely composed of managers change efforts will fail (Kotter, 1996).

The third step in Kotter's approach to change is developing a vision and strategy. The vision is an important aspect of change management as the new vision promotes the direction that the organization is headed and helps to disrupt the status quo. Kotter (1996) established that vision has three purposes: (a) clarifying the direction for change, (b) motivating people to take action, and (c) coordinating the actions of different people throughout the organization. An organizational vision that resonates with employees emotionally will motivate the employees and align individual efforts with organizational goals (Carreño, 2024).

The fourth step in Kotter's model is communicating the change vision.

Communicating the change vision is a step that must not be neglected when implementing change. To address vision communication, we must first understand the vision. Kotter (1996 p. 71) stated that vision has three purposes: (a) clarifying the general direction for change, (b) motivating people to take action and (c) coordinating the actions of multiple people. Zhang et al. (2025) studied the relationship between leadership vision communication and found that work uncertainty amplified the effect vision communication had on change outcomes which signifies that Kotter's elements of effective communication (Kotter, 1996 p. 92) could be used to better combat the uncertainty that change brings by focusing on two-way communication and leading by example. Kotter credited the desired future state as motivation to create organizational transformation, but these transformations can only happen if the organizational change vision is shared, communicated, and understood.

The fifth step in Kotter's model is empowering broad-based action. Kotter (1996) believed that this step is meant to empower people to take action and remove the barriers that would hinder change implementation, primarily structures, skills, systems, and supervisors. Al-Asoufi and Akhorshaidh (2017) equated employee empowerment with assigning employees decision making capabilities which makes employees partners within the organization allowing them to participate. Trust is also an integral part of empowerment as employees need to feel supported, informed, and confident that they are acting aligned with the vision communicated (Carreño, 2024). Job satisfaction is

influenced by empowerment and that satisfaction is affected by access to information, support, and resources (Gottlieb et al., 2021).

The sixth step in Kotter's model is generating short-term wins. One potential barrier to successful change implementation is change fatigue. Through short term wins, organizational leaders can show employees that their efforts are working and that the change is succeeding (Carreño, 2024). Kotter (1996) explained that creating wins, provides validity of the vision and allows for workers to "pat themselves on the back" (Kotter, 1996, p 125). Kotter further explained that short term wins have six ways in which they help the transformation process: (a) provide evidence that sacrifices are worth it, (b) reward change agents with a pat on the back, (c) help fine-tune vision and strategies, (d) undermine cynics and self-serving resisters, (e) keep bosses on board, and (f) build momentum.

The seventh step that Kotter established is consolidating gains and producing more change. Kotter (1996) believed that momentum can be lost and regression to the previous state can occur if leaders let up before the job, change, is complete. Although the previous step, generating short-term wins, is meant to celebrate that change is working and help to retool or refocus the vision, staying focused on the short-term wins can, in fact, hinder the change effort. Carreño (2024) shared that leaders should use the early successes, the early wins, as the foundation for more change, the change that will be cemented into the organizational culture. Kumar et al. (2015) developed their own steps to change by blending both Kotter and Lewin's approaches and they believed that to consolidate gains and produce more change relies on increased credibility and

reinvigorating the process with new projects and change agents. Kotter (1996) summarized step seven as: (a) more change, not less, (b) more help, (c) leadership from senior management, (d) project management and leadership from below, and (e) reduction of unnecessary interdependencies.

The final step, step eight, is anchoring new approaches in the culture. Fietz and Günther (2021) believed that organizational culture affects the behavior and decision making of managers which influences the organizations' performance, procedures, and attitudes towards change and innovation. Kotter (1996) believed that culture is important because it powerfully influences human behavior which makes it hard to change and address directly. Kotter established that there are three reasons that culture is powerful: (a) individuals are selected and indoctrinated well, (b) culture exerts itself through the actions of hundreds or thousands of people, and (c) the above happen without much conscious intent making it difficult to challenge or discuss. Kotter further explained that cultural changes happen last, but throughout the stages of change, people's actions and behaviors are modified which allows them to see the benefits of the change initiative; although culture is last to change, as it is being anchored, the groundwork for cultural transformation happens throughout the change process and should be the last aspect in each cycle.

Although Kotter's method of change is highly used, it is not without its limitations. McLaren et al. (2022) shared that the challenging of the status quo can lead to employee stress and anxiety, and the 'burning platform' analogy that Kotter used in describing the sense of urgency can lead to more harm than good. McLaren et al. also

acknowledged that Kotter has also criticized the use of the analogy for today's work environment, but as the steps of change have yet to be modified. Carreño (2024) shared some limitations and suggestions to Kotter's approach to change. Primarily, as Kotter's approach is top-down; and linear, it can be argued that the approach may not work in fast paced environments like technology. Carreño offered that Kotter's approach to change should be used in conjunction with other methods, like lean and continuous improvement. These additional approaches offer fluidity instead of the 'rigidness' of Kotter's eight step model which was also an opinion shared by Appelbaum et al. (2012).

Another criticism of Kotter's method is the hypocrisy within the model itself. McLaren et al. (2022) noted that Kotter's method focused on building trust between the organization and employees, but Kotter justifies falsely creating crisis to create the needed sense of urgency. As research is meant to be reliable and valid, Kotter's method lacks both reliability and validity on an empirical scale (Appelbaum et al., 2012; McLaren et al., 2024). McLaren et al. described the Appelbaum et al. (2012) work as the only literature that comes close to evaluating Kotter's model and reiterated that their findings did not offer validity or reliability (McLaren et al., 2024).

Burke-Litwin

The Burke-Litwin model is rooted in open-systems theory, and is comprised of an external environment box, top of the model, which represents input, and the individual and organizational performance box, bottom of the model, representing output and signifies that feedback operates in both directions, the remaining ten boxes represent aspects of the general systems theory (Burke & Litwin, 1992). The model established

primary variables that should be considered when change initiatives occur in organizations. The model can be broken into halves where the top half represents transformational variables, and the bottom half represents transactional variables. The transformational variables include external environment, leadership, mission and strategy, and organizational culture. The transactional variables include management practices, structure, systems, work unit climate, motivation, job/skill match, individual needs and values, and individual and organizational performance. Coruzzi (2020) described the model as a manifestation of leadership as it is the intent and purpose of leaders that define the variables and influence how the organization will perform.

Burke and Litwin designed their model with the premise that organizational change comes primarily from environmental influences (Burke & Litwin, 1992; Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Filej et al., 2009). Burke and Litwin (1992) clarified that the external environment was any condition or situation that occurred outside of the organization. French et al. (2022) explained that the Burke-Litwin model can accommodate a variety of organizations. Allen et al. (2020) shared how the COVID-19 pandemic was a real-time example of an external environmental factor that influenced organizational change for their organization, as described by the Burke-Litwin model. Coruzzi (2020) shared that the complexity of the Burke-Litwin model was aligned with the complex organizational change that would occur within Electric Boat (EB) which was also called a complex organization.

Supporting Framework

Lewin. As there are numerous models of change, one would be remiss to not examine change through the model that Lewin (1947) established. Most models that are highly used have evolved from Lewin's model. Lewin explained that change for a higher group performance is generally short lived and that after the change occurs the organizational culture returns to the previous state. To create successful change Lewin developed three aspects that are needed to make the change permanent: (a) unfreezing the present level, (b) moving to the new level, this aspect would be the introduction of the change, and (c) freezing the group life on the new level (Lewin, 1947). Lewin's method is generally related to an ice block where the ice block is unfrozen, then molded into a new shape, and finally refrozen to maintain the new desired state (Adelman-Mullally et al., 2023; Lewin, 1947). Lewin's model of change focuses on the force fields that influence individuals and groups, and Lewin believed that if leaders can successfully change group standards, then that force field would facilitate individual change and stabilize the individual's behavior on the new group level (Kump, 2023; Lewin, 1947).

The first aspect that Lewin discussed was unfreezing. This step, like Kotter's (1996) creating a sense of urgency, focuses on breaking complacency (Adelman-Mullally et al., 2023). Stanz et al. (2022) attributed unfreezing with unlearning long-established processes that are both ineffective and irrelevant due to the occurrence of an unexpected event. It is highly believed that in this step of change, leaders should have a vision for the future and the positives that that future entails, and that vision must be communicated to the team (Ellis, 2023a). According to Ellis, leaders have a responsibility to be visible

throughout the unfreezing process and take responsibility for slow progression of the change or the unfreezing event may not occur.

Moving to the new level is the second aspect that Lewin discussed when implementing change. Burnes (2019) explained that this process occurs when forces aimed at change are stronger than those resisting change. Lewin (1947) believed that driving forces can either move something away or towards a result. Lewin's works focus on group dynamics and as such this aspect of the change process relies on group consensus on the need for change, without this consensus the change may not be permanent (Adelman-Mullally et al., 2023). Ellis (2023b) explained that the moving step is perhaps the most difficult of the three as leaders must address the factors that lead to resistance to change and promoted that communication is crucial in combating resistance as leaders can relate the change to shared values that align with personal identities.

Freezing, or refreezing, as most literature referred to it, is the final aspect of Lewin's change model. Freezing means that the organization is returning to a stable state and that the change is being embedded into the culture (Ellis, 2023c). Another way to examine the freezing aspect is that the current organizational culture or climate now has a new force field that is protecting it from outside forces (Adelman-Mullally et al., 2023; Lewin, 1947).

Although Lewin's model for change seems as if it is a linear process, some have argued that Lewin's approach accepted that change is cyclical (Ellis, 2023c). Kotter (1996) explained that the eight-step model is linear and that the steps must be done in sequential order; however, Lewin understood that change brings change (Ellis, 2023c).

Endrejat and Burnes (2022) shared that neither they nor Lewin considered the model concrete and that the models Lewin developed were comparable to living organisms that can evolve and adapt. Nancy and Dongre (2021) related that change is a cyclical process, and through the example of smoking cessation the change process occurred in six phases (a) precontemplation, (b) contemplation, (c) preparation, (d) action (e) maintenance and finally (f) termination. These processes of change fall into Lewin's model as it could be argued that the first three process are 'unfreezing', the next two 'moving' and then termination would equate to 'freezing'. See Table 1 for key components of the theoretical frameworks.

Table 1*Taxonomy Table of Change Management Theories*

Theory	Year Introduced	Theorist Author	Key Components
Lewin's Change Theory	1947	Kurt Lewin	<p>Lewin (1947) established that change needs to occur in three phases, (a) unfreezing, (b) moving, (c) refreezing to be effective.</p> <p>Lewin's work showed that there is a need to change the group mentality to ensure that change occurs.</p> <p>Lewin's development of change management theory is critical as it is the foundation of change management theories.</p>
The Eight-Step Model of Change	1996	John Kotter	<p>Kotter (1996) shares how and why business fail at change implementation.</p> <p>Kotter's 8 steps include: (1) establishing a sense of urgency, (2) creating the guiding coalition, (3) developing a vision and strategy, (4) communicating the change vision, (5) empowering broad-based action, (6) generating short-term wins, (7) consolidating gains and producing more change, and (8) anchoring new approaches in the culture</p> <p>Kotter further shared that often leaders fail to utilize the process sequentially which results in change failures.</p>
Burke-Litwin Model of Change	1992	W. Warner Burke George Litwin	<p>The Burke-Litwin model focused on how organizations function and how organizations might be deliberately changed</p> <p>The model is composed of transformational variables (mission and strategy, leadership, and organizational culture), transactional variables (structure, management practices, and systems), and individual needs (tasks and skill, motivation, and individual needs and values).</p> <p>Transactional and transformational variables both affect motivation and performance.</p>

Change Effort Failure

Change efforts are a significant factor in the success of businesses; however, most of these efforts fail. Previous researchers have consistently shown that change efforts fail, nearly 75% of the time (Blackman et al., 2022; Hughes, 2011; Leonard & Coltea, 2013). Heracleous and Bartunek (2020) also reported that change efforts fail anywhere from 60% to 75% of the time. Blackman et al. (2022) attributed the failure of change efforts to employee resistance and cynicism based on the lack of communication that addressed the legitimization of the change. Leonard and Coltea (2013) believed that 70% of change efforts fail is rooted in the concept that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Leonard and Coltea offered that change efforts lack focus, specifically there is not enough focus on front-line managers and organizations do not focus front-line managers on the necessary actions to meet the organizational goal or vision which results in the failure of the change effort.

There are numerous possible causes of change effort failures, including organizational culture, resistance to change, inadequate communication lack of clarity and/or resources, insufficient leadership, and organizational reactions to change. Heracleous and Bartunek (2020) believed that these failures can be attributed to a lack of clarity regarding the benefits and activities associated with the change, a lack of clarity on the role of the change agent, a lack of resources, insufficient leadership, inadequate communication, and even resistance to change efforts from employees. Khaw et al. (2022) credited change effort failure with ignoring the more important variable of individual and organizational reactions towards the change effort. Rehman et al. (2021)

explained that successful change relies on the attitudes and responses of employees towards the change effort and that resistance to change, the leading obstacle in change efforts, is comprised of the negative attitudes which stemmed from leaders not considering the perceptions of employees.

Culture. Culture is a fundamental part of the organizational change effort and can be a cause of change effort failure. Kotter (1996) explained that change needs to be anchored into the organizational culture. However, organizations often begin change initiatives by attempting to change the culture first. Kotter believed that this practice was once the right way to bring organizational change but now Kotter disagrees with that sentiment. If the first step of organizational change is changing the culture, then the organization and the change effort, are following the wrong path (Kotter, 1996). Smith (2003) explained that culture change often occurs with other types of changes within the organization and that the existing organizational culture is a significant barrier to culture change.

Resistance to Change. Resistance to change is another possible reason that change efforts fail. There are numerous perceptions of resistance to change. The most common perception of resistance to change is that resistance is a negative attitude or behavior that hinders change (Damawan & Azizah, 2020). Grønvad et al. (2023) explained that resistance to change is one of the core psychological foundations associated with organizational change failures. A potential rationale for resistance to change is the uncertainty that the change effort will bring to the organization which can be highlighted through understanding the feelings and attitude that employees have

regarding the change initiative (Rehman et al., 2021). Rehman et al. explained that fear and the perception that the change is unfair resulted in negative attitudes towards change which hinders the successful implementation of the change effort.

Resistance to change is not solely tied to an individualistic approach or phenomenon, but leaders are affected as well. Mikel-Hong et al. (2023) shared different perspectives on how resistance to change is influenced through the relationship between the change agent(s) and receivers (employees). Stewart et al. (2017) examined leadership resistance when transitioning to a team-based empowerment model and found that the resistance of leaders stems from their inability to effectively delegate tasks and responsibilities. This example of resistance implies a lack of trust and shows the complexity associated with resistance as applied to group settings. Mun and Jung (2018) shared how different groups within an organization can also pose resistance to change. They explained that HR managers resisted the push for gender diversity in a Japanese firm which Mun and Jung believed to be designed through workplace politics.

Inadequate Communication. Change relies on communication to be successful, therefore inadequate communication can lead to change effort failures. Blackman et al. (2022) attributed resistance to change with communication, primarily focusing on the need for effective messaging. Buick et al. (2015) relayed findings that suggested that the lack of consultation led to a lack of buy-in towards the change process. Buick et al. identified that employees believed that there was a need for better communication on what the priorities were and that there were instances where the objectives simply were not communicated. Communication is relied upon throughout the organization but

perhaps it is the ‘middle managers’ that truly need communication the most; through their works Blackman et al. (2022) and Buick et al. (2015) mentioned the critical importance of middle manager when it comes to communicating change. In these studies, senior leaders explained that the middle managers are the ones that must interpret the message and give instructions and relay the message to employees and the lack of communication or inadequate communication hindered the change effort.

There are numerous reasons that researchers have attached to the reason of why change efforts fail. Researchers also offered different opinions on the history of the reported 75% failure rate. In any case, organizational culture, resistance to change, and inadequate communication are significant influences on why change efforts fail. These influences are also seen in literature as being key components of change management and their successes.

Business Topic Scholarship

In the following subsections the independent variables, employee productivity, employee motivation, employee engagement, and the dependent variable, leaders’ communication strategy will be addressed. In these sections the variables will be thoroughly examined to relay how these variables influence change efforts and the relationship that the independent variables have with the dependent variable will also be examined.

Variables

Employee Productivity. There are numerous definitions of employee productivity and researchers apply their own definition of the phrase based on their study.

Singh and Chaudhary (2022) shared two different definitions from literature on employee productivity, Yunus and Ernawati (2018) and Iqbal et al. (2019) respectively. Yunus and Ernawati (2018) defined employee productivity as the capability to produce goods and services to achieve organizational goals. Iqbal et al.'s (2019) definition of productivity centers on trust; a lack of trust between the employees and employers will lower productivity and hinder organizational performance. For this project both, definitions are relevant, as productivity is meant to meet the organizational goals which relies on the capability to produce goods or services. The second definition for employee productivity's relevancy is based on the trust that is needed between the organization and the employees as trust can be deemed as a motivator (van der Werff et al., 2019). Change is admittedly uncertain, which means that there must be trust between leaders and employees to navigate the process of change; trust is fundamental in the success of an organization and that trust is exhibited through the strategies and actions of leaders (Kleynhans et al., 2022) Trust allows employees to feel secure and not fear the consequences of expressing their opinions which means that organizational leaders must promote a culture that is open and honest (Bahrain et al., 2023).

Change management serves to increase organizational productivity and performance, which would include employee productivity. Mahamoud Hasan et al. (2025) explained that change management is intended to raise employee capabilities and improve organizational performance and that effective change management increases employee productivity. Understanding that change management influences productivity means that leaders play an integral role in change management practices but also create

the culture that supports change. Benson (2021) related productivity to motivation and believed that employees need to be motivated to reach high performance. Kouzes and Posner (2003) found a link between motivational leadership style and performance. One practice that Kouzes and Posner established was ‘encouraging the heart’ which aligns with sentiments from Kotter’s (1996) work as Kotter believed that “...a massive amount of communication, which is generally what is needed to win over both hearts and minds” (Kotter, 1996, p 95). Productivity is not simply related to inputs and outputs. Productivity relies on human interactions such as motivation and communication to reach the organizational goals. Kotter (1996) explained that hearts and minds need to be won to create effective change. The people element of productivity is fundamentally what drives success.

Communication is also a pivotal aspect of employee productivity. Ma (2022) believed that organizational communication, specifically professional communication, was important for increasing employee productivity. Sinitsyna et al. (2023) found that internal communication fosters an engaged workplace and believed that this engagement could improve productivity. Dutta et al. (2021) posited that communication and productivity share a non-linear relationship and concluded that communication is strongly related to organizational productivity. The utilization of communication strategies that provide clear and transparent communication promotes a positive work culture that encourages employee development and growth and through effective communication and the platforms that allow for leveraging communication productivity can be enhanced (Igbokwe, 2024).

There are both negative and positive aspects of communication when associated with productivity. Eresanara and Frank (2024) examined the plethora of literature surrounding communication and productivity and shared not just the positive effects associated with communication but also the negative. For instance, clear and consistent communication resulted in employee satisfaction and manager performance and engaging communication had a correlation with increased productivity, whereas communication that did not clearly explain goals and expectations led to a deteriorating work quality (Eresanara & Frank, 2024). As this project focuses on the need for leaders to understand the importance of communications strategies to have successful change, the negatives associated with poor communication or barriers of communication are important. Bahrain et al. (2023) explained that a lack of relevant information has a negative effect on productivity and that inadequate communication can lead to employee confusion and inefficiency.

Employee Motivation. There is an abundance of literature regarding employee motivation. Rahman (2020) characterized motivation as a psychological process that affects the direction and the rate of individual behavior towards commitment. Another definition of motivation is the process of satisfying individual needs (Radojević et al., 2020). According to Pincus (2023), motivation is dynamic and focuses on aiming for a change from a current position to a better future state. Pincus's concept of motivation suggested that change and motivation are linked. Gagné et al. (2014) defined three major categories of motivation (a) amotivation, (b) intrinsic motivation and (c) extrinsic motivation. Amotivation is the lack of motivation towards an activity, intrinsic

motivation is partaking in an activity due to its interest in enjoyability, and extrinsic motivation is engaging in the activity for rewards and approval and avoiding punishments.

Previous researchers also suggested that there is a link between change management, motivation and effective communication and that leaders should cultivate an environment that increases motivation so that change initiatives can be successful (Albrecht et al., 2023; Radojević et al., 2020). Radojević et al. (2020) explained that effective organizational change requires motivating employees and the utilization of effective communication. Through the examination of IRM, Bor, Radojević et al. described the organizational communication as assertive and two-way and credited this communication to the increase in employee motivation. In Lewin's (1947) and Kotter's (1996) approaches to change the concept of motivation is not forgotten. As previously discussed, leaders must communicate the 'why' of the change and the 'how' it affects employees, likewise they must convey the change initiative in a manner that motivates them, the employees, to accept the change. Lewin stated, "Motivation alone, however, does not suffice to lead to change" (p 33). Lewin's statement signified that numerous variables can lead to successful change and motivation is simply one of the many factors that influence change management.

The linkage between motivation and leaders' communication strategy can also be seen through the lens of the motivational language theory (MLT). MLT has three types of motivational language (a) direction-giving, (b) empathetic, and (c) meaning-making (Tao et al., 2022; Zhao & Ali, 2024). Sullivan (1988) explained that employees develop

beliefs of meanings based on informal communication with their supervisors. Sullivan further explained that motivation communication reduces uncertainty, which is a known factor in resistance to change literature. The meaning-making aspect of MLT requires that leaders create an environment that has a shared identity and that as employees become aware of how their roles are applied to the future, i.e. through the change process, they are motivated to become more engaged with the organization and the process (Zhao & Ali, 2024).

Employee Engagement. There are multiple definitions and core characteristics of employee engagement in the literature. Kahn (1990) described engagement as the concurrent employment and expression of “preferred self” in behaviors to create a connection to work, others, personal presence, and full role performance. Kahn established that there are three psychological conditions, safety, availability, and meaningfulness, that influence how people fulfil their roles. Sahi et al. (2025) equated the alignment between employee personality and their job is the meaningfulness of the role. Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) believed that there are higher levels of engagement when all the psychological conditions are met. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) described engagement as a positive state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption.

Employee engagement has been reported as being an issue in organizational change (Islam et al., 2021). Shaik et al. (2025) found that resistance to change moderated between change management and employee engagement and that less resistance will result in higher engagement. Islam et al. (2020) and Islam et al. (2021) linked resistance to organizational change to employee psychological factors primarily the uncertainty of

the change. If the uncertainty of the change is what hinders engagement it is fair to speculate that employees do not know or do not understand how the change initiative will affect their future within the organization. As change management requires teamwork, communication becomes a crucial element not just for effective teamwork but also for change management initiatives to succeed (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022) Mazzetti and Schaufeli differentiated between transformational and engaging leaders and established that trust mediated the relationship between leadership and team performance. Researchers have abundantly shown that there is a positive relationship between work engagement and team resources which includes communication (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). Sulaiman et al. (2023) shared that improved strategic internal communication is related to higher levels of engagement. There is also an abundance of literature on the benefits that employee engagement has on organizations.

Leadership is an integral aspect of both change management and employee engagement. Li et al. (2021) credited employee empowerment with increased engagement within the organization. Leaders that can articulate the vision, are open to innovation, and foster a culture of learning inspire employees to be more motivated and engaged (Li et al., 2021). Li et al. focused on employee engagement and motivation through the lens of leadership style. For example, transformational leadership has often been chosen to communicate and execute change initiatives as this style requires adaptability. Islam et al. (2021a) credited transformational leaders for enhancing employee work engagement and found that change oriented work engagement is increased through transformational leadership. Sahi et al. (2025) believed that employee

engagement is linked to the ethical climate of the organization and Armstrong and Muenjohn (2014) related transformational leadership and ethical behaviors of the organization.

Leaders' Communication Strategy/ Leadership Culture. Change management is a significant factor in ensuring competitive advantage. In this regard, business leaders must effectively communicate the change process to subordinates. Numerous researchers have explained the importance of communication and employee engagement (Li et al., 2021; Petković & Rapajić, 2021). Researchers have found a relationship between communication, employee engagement, and motivation (Petković & Rapajić, 2021). The connections between communication and engagement suggest that business leaders should provide the vision and goals of the organization to subordinates for the business to succeed. Employees play a pivotal role in the success of businesses (Li et al., 2021; Petković & Rapajić, 2021).

Petković and Rapajić (2021) credited communication as the foundation of the organizational culture which signifies that communication must be open and flow in all directions not simply from a top-bottom approach. Petković and Rapajić further believed that communication can be used to gauge the well-being of employees, specifically that the basic human needs are being met by the organization. Qin and Men (2022) credited internal communication to employee attitudes believing that communication is critical for operational success. Petković and Rapajić primarily focused on the relationship between employees and managers and how communication is viewed between both parties. Petković and Rapajić (2021) found that managers placed a higher value on

communication compared to employees, but all participants believed that through the right amount of communication motivation could be increased.

Most organizational change efforts and initiatives fail, and multiple reasons have been cited for this failure. Shrivastava et al. (2022) shared that organizational change efforts fail and believed that communication, or rather the breakdown in communication, is the key link in the failure of change efforts. Errida and Lotfi (2021) described that effective and constant communication as critical components of successful change initiatives and that effective communication includes a communication strategy that assesses the needs of the stakeholders, is monitored regularly and evaluates the communication process.

Feedback is another concept that is addressed by researchers throughout communication literature (Engmann et al., 2024; Mamula Nikolić et al., 2020; McLaren et al., 2024; Shrivastava et al., 2022). Mamula Nikolić et al. (2020) stated that leaders can only have effective communication if effective feedback is present. Feedback is integrated into the change model established by Engmann et al. (2024), to the point that strategies are redefined based on feedback received. McLaren et al. (2024) explained how feedback ties into self-worth and that feedback is used in numerous operational aspects of business communication signifying that change communication necessitates feedback and would then establish a two-way channel of communication. Perhaps the lack of communication strategies, not enough communication, or simply complacency accounts for the reason that change efforts fail, but there are numerous options that leaders have at their disposal to remedy the problem. Scheuer and Thaler (2024) offered that two-sided

messages increase credibility and can be more effective than only showing or sharing negative information, meaning that leaders need to share the possible negative aspects of change efforts.

Change efforts rely on communication for numerous reasons. When examining steps to change, Kotter (1996) reinforced the importance of communication specifically communicating the vision. Shrivastava et al. (2022) established that communication must consider those that receive the communication focusing on the “who, what, where, why, and how” of change and the fact that different communication strategies should be used throughout the change process based on the “who’s and what’s”. Communication can be used to show dissatisfaction with the status quo (Kotter, 1996; & Shrivastava et al., 2022) which in turn aligns with Lewin’s (1947) change model. Kotter (1996) used the term “heart and minds” throughout the work and in these instances, Kotter is referring to the importance of communication in the ability to win the “hearts and minds” of employees to allow for successful change efforts which is reinforced through Shrivastava et al. (2022).

Stakeholder communication is often a neglected aspect of change management and leader communication strategies for the change implementation (Engmann et al., 2024). Engmann et al. offered that stakeholder communication is needed in change efforts and needs to be ongoing, which they believe to be a missing component of Kotter’s (1996) work. McLaren et al. (2024) also supported the belief that there is a link between communication and change and believed that how change is planned and communicated matters as communication can influence the self-worth of employees.

Change management, specifically change efforts, rely on numerous aspects to be successful and as reported employee productivity, employee motivation, employee engagement, and leadership communication are significant factors for successful change efforts to occur. Each of these variables has a relationship that influences the other and in some instances the variables are almost identical.

Summary

In summary, in this section, I identified that there is significant business problem regarding change management and the importance of the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy. In this section, I established the problem and the purpose of the project. I selected a composite conceptual framework to answer the research question "What is the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy?". This section also addressed the assumption and limitations and posed two hypotheses. The section closed out with a review of the professional and academic literature.

Section 2: Primary and Secondary Industry Data Analysis

Nature of the Project

A quantitative method and correlational design were the best fit for my research. Lim (2024) explained that quantitative research offers a structured framework using numerical data that is objective to test hypotheses. In this project, I tested two hypotheses regarding the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity and leaders' communication strategy. As I studied numerical data focusing on leaders' communication strategy, which required objectivity and not subjectivity, my project is aligned with a quantitative method (Lim, 2024).

Devi et al. (2023) explained that correlation researchers investigate the relationship between variables without the researcher manipulating the variables. Correlational research has three objectives: (a) seeking evidence of whether there is a relationship between variables, (b) seeing the level of the relationship between the variables, and (c) obtaining clarity on whether this relationship is significant or insignificant (Putri et al., 2025). Model testing was deemed unsuitable as there was no existing empirical model to test that explains the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity and leaders' communication strategy. A prediction model was not suitable as I sought to describe the relationship between variables, not to predict the use of leaders' communication strategy. A descriptive approach was most feasible as I described the relationship between the variables based on the statistical data that allowed for the extent of the relationship between the variables to be interpreted (Barroga et al., 2023).

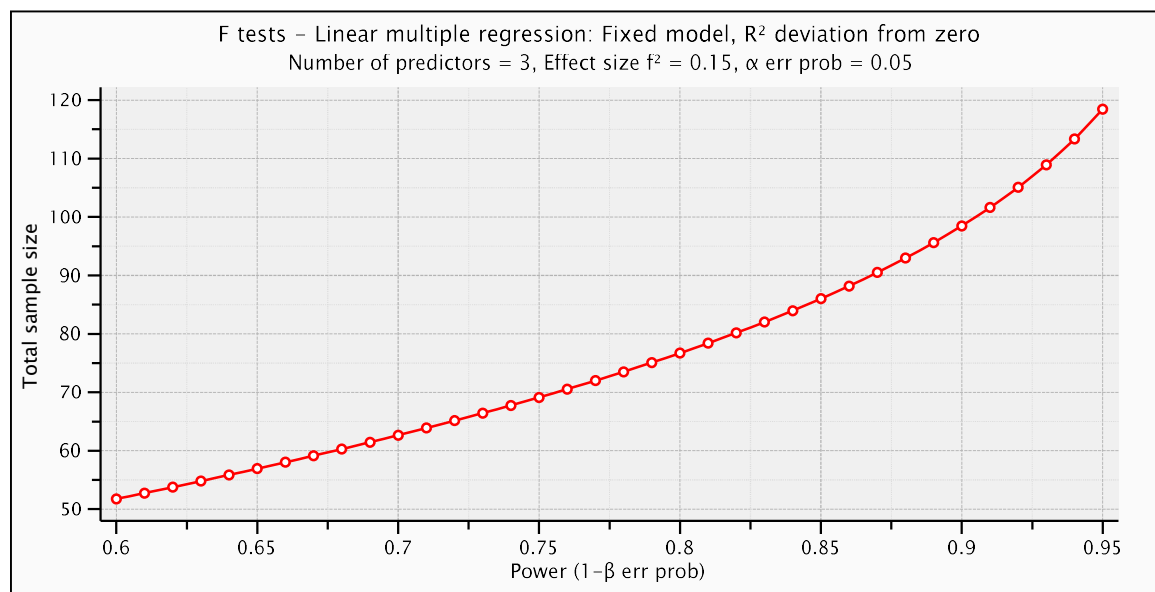
Population, Sampling, and Participants

The population for the project included human resource managers as they are an integral part of change management. Link (2025) believed that effective change management builds employee trust, strengthens engagement, and supports business continuity and believed that HR leaders must embrace their role as change champions. As leaders' communication strategy is often underused throughout the change process HR leaders can bridge the communication gap and along with their teams, being actively engaged in the change management process (Link, 2025; Tipton, 2024). Selection for the participants required that they had 5 years of human resource management experience and work in the United States. A non-probabilistic non-random purposive sample was used for this project. Turban et al. (2023) described non-probabilistic sampling as research that obtains participants by not using a random selection. As participants were selected based on their role or title, human resource manager, and experience, purposive sampling was used (Berndt, 2020; Stratton, 2024; Turban et al., 2023). Purposive sampling is subject to researcher bias as the sample may not represent the population highly and a potential limitation is that the findings may be harder to generalize (Ahmend, 2024). Stratton shared that the use of an online invitation, which was used for this project and distributed to LinkedIn, Facebook, and HR Groups, constituted a nonrandom method. Simkus (2023) shared that the use of online surveys can lead to under coverage bias as the population would be inadequately represented due to limited internet access.

I determined the sample size using G*Power 3.1.9.7. The parameters for the sample included a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a standard alpha of ($\alpha = 0.05$), and three predictor variables and one dependent variable. For a statistical power of 0.80, the minimum sample size was 77 responses. Figure 1 shows the input parameters for the sample size. Cohen as cited by Descôteaux (2007) described a medium effect size as being observable to the naked eye of the researcher and Norton and Strube (2001) explained that effect sizes are determined by past research or experience. In studies by Jones (2018) and Thomas (2018) where employee engagement and leadership were examined, a medium effect size was used. I have more than a decade of experience in human resources management and leadership communication strategies and believe that the influence of leaders' communication strategy can be obtained by the naked eye. Sink and Mvududu (2010) along with Norton and Strube (2001) reported that conventionally the alpha level and statistical power level are set at .05 and .80 respectively. The selected alpha level means that there is a 5% chance that the null hypothesis could be rejected erroneously creating a Type I error. Type II errors occur when the null hypothesis is accepted when it should be rejected which can occur by using a higher alpha (McLeod, 2023) Figure 2 shows the sample size required for varying levels of statistical power.

Figure 1*Sample Size Input Parameters*

Test family		Statistical test	
F tests		Linear multiple regression: Fixed model, R ² deviation from zero	
Type of power analysis			
A priori: Compute required sample size – given α , power, and effect size			
Input Parameters		Output Parameters	
Determine =>	Effect size f^2	Noncentrality parameter λ	11.5500000
	α err prob	Critical F	2.7300187
	Power ($1-\beta$ err prob)	Numerator df	3
	Number of predictors	Denominator df	73
		Total sample size	77
		Actual power	0.8017655

Figure 2*G*Power as a Function of Sample Size*

Data Collection Activities

The multiple surveys that were used in my project were administered via a single electronic survey utilizing SurveyMonkey. O'Connor (2021) explained that self-completing surveys can be administered through online platforms to a large population. Nayak and K.A. (2019) found that computer administered surveys allow for standardization while allowing for anonymity, are often shorter and more enjoyable than paper surveys, and often have less blank information. See Appendix B for the survey instrument.

Reliability and validity are important aspects to research. Reliability is the repeatability of results which establishes consistency which is measured through Cronbach's alpha, and validity is the extent in which a survey or questionnaire measures what is stated in the research question and this measurement comes from the internal consistency (Nawi et al., 2020). For my research I selected surveys that have been tested for reliability and validity. I also performed my own testing of the hypotheses, along with testing of Cronbach's alpha, and internal consistency. Incomplete surveys will not be included in the datasets.

The Multidimensional Work Motivational Scale (MWMS) was developed by Gagné et al. (2014) and was used to measure the IV Employee Motivation and was treated as an interval scale. The MWMS is a 19-item questionnaire that uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *not at all* to 7 *completely based on the stem* "Why do you or would you put efforts into your current job?". Out of 35 alpha coefficients the majority were above .80. Gagné et al. shared that there is factorial validity for the MWMS in

seven languages in nine different country samples. The MWMS participant score was the overall average score per participant across all questions that ranged from 1 to 7 where the higher score equates to higher motivation. Gagné et al. reported that the MWMS was tested across seven languages and nine countries for factor validity and Algarni and Khan (2021) tested the MWMS and reported satisfactory findings for reliability and validity. Trépanier et al. (2023) also furthered the literature on reliability and validity. Dr. Gagné has granted written permission for the use of the survey which is located in Appendix A.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) was used to measure the IV Employee Engagement and will be treated as interval. The original 17 question survey had an internal consistency that ranged between .80 and .90. The UWES in the long form (17- item), or the short form (9-item) is gauged using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 *Never/Never* to 6 *Always/Every day*. Across 10 countries the alpha for the short version ranged between .85 and .92 Schaufeli and Bakker stated that Byrne et al. (2016) conducted the most comprehensive convergent validity project of the UWES where it was compared to Job Engagement Scale created by Rich et al. (2010), finding that the two are moderately positively related to each other, but the UWES examines engagement in a broader scope (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). The overall UWES score was the average score per participant across all questions and would range from 1 to 7. The higher score equates to higher engagement. Dr. Schaufeli granted permission to use the survey which is located in Appendix A.

The Employee Productivity developed by Hanaysha (2016) is a five point Likert scale from 1 ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 ‘strongly agree’ that measures 5 items on productivity. The IV employee productivity was measured utilizing Hanaysha’s scale and was treated as interval. Hanaysha’s scale is comprised of items from Chen and Tjosvold (2008) and Lee and Brand (2010). Cronbach’s Alpha for Hanaysha’s (2016) scale was 0.755. Chen and Tjosvold’s productivity measurements had a Coefficient alpha of .78 for their 4-item scale. The overall productivity score was the average score per participant across all questions ranging from 1 to 5. Hanaysha pulled three items from Chen and Tjosvold (2008) to develop the productivity survey used and Chen and Tjosvold. reported an alpha of .87 and they conducted a CFA and the CFI was .60 for a combined performance and future collaboration but their baseline model had a reported CFI of .83. Hanaysha also used two items from Lee and Brand (2010) to round out the five question survey and the alpha for their performance scale was .61 and the GFI for their entire model was 0.94 and Hanaysha conducted CFA and established that the survey met the criterion established in previous literature. Dr. Hanaysha granted permission to utilize the survey which is located in Appendix A.

The Perceived Leadership Communication Questionnaire developed by Schneider et al. (2015) is a 6-item questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ‘completely disagree’ to 4 ‘completely agree’. The PLCQ-OR was used to measure the DV Leadership Communication and will be treated as interval. Erben et al. (2019) found that the internal consistencies for the PLCQ-SR and PLCQ-OR were .84 and .91 respectively. Schneider et al., (2015) reported that the average Cronbach’s Alpha was .80.

The PLCQ-OR was validated against the German version of the Multidimensional Leader-Member Exchange Questionnaire with results of CFA showing a good model fit and factor loadings were between .77 and .91 (Schneider et al., 2015). Schneider et al. (2015) found that the PLCQ-OR was “moderately positively correlated with general job satisfaction”. The overall score for the PLCQ-OR was the average overall score per participant across all questions ranging from 1 to 5. Dr. Schneider granted permission to utilize the PLCQ which is located in Appendix A.

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

Research Question (RQ): What is the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders’ communication strategy?

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders’ communication strategy.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a statistically significant relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders’ communication strategy.

Linear regression is used to understand the relationship between a dependent and independent variable, multiple regression on the other hand includes a dependent variable and multiple independent variables (Roustaei, 2024). I looked to understand the relationship between independent variables employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and the dependent variable leaders’ communication strategy, therefore multiple regression was appropriate. Tumin et al. (2020) explained that linear regression should be used for continuous variables which, as the variables in my project

are interval, Tumin et al.'s belief is satisfied. As there is only one dependent variable, multivariate multiple regression is not suitable for this project (Sinharay, 2010).

Data cleansing is paramount in research as the wrong decisions could be made based on inaccurate data (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2023). Hosseinzadeh et al. believed that the purpose of data cleansing is to correct the errors found in the data set and to convert the data into a uniform format. Sharifnia et al. (2025) shared that data errors can create bias and reduce the quality of the data. My process for data cleaning and screening included demographic information at the beginning of survey. As participants must have had at least 5 years of HR Manager experience, survey responses that are answered with "1 to 4" years were redirected to the end of the survey. Questionnaires that were not answered in full were considered missing data and these responses were removed from the datasets.

According to Laerd Statistics (n.d.) there are eight assumptions when conducting multiple regression analysis, (a) the dependent variable is either interval or ratio, (b) there are two or more independent variables, (c) there is an independence of observations, (d) a linear relationship between the dependent variable and each independent variable along with a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables collectively, (e) the data must show homoscedasticity, (f) the data must not show multicollinearity, (g) the data should not have significant outliers, and (h) that the errors are normally distributed.

The first assumption requires that the dependent variable, leadership communication, be either interval or ratio. For this project, leaders' communication

strategy is interval measured on a Likert scale. To satisfy the second assumption of having two independent variables, this criterion was met as there are three independent variables: (a) employee engagement, (b) employee motivation, and (c) employee productivity. All three variables are interval and measured on Likert scales. In order to satisfy assumption three, the Durbin-Watson statistic was used. Positive autocorrelation occurs when the test statistic (d) is lower than the lower critical value, when d is higher than four minus the lower critical value negative autocorrelation is present, when d is between the upper critical value and four minus the upper critical value there is no autocorrelation and if d is between the lower and upper critical value or between four minus the upper critical value and four minus the lower critical value the presence of autocorrelation cannot be determined (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2014).

To test assumption four, I used a scatterplot to verify that there is a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Assumption five of homoscedasticity was addressed through the examination of the same scatterplot used to verify assumption four. To test multicollinearity, I used SPSS to assess Tolerance/VIF values Jeng (2023) explained that historically the VIF cutoff value for multicollinearity is 10 and Kim (2019) shared that tolerances lower than 0.1 to 0.2 show multicollinearity. Assumption seven was assessed using Cook's Distance. Jayakumar and Sulthan (2015) explained that Cook's Distance (D_i) is used to assess influential observations in regression models. A D_i of 1 is typically described as being a large influence and the general rule for D_i is $4/n$, where n is the total number of data points. D_i will be found using SPSS. Assumption eight was tested through the utilization of a

histogram and P-P Plot. Ghasemi and Zahediasl (2012) explained that normal distribution when utilizing the P-P Plot is a straight diagonal line. They also recommend the Shapiro-Wilk test to examine normality both of which can be performed through SPSS.

If any violations were found in the assumptions, then a different analysis approach was considered. As the assumption of heteroscedasticity was violated, the dependent variable was transformed by squaring the results as recommended by Laerd Statistics (n.d.). For issues of multicollinearity the variable with the highest correlation would be removed and the analysis retested. Weighted regression could also be used if homoscedasticity is found within the project (Penn State University, (2026). Normality concerns can be addressed by applying nonlinear transformation to the dependent variable (Statistical Point, n.d.).

Hamilton et al. (2015) explained that goodness of fit in linear regression is calculated by the square of the regression line, R^2 and that a perfectly fit model would have an R^2 of 1.0. The null hypotheses will be rejected if $p < 0.05$. The confidence interval for the project was 95% which will provide information about the size of the effect, the uncertainty of the population estimate, and the effect's direction (Patino & Ferreira, 2015).

The 95% confidence interval represents a range of values around the statistic where the true average value in the wider population probably lies, meaning that if this project or any other were conducted 100 times, calculating a new estimate and a new confidence interval, about 95 of the confidence intervals would reflect the value of the entire population (Elkins, 2024). Effect sizes can be small, medium, or large, with a

medium effect being observable to the naked eye, and effect sizes allow researchers to make inferences to the practical significance of the research findings specifically whether the effect is meaningful or not (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012).

All data were analyzed using SPSS version 30.

Summary

In this section I have discussed why a quantitative correlational research design was selected for this project and the justification for a linear regression analysis. The participant's criterion was also established focusing on why a non-probabilistic purposive sampling was selected and how the sample size was determined through the utilization of G*Power software. I also discussed the measurement instruments that were used in this project and supported both their reliability and validity. This section also addressed the assumptions associated with linear regression and how these assumptions were addressed if they were violated.

Section 3: Data and Professional Practice

Project Results

The purpose of the research project was to address the following research question:

Research Question (RQ): What is the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy?

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a statistically significant relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy.

I used multiple linear regression to examine the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy. The purpose of multiple linear regression is to test for a general underlying pattern between multiple independent variables and a dependent variable, and to show the relationship between X (independent variables) and Y (dependent variable) to predict Y for a specified value of X.

The population of the project was human resources managers or professionals in the United States. There were 82 total participants in the project, but the final sample size was 77 as results were removed due to four participants not meeting the screening question criteria and one data set being incomplete.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic frequencies are provided in Table 2. A total of 77.9% of the participants were female (n = 60) and 22.1% of the participants were male (n = 17). By age 11.7% of the participants ranged between 25 to 34 years of age (n = 9) and 7.8 % of participants were 65 years of age or older (n = 6). Most participants, 33.8% (n = 26), were between the ages of 35 to 44. A total of 27.3% (n = 21) of participants had 5 to 9 years of human resources experience, 39% (n = 30) had 10 to 15 years of experience, and 33.8% (n = 26) had 16 or more years of experience in human resources. I have included the mean, standard deviation, and robust standard error of the independent variables along with the mean and standard deviation for the dependent variable in Table 3. All variables were measured on Likert scales.

Table 2

Demographic Frequencies

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	60	77.9
	Male	17	22.1
Age	25-34	9	11.7
	35-44	26	33.8
	45-54	24	31.2
	55-64	12	15.6
	65+	6	7.8
HR Years	5-9	21	27.3
	10-15	30	39
	16+	26	33.8

Table 3*Independent and Dependent Variables Descriptive Statistics*

	M	SD	Robust Standard Error
EM	3.81	.917	.906
EE	3.60	1.35	.928
EP	3.62	.840	1.35
LC Squared	9.04	5.13	

Testing Assumptions

The first assumption requires that the dependent variable, leadership communication, be either interval or ratio (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). For this project, leadership communication was interval and measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 4. To satisfy the second assumption of having two independent variables (Laerd Statistics, n.d.), this criterion was met as there were three independent variables: (a) employee engagement, (b) employee motivation, and (c) employee productivity. All three variables were interval and measured on Likert scales. Employee engagement was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 6, employee motivation was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7 and employee productivity was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

The third assumption is that there is an independence of observation (Laerd Statistics, n.d.), which was verified through the utilization of the Durbin-Watson statistic which was 2.009. Assumptions four, that there is a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, and assumption five the presence of homoscedasticity were tested through the creation of scatterplots (Laerd Statistics, n.d.).

Homoscedasticity was also tested by conducting the Breusch-Pagan Test for Heteroskedasticity. The test for heteroskedasticity had a significance of .831 meaning that the hypothesis of the presence of heteroskedasticity could be rejected in the transformed model, the original non transformed model had a significance of .030 signifying that the assumption of homoscedasticity was violated. Figure 3 was generated to determine if the assumption of linearity was met. According to Laerd (n.d.), although visually there is a linear relationship, which satisfies the assumption, it shows a weak relationship between the variables. Through a function data transformation, where the dependent variable, leaders' communication strategy, was squared, to address the assumption of homoscedasticity this linear relationship improved. Figure 4 is the scatterplot generated after the data transformation. Lee (2020) recommended that power transformations, like the squared transformation, be used to address negative skewness which was also present in this project and that transformation affects interpretability of results. Figure 5 is a partial regression of employee productivity, Figure 6 is the partial regression of employee engagement, and Figure 7 is the partial regression of employee motivation. Gallup (2019) explained that the partial regression plot shows the transformations of an independent variable and the dependent variable without the influence of other independent variables.

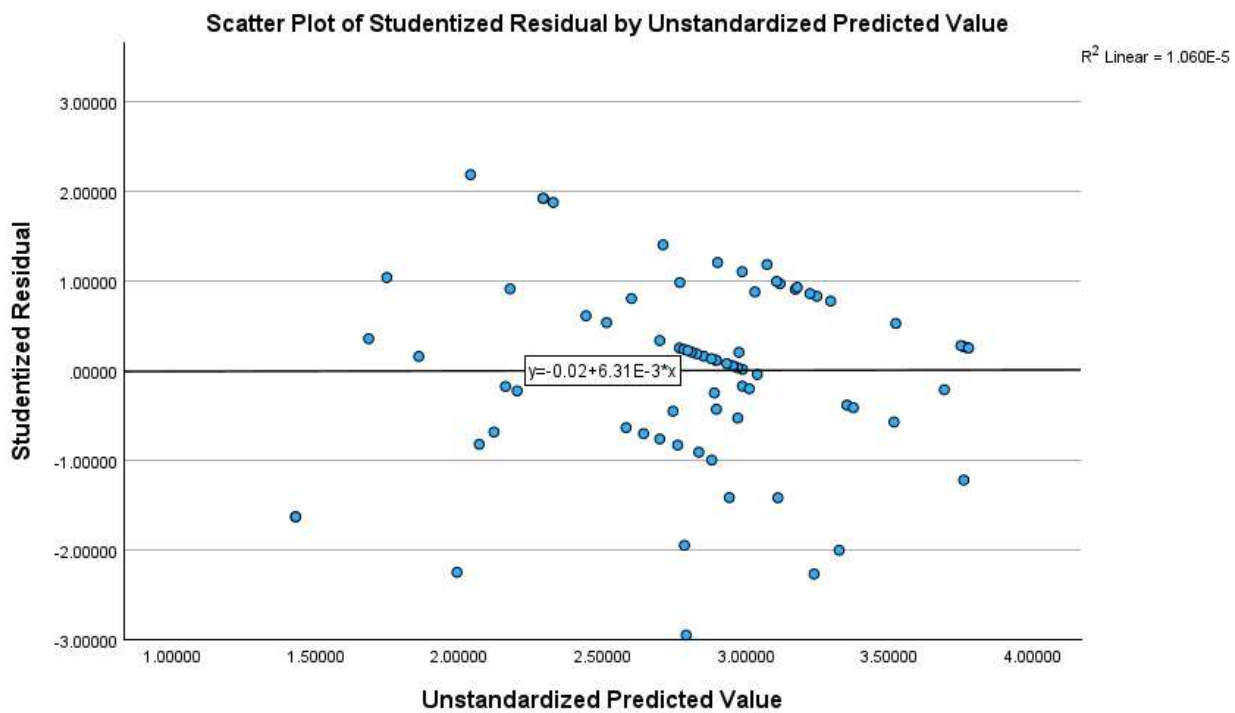
Figure 3*Linearity and Homoscedasticity*

Figure 4

Scatterplot of Leader Communication Squared

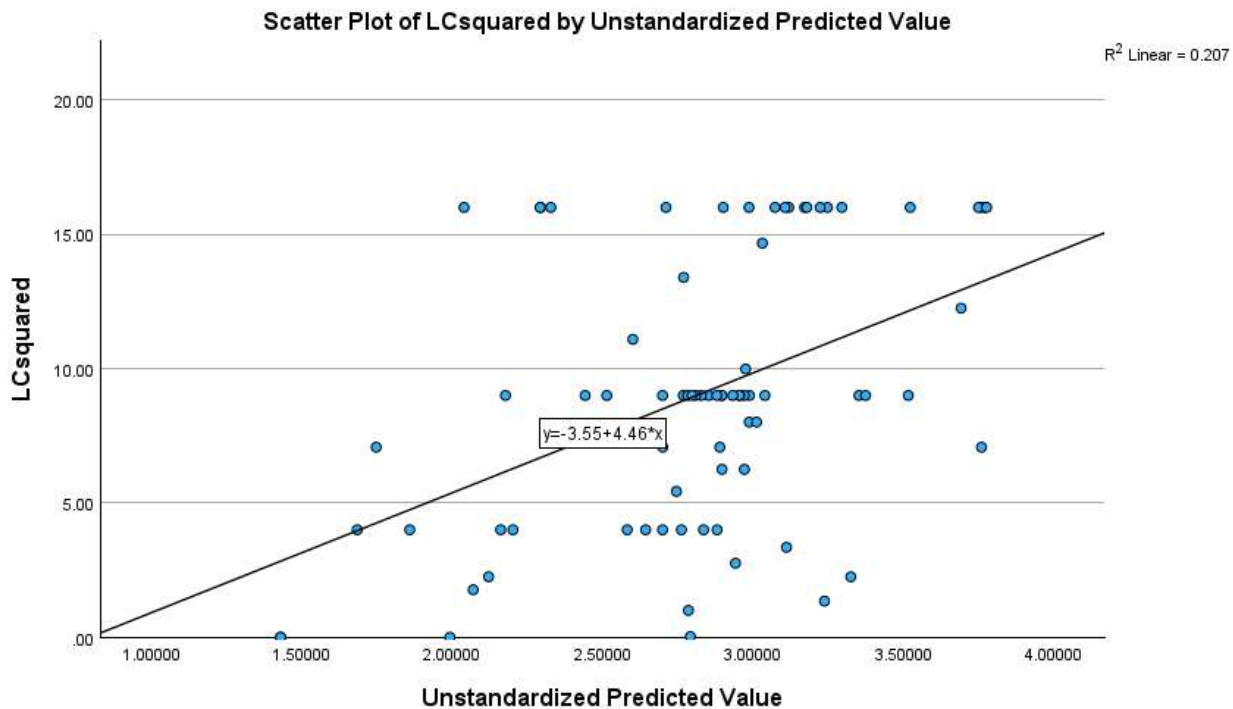


Figure 5

Partial Regression of Employee Productivity

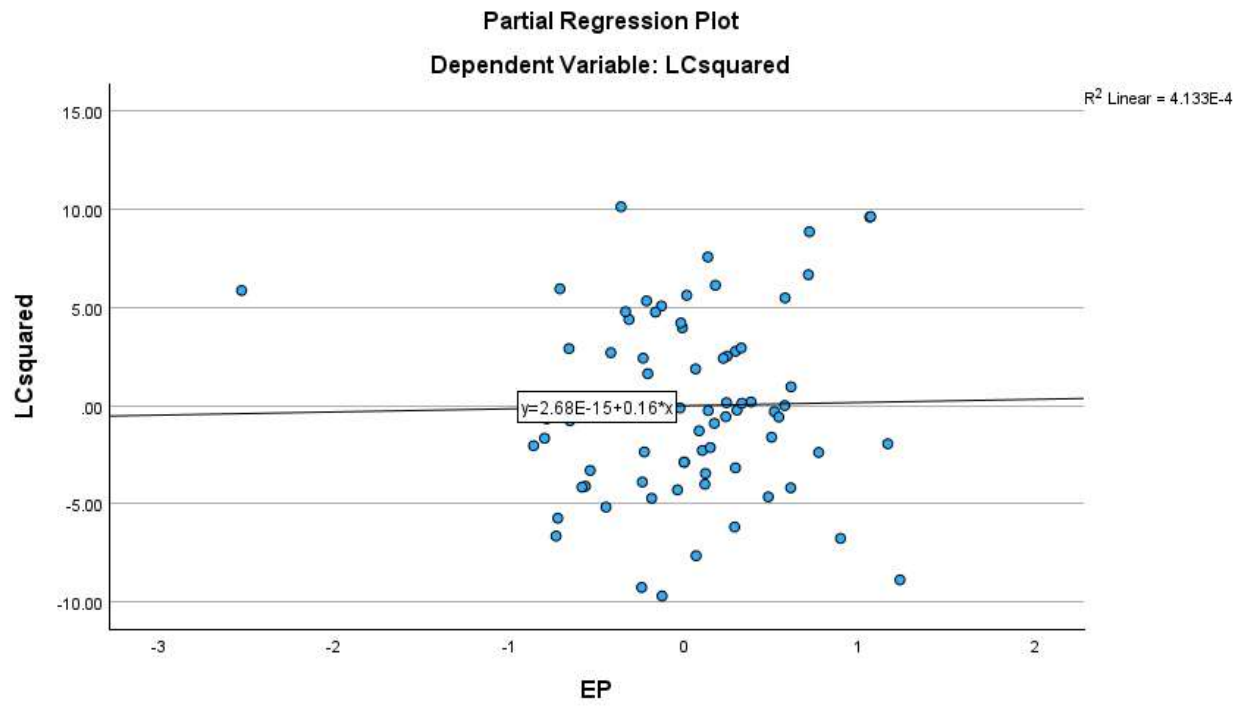


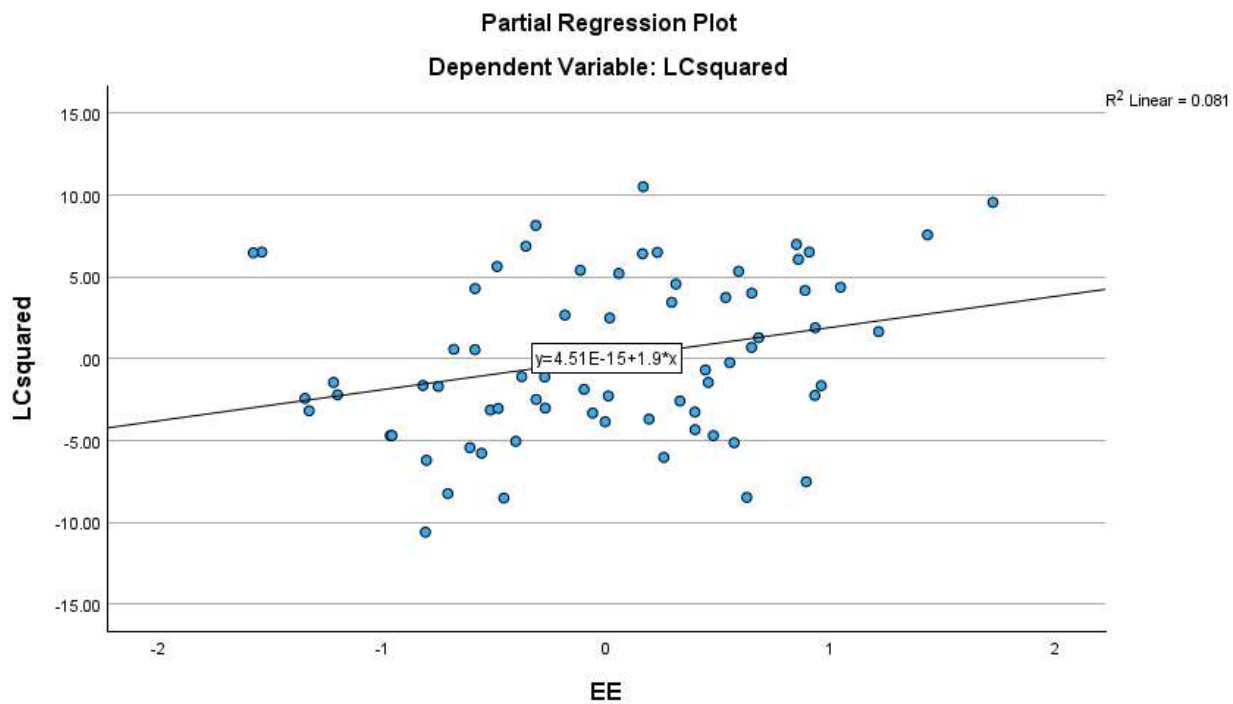
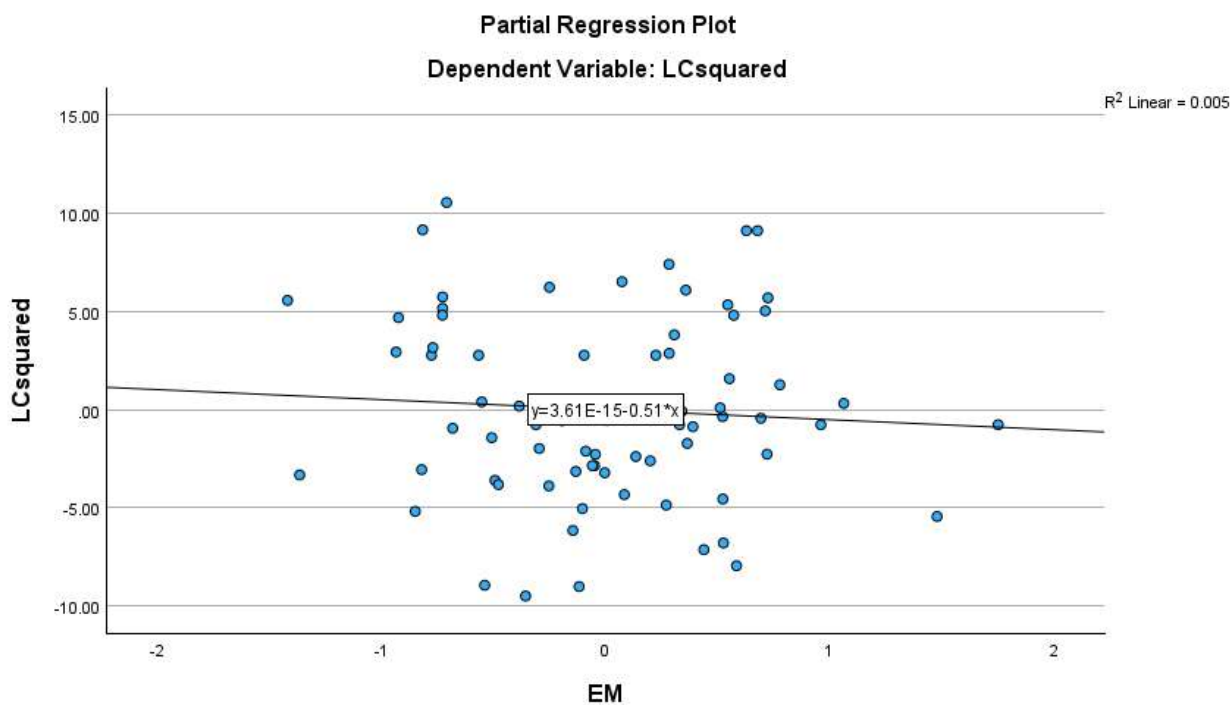
Figure 6*Partial Regression of Employee Engagement*

Figure 7*Partial Regression of Employee Motivation*

Assumption six required that there be no multicollinearity and assumption seven required that the data should not have significant outliers (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). To test for multicollinearity, I ran a linear regression correlation test using both Pearson Correlation and Spearman's rho along with a toleration and VIF test. By examining the Pearson Correlation, employee engagement had a strong correlation with employee productivity and employee motivation with a coefficient over .7 (Schober et al., 2018). According to Mukaka (2012), the variables range from a low positive correlation to a moderate positive correlation with no variable having a higher correlation than .7. The Pearson correlation is best used when the variables are normally distributed and Mukaka recommended that Spearman's rho be used when the variables are not normally

distributed which is the case in this project. The correlation coefficients are in Table 4. Following Jeng's (2023) explanation on VIF cutoff value of 10, the assumption of no multicollinearity is met as no independent variable had a VIF higher than 3.606. Following the guidance of Kim (2019) on tolerances ranging from 0.1 to 0.2 showing multicollinearity, the data in this project does not possess multicollinearity as tolerances ranged from 0.277 to 0.471. VIF and Tolerance results are in Table 5. To test for outliers Cook's Distance (D_i) was used (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). The general rule for D_i is $4/n$, which for this project would be $4/77=0.0519$. There were eight responses that were above the rule of thumb. The model was run with outliers, as removing them would have placed the sample below the minimum number of responses needed. There was no change in the model significance $p < .001$ when ran with and without outliers. The model with outliers had lower coefficients than the model without outliers. There were no values where D_i was 1. The highest D_i was 0.17798.

Table 4*Correlation Matrices*

		Leader	Employee	Employee	Employee
		Communication	Productivity	Engagement	Motivation
		Squared			
Pearson Correlation	Leader	1.00	.345	.452	.293
	Communication				
	Squared				
	Employee	.345	1.00	.724	.487
	Productivity				
	Employee	.452	.724	1.00	.742
	Engagement				
Spearman's rho	Employee	.293	.487	.742	1.00
	Motivation				
	Leader	1.00	.336	.431	.281
	Communication				
	Squared				
	Employee	.336	1.00	.661	.453
	Productivity				
	Employee	.431	.661	1.00	.671
	Engagement				
	Employee	.281	.453	.671	1.00
	Motivation				

Table 5*Collinearity Statistics*

	Collinearity Tolerance	Statistics VIF
Employee Productivity	.471	2.125
Employee Engagement	.277	3.606
Employee Motivation	.444	2.251

To test the final assumption, assumption eight, a histogram, Figure 8, and a P-P Plot, Figure 9, were created to examine normal distribution (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). Ghasemi and Zahediasl (2012) explained that normal distribution when utilizing the P-P Plot is a straight diagonal line which was not present as points were both above and below the diagonal line. When I performed the Shapiro-Wilk test, I found that employee productivity and employee engagement had p values less than .005 meaning that the assumption of normality was violated. Salkind (2007) shared that the Shapiro-Wilk test lacks power in small samples sizes and as a result will fail to reject a sample from a non-normal population. Mishra et al. (2019) recommended that the Shapiro-Wilk test not be used for sample sizes over 50 which showcases the sensitivity of test. The robust standards of errors were reported in Table 3 as Newsom (2024) recommended. However, the primary check for normality relies on visual aids therefore Q-Q plots, Figure 10, Figure 11, Figure 12, and Figure 13 were created. According to Law and Jackson (2016) Q-Q plots of residuals discern if the normality assumption holds. Looti (2026) shared that if two distributions are similar the plotted points should approximate a straight line. Figure 10 shows that employee motivation deviates from the line in the middle or the

median, which Looti (2026) explained to be common due to sampling variation. Figure 11 shows that employee productivity travels closely aligned with the diagonal line with slight deviation in the left tail. In Figure 12, employee engagement dips below the median, again which can be described as common based on sample variation according to Looti (2026).

The histogram has a bell shape which allows for the assumption of normal distribution to be accepted (Mishra et al., 2019). Nonparametric regression was not performed as the assumptions were met through the transformation of the dependent variable.

Figure 8

Histogram

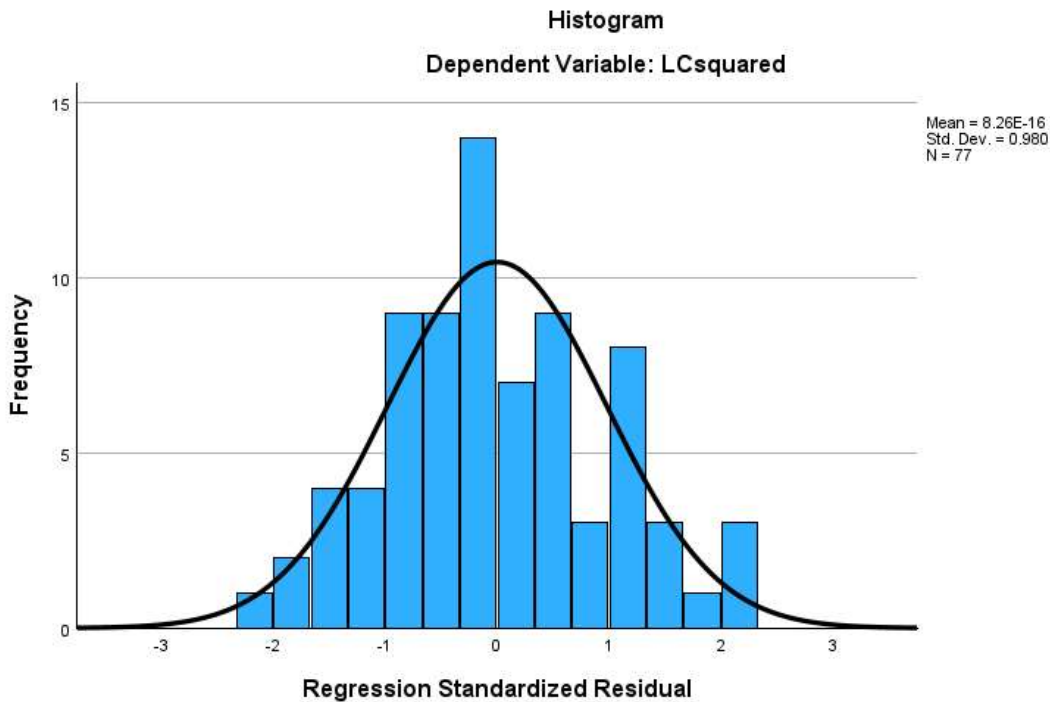


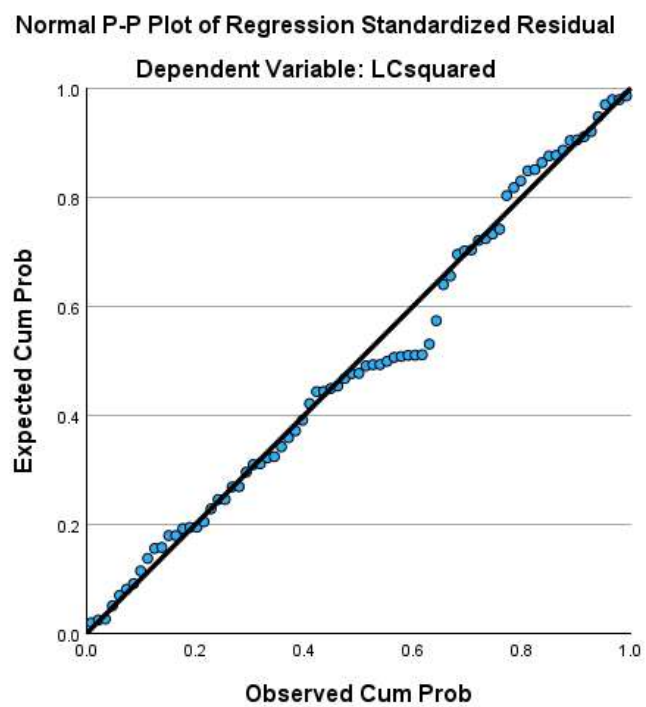
Figure 9*P-P Plot*

Figure 10

Q-Q Plot of Employee Motivation

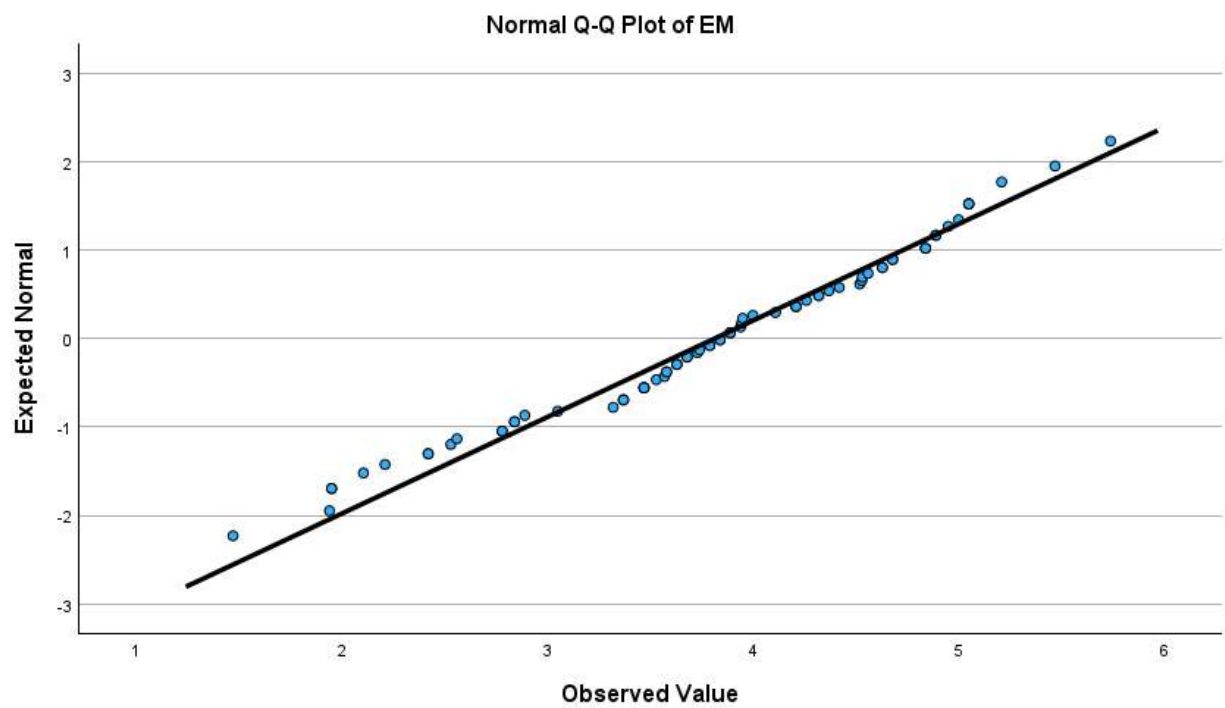


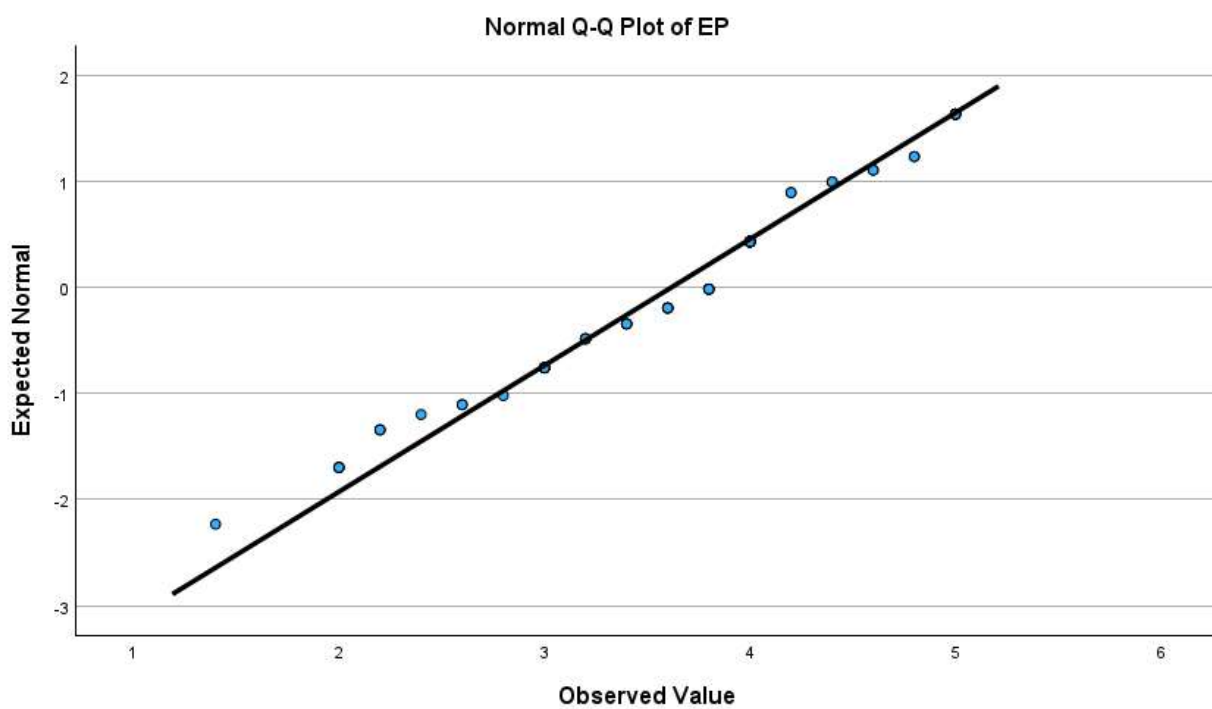
Figure 11*Q-Q Plot of Employee Productivity*

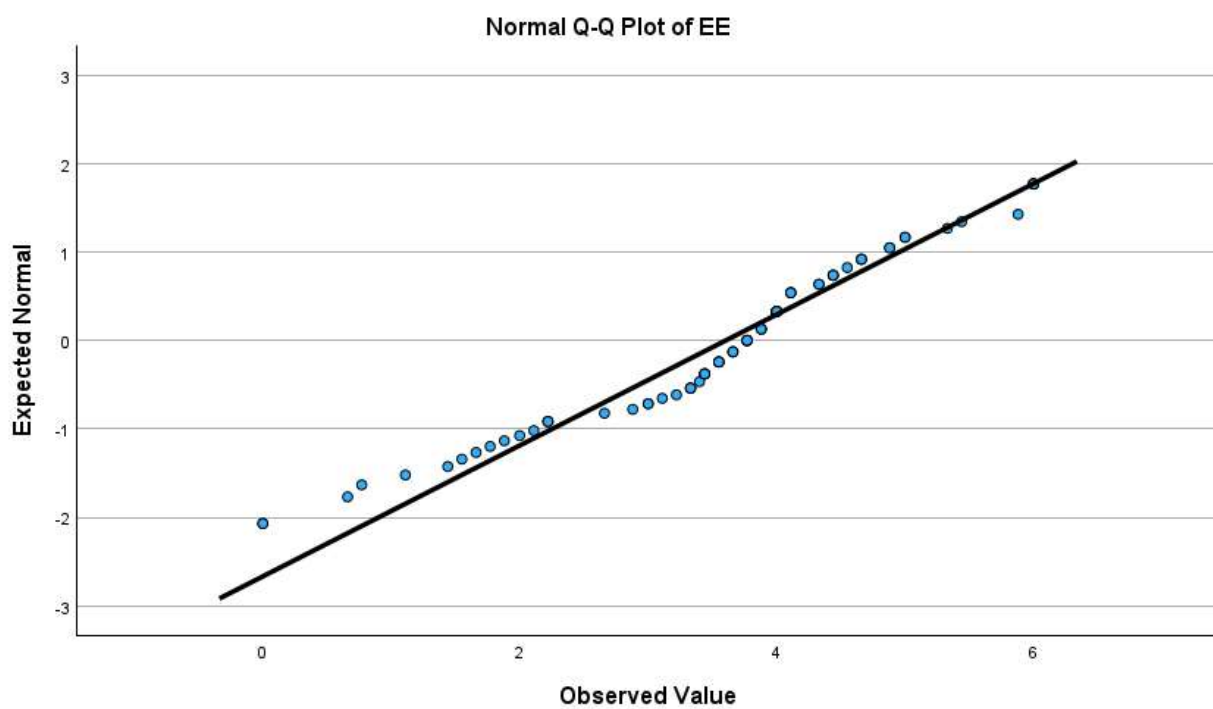
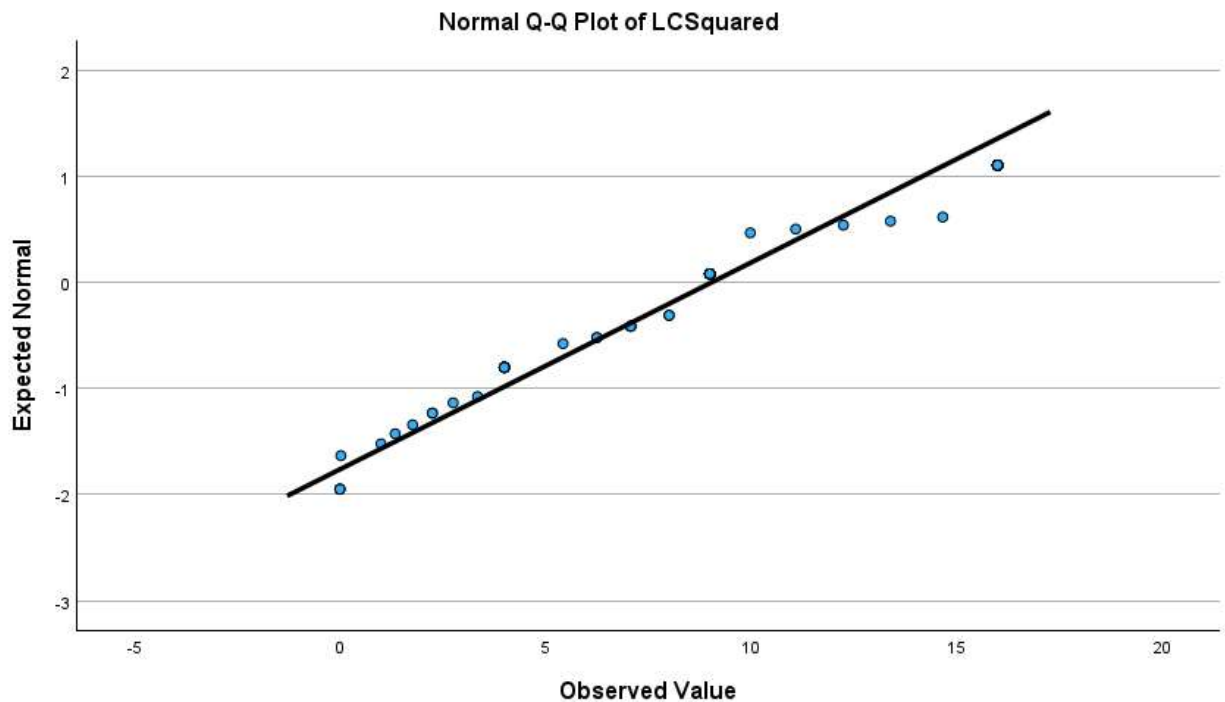
Figure 12*Q-Q Plot of Employee Engagement*

Figure 13

Q-Q Plot of Leader Communication when Squared



Inferential Results

I conducted multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between employee engagement, employee motivation, employee motivation, and leaders' communication strategy across the United States in human resources managers and human resources professionals. The model summary for this analysis is in Table 6. R^2 for the model was 20.9% with an adjusted R^2 of 17.6% which Cohen, as cited by Gignac and Szodorai (2016), described as a small effect. As this project evaluated human behavior, the R^2 value is acceptable as it shows that 20.9% of change in leaders' communication strategy is predicted by employee engagement, employee motivation, and employee productivity and Ozili (2023) explained that R-squared values ranging between 0.10 and

0.50 (10% to 50%) are acceptable in social sciences when some variables are statistically significant. The practical significance of the model is measured by the effect size. In a regression model, effect size can be measured through R^2 . The practical significance of the model suggested that the 20.9% variance in leader communication strategy can lead to observable benefits regarding organizational change initiatives. The model had a standard error estimate of 4.65. The model predicted a statistically significant relationship of leaders' communication strategy, $F(3,73) = 6.429$, $p < .001$. Therefore, I was able to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. The Beta coefficients were tested when examining if there was a statistically significant relationship between slope and linearity. Employee engagement was the only variable that was statistically significant as $\beta = .501$, $p = .013$ with a 95% confidence interval that does not go below zero. The linear relationship had a positive slope. Beta coefficients and their confidence intervals are listed in Table 7.

As the model was transformed based on heteroscedasticity and robust standard errors reported for the normality assumption the parameter estimates are listed in Table 8 which show that employee engagement is statically significant $p = .044$ with a 95% confidence interval that does not go below zero. The linear relationship had a positive slope. Table 8 also shows that there is not a statistically significant relationship involving employee motivation and employee productivity as both independent variables had p values above .05 and the confidence intervals for each crossed 0. Only employee motivation had a negative slope for the linear relationship.

Table 6*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.457	.209	.176	4.65	2.009

Table 7*Beta Coefficients and Confidence Intervals*

	Unstandardized B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
(Constant)	3.54		.253	-2.594	9.691
Employee Productivity	.161	.026	.863	-1.687	2.009
Employee Engagement	1.904	.501	.013	.407	3.400
Employee Motivation	-.511	-.091	.561	-2.254	1.232

Table 8*Parameter Estimates with Robust Standard Errors*

	B	Robust Standard Errors	Sig,	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Intercept	3.548	3.585	.326	-3.597	10.694
EE	1.904	.928	.044	.055	3.752
EM	-.511	.906	.575	-2.317	1.295
EP	.161	1.352	.905	-2.533	2.855

Application to Theoretical Framework and Literature

Change management is a crucial aspect for survival and competitive advantage of organizations. Through the proper implementation of change management practices, primarily through their leaders' communication strategy, business leaders can effectively influence employee productivity and motivation. Kotter (1996) established eight steps to follow when implementing change and one critical aspect throughout the steps was communication. Leaders' communication strategy starts in the first step with creating a sense of urgency and then can be seen in other steps such as communicating the change vision. Through my project, a relationship between employee engagement, employee motivation, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy was found which furthers the foundation of Kotter's beliefs on how business leaders should implement change. This project provides further support for Kotter's change model as critics believe that the model lacks reliability and validity scale (Appelbaum et al., 2012; McLaren et al., 2024). Kotter believed that hearts and minds need to be won to create effective change which is a sentiment that was also shared by Kouzes and Posner (2003).

Although Kouzes and Posner found a link between motivational leadership and performance, this project furthers the knowledge base for both motivation and productivity. The results suggest that organizational success is tied to the people within the organization and their productivity. My project also helps to further Dutta et al. (2021), who believed that leaders' communication strategy is related to organizational productivity.

The Burke-Litwin model of change was described as a manifestation of leadership by Coruzzi (2020) and as Burke and Litwin designed the model based on how organizations might be deliberately changed. The belief associated with the model is that the transformational and transactional variables both affect motivation and performance. For this project, leaders' communication strategy could be examined as either a transformational or transactional variable. Leaders' communication strategy is also an integral part of the organizational culture. The individual needs that the model addresses are motivation and performance, which were examined through the lens of productivity. My project further verifies the work of Igbokwe (2024) showing that productivity is improved through leveraging communication.

This project also shows that motivation is not the sole factor in implementing change efforts and furthers Lewin's (1947) belief. Lewin's work is based on group dynamics and one aspect portrayed is the consensus for the need for change which should solidify the change as permanent. Ellis (2023a) stressed the importance of leaders being visible throughout the process and that communication is needed to combat resistance to change (Ellis, 2023b). Change management processes also work to influence the culture

of the organization. Using Lewin's model, the culture is being changed by breaking complacency, for instance ending the usage of inadequate communication strategies. Organizational leaders would then move to the desired state, the utilization of effective communication strategies, and would then refreeze the culture that possesses effective communication. Change does not begin by immediately changing the culture but influencing the behaviors within the organization that are resisting change efforts.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

Change management is a necessary aspect of any business practice. Through change management practices, organizational leaders can create new culture within their organizations. The change process also requires leaders to effectively communicate so that employees are engaged, motivated, and productive throughout the change process and beyond. The implications of this project suggest that there is a relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity and leaders' communication strategy. Through building trust, everyday leader communication, the utilization of servant leadership, and application of the Johari Window leaders could facilitate successful change efforts.

Building Trust

To successfully implement change trust must be an integral part of the process and trust can be built through effective communication strategies. Poarch (2025) recommended that leaders communicate early and often through various formats which will help build trust and offset resistance to change. Iddrisu (2025) believed that a culture that is open and transparent enhances communication between both in and out groups and

builds trust. Hamilton (2025) shared that the most trusted leaders are consistently human, meaning that they are present, act in the interests of others, and treat every interaction as meaningful. Authenticity, logic, and empathy are three traits that leaders should possess as trust requires these elements to thrive (Hamilton, 2025).

Leader Communication

The results of my project suggest that leader communication is not solely meant for change management practices but is a necessary facet of everyday business operations. Salsabila et al. (2025) explained that communication is crucial for leaders and found that within their study that 78% of CEOs identified that communication was a challenge that leaders faced. Leaders' communication strategy is important because communication is how leaders attempt to shape the experiences and responses of subordinates but also the transmittal of information is an intentional effort to influence specific outcomes (Utzinger et al., 2025).

Servant Leadership

One potential way to improve communication is through the utilization of servant leadership. Servant leadership focuses on empathy and active listening, meaning that leaders are attuned to the needs and concerns of their workforce. Organizations that utilize servant leadership create environments that support open communication which allows for collaboration and shared decision-making (Kainde & Mandagi, 2023). Schowalter and Volmer (2023) defined servant leadership as holistic leadership that combines task and people focus by being centered on people without ignoring performance expectations and can be measured in eight dimensions: (a) empowerment,

motivating followers to be proactive (b) accountability, followers know their expectation and are responsible for their performance (c) standing back, leaders share credit (d) humility, leaders utilize an appropriate perspective for their accomplishments and capacities (e) authenticity, leaders are true to themselves (f) courage, facing challenges in line with own beliefs and values (g) forgiveness, accepting others despite their mistakes and (h) stewardship, n growth, and these leaders build strong relationships with the followers through mutual trust, commitment, shared values, and concern for the welfare of others Urrila & Eva (2024).

Johari Window

Leaders that wish to improve their communication strategies may wish to begin with the utilization of the Johari Window, which Ryan (2018) described as a tool to help a person understand their behavior and how it affects others in ways that they did not recognize. Kapur (2023) shared that one significant goal of the Johari Window is to improve communication and relationships. The model is comprised of four quadrants or areas: the open area, the part of ourselves that everyone knows, the blind area, aspects that are visible to others but hidden from ourselves, the hidden area, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors we keep to ourselves, and the unknown area, untapped potential, talents, and qualities that are undiscovered (Ryan, 2018; & Salsabila et al., 2025). Salsabila et al. (2025) explained communication through the utilization of the Johari Window, in this context the open area fosters trust within a team, the utilization of feedback constitutes reducing the blind areas, transparent leaders enhance team engagement and trust thought

minimizing the hidden area, and the unknown area is explored through training, mentoring, and even self-reflection.

Implications for Social Change

An undeniable fact is that change happens and will continue to happen. In organizational change efforts there is reason to believe that change can only succeed if managed in a sequential order and by winning the heart and minds of the workers. This sentiment relates to a quote from Gandhi (1964 p.158) as cited by the Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust (2025) “If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him.” As organizations move through the change process, the leaders are ideally fostering environments that allow for growth, acceptance, and trust just to name a few aspects of an ideal culture. These efforts will lead to cementing or freezing, as Lewin (1947) put it, the desired result into of the change effort. Ideally, as the organization changes the actions and attitudes of the workforce will also change.

As organization leaders begin to enhance their communication strategy, leaders can begin the process of establishing an environment that fosters trust, engagement, and increased motivation. Researchers like Yue et al. (2019) believed for organizations to gain trust there must be a key element that builds the foundation. That foundation starts with communication. Through adequate communication strategies, leaders should incorporate inclusive and participatory communication practices which strengthen the legitimacy of change efforts and reduce the belief of social inequality and discrimination (Iba et al., 2024). Trust could be argued as the paramount fixture of an organization and

numerous aspects of daily life. As communication builds trust, organizational citizenship behavior may occur, which is when employees engage in behaviors outside their prescribed roles and is a result of employee trust in the organization (Louis & Murphy, 2023; Yue et al., 2019). These environments that foster growth, engagement, and trust show that employees are cared for and valued, which according to Vo et al. (2022) leads to them creating positive outcomes for common benefits to repay the kindness they received. As employees become motivated, organizational leaders are creating a positive social change (PSC) which is a process that transforms thoughts and behaviors to generate beneficial outcomes for individuals, communities, organizations, society, and the environment (Stephan et al., 2016). At the same time, these motivated and engaged employees may feel the need to make more meaningful connections and contributions to society as Bryant et al. (2023) believed that people choose their careers to make a significant contribution to society.

As organization leaders work to strengthen their relationships with the community through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, they show their employees that they care for more than just the bottom line which helps in retention efforts and organizational success (Reiersen, 2024). The benefits of CSR are numerous, but most importantly, those that give back help to remind people of our shared humanity and further create a culture of care and support in their communities (Mortach, 2025). Change promotes change and when done correctly the results and possibilities are endless.

Recommendations for Further Study

The research had limitations that included exposure to research participants, selection criteria, and the utilization of an online platform to administer the survey. Social media was the main proxy for gathering research participants primarily LinkedIn and Facebook Groups that catered to human resources practitioners and the survey was administered through SurveyMonkey. Through the social media sites, I posted a link to the survey from my profile where it could be reshared through my own network, and I relied on my own personal network where I would send the survey if I believed the criterion were met. Relying solely on social media meant that those without social media were unable to participate in the project as they would not have had access to it. Future researchers would benefit from building partnerships with organizations and utilizing paper surveys that can be returned via mail. The utilization of paper surveys could help with the low response rates that Wright (2023) attributed to online platforms. Part of the criteria to participate required that participants be human resources professionals and have more than 5 years of experience in human resources. I recommend that future studies have a shorter period for years of experience as this time period might be too excessive and that the project be open to an array of business leaders and not just one group.

Leaders' communication strategy is not a new concept and there is a plethora of literature on the subject. This project was one of the few that evaluated the relationship between employee engagement, employee motivation, employee productivity and leaders' communication strategy collectively meaning that further research needs to be

done in the field. However, my project did not capture every aspect of leaders' communication strategy. Utzinger et al. (2025) shared that there is still a gap between leadership styles and communication techniques with the latter lacking a depth of analysis. My project helped to increase the knowledge base more in the realm of leadership styles, but understanding how communication techniques influence behavior should be examined further.

Motivation is also a well-researched and documented phenomenon in literature. As my project only intended to address the relationship between leaders' communication strategy and employee motivation as a whole, the different aspects of motivation should be addressed in future studies. In my project, the Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS) developed by Gagné et al. (2014) was used as part of the survey instrument. The MWMS breaks motivation into four categories and the relationship that leaders' communication strategy have on these categories independently should be studied in the future. The MWMS in its entirety is 19 questions long, all of which were incorporated into my project, and I would recommend that future studies not utilize the entire survey unless they examine all aspects of motivation to reduce the number of questions within the survey.

Conclusion

To examine the relationship between employee motivation, employee engagement, employee productivity, and leaders' communication strategy I performed a quantitative correlational project. Data from 77 participants, human resources professionals, throughout the United States were analyzed. I found that there was a

statistically significant relationship between employee engagement, employee motivation, employee productivity and leaders' communication strategy which allowed for the null hypothesis to be rejected. This project can help leaders of any organization and in any field improve their relationships within the workplace. Although this project was conducted under the lens of change management, change efforts are not the only enterprises that leaders encounter that influence the need for communication. Through effective communication strategies, leaders can improve employee engagement, motivation, and productivity which could result in better organizational performance and competitive advantage.

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Appendix A: Author Permissions



Dr. Jalal Rajeh Mohammad Hanaysha <jalal.hanayshi@yahoo.com>

To: Christopher Tucker

 **Flagged**

Good Evening,

Please feel free to use the survey. All the best in your research.

Regards,
Jalal

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

...

Dear Chris Tucker,

Thanks for your interest in our research!

You can freely use the PLCQ if cited appropriately. I guess you've read about the scale publication in The Journal of Psychology published in 2015. I've attached a second, more recent paper further corroborating the validity of the PLCQ. You also may want to have a brief look at it.

All the best and good luck with your research!
Frank

—

Dr. Frank M. Schneider

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Yes you can, no problem

Marylène Gagné

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Dear Christopher,

Thank you very much for your interest in my work.

You may use the UWES free of charge, but only for non-commercial, academic research. In case of commercial use, we should draft a contract. Please visit my website (address below) from which the UWES can be downloaded, as well as all my publications on the subject.

Good luck with your research.

With kind regards,

Wilmar Schaufeli

Wilmar B. Schaufeli, PhD | Professor emeritus of Work and Organizational Psychology | *Social, Health & Organizational Psychology* | Utrecht University | P.O. Box 80.140, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands | Phone: [\(31\) 6514 75784](tel:+31651475784) | Site: www.wilmarschaufeli.nl | [citations](#)

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was comprised of the following questions and statements:

What is your gender?

What is your age?

How long have you be an HR Manager or HR Professional?

I do a large amount of work each day.

I accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently.

I have a high standard of task accomplishment.

My work outcomes are of high quality.

I always beat our team targets.

At my work, I feel bursting with energy.

At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.

I am enthusiastic about my job.

My job inspires me.

When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.

I feel happy when I am working intensely.

I am proud of the work that I do,

I am immersed in my work.

I get carried away when I'm working.

My supervisor is sensitive to the needs of others.

My supervisor seems to like devoting his time to me.

I am content with the way my communication with my supervisor is going.

My supervisor and I share an understanding of how we would like to achieve our goals.

My supervisor and I can speak openly with each other.

Especially when problems arise, my supervisor and I talk to each other even more intensively in order to solve the problems.

The following statements are based on the stem question “Why do you or would you put efforts into your current job?”

I don’t because I really feel that I’m wasting my time at work.

I do little because I don’t think this work is worth putting effort into.

I don’t know why I’m doing this job, it’s pointless work.

To get others’ approval (E.g. supervisor, colleagues, family, clients...).

Because others will respect me more.

To avoid being criticized by others.

Because others will reward me financially only if I put enough effort into my job.

Because others offer me greater job security if I put enough effort into my job.

Because I risk losing my jobs if I don’t put enough effort in it.

Because I have to prove to myself that I can.

Because it makes me feel proud of myself.

Because otherwise I will feel ashamed of myself.

Because otherwise I will feel bad about myself.