

Article type:  
Original Research

Article history:  
Received 08 October 2024  
Revised 26 November 2025  
Accepted 26 January 2026  
Published online 01 March 2026

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How to cite this article:  
Okati, H. (2026). The Impact of Organizational Communication on Employee Creativity Considering the Mediating Role of Symmetrical Internal Communication. *Future of Work and Digital Management Journal*, 4(2), 1-14.  
<https://doi.org/10.61838/fwdmj.208>



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## The Impact of Organizational Communication on Employee Creativity Considering the Mediating Role of Symmetrical Internal Communication

### ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with the aim of examining the impact of organizational communication on employee creativity, considering the mediating role of symmetrical internal communication. In terms of purpose, this research is applied, and in terms of nature and methodology, it is descriptive–correlational. The statistical population of the study included all employees of public organizations in the city of Tehran in 2025, the size of which was considered unlimited. To determine the sample size, given the size of the population and using Cochran’s formula, 384 individuals were selected as the statistical sample. The sampling method employed in this study was proportionate stratified random sampling. Data collection in this research was conducted using a survey method, and the primary instrument for data collection was a standardized questionnaire. To assess the validity of the research instrument, face validity, content validity, and construct validity were examined. To evaluate the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient and composite reliability were used. In this study, data were analyzed at two levels: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS software. The results indicated that organizational communication has a positive and significant effect on employee creativity. In addition, symmetrical internal communication mediates this relationship.

**Keywords:** Organizational communication, employee creativity, symmetrical internal communication

### Introduction

In contemporary organizational environments, creativity has emerged as a critical strategic resource for sustaining competitiveness, adaptability, and long-term performance. Rapid technological change, digital transformation, increasing environmental uncertainty, and heightened stakeholder expectations have collectively intensified the need for organizations to continuously generate novel and useful ideas, processes, and solutions. Within this context, employee creativity is no longer viewed as an optional or peripheral attribute but rather as a core organizational capability that underpins innovation, service quality, and organizational resilience. Scholars in management and organizational behavior consistently emphasize that creativity originates not only from individual cognitive abilities but also from organizational systems, social interactions, and communication processes that shape how employees perceive, interpret, and respond to their work environment [1, 2]. Consequently, understanding the organizational antecedents that foster or inhibit employee creativity has become a central concern in both theoretical inquiry and managerial practice.

Among the various organizational factors influencing creativity, communication occupies a particularly salient position. Organizational communication constitutes the primary mechanism through which goals are articulated, values are

transmitted, expectations are clarified, and relationships are constructed within organizations. Effective communication systems enable employees to access information, exchange knowledge, coordinate activities, and develop shared understandings, all of which are essential conditions for creative thinking and innovative behavior. Conversely, weak, fragmented, or asymmetrical communication structures may constrain information flow, suppress idea sharing, and erode psychological safety, thereby undermining creative potential. Prior research has demonstrated that organizational communication quality is positively associated with employee motivation, engagement, trust, and performance, suggesting that communication processes may play a pivotal role in shaping creative outcomes [3, 4].

The relationship between organizational communication and employee creativity is theoretically grounded in several foundational perspectives. Social exchange theory posits that employees reciprocate favorable organizational treatment with positive attitudes and discretionary behaviors, including creativity and innovation [2]. From this viewpoint, transparent, supportive, and participative communication signals organizational respect and investment in employees, thereby fostering a sense of obligation to contribute creatively. Similarly, leadership and creativity theories emphasize that communicative leadership behaviors—such as vision sharing, feedback provision, and open dialogue—create environments conducive to experimentation and idea generation [1]. These theoretical lenses collectively suggest that communication is not merely a technical function but a relational and symbolic process that shapes employees' willingness and capacity to engage in creative work.

Empirical studies provide substantial evidence supporting the positive association between organizational communication and employee creativity. Research conducted in public and private sector contexts indicates that open communication channels, feedback-rich environments, and participatory communication practices enhance employees' creative self-efficacy and idea generation capabilities [4, 5]. In public organizations, where bureaucratic structures often constrain flexibility, effective internal communication has been shown to mitigate rigidity and stimulate innovative behaviors among employees [5]. Moreover, strategic approaches to employee communication, which align communicative practices with organizational goals and employee needs, have been found to positively influence creative engagement and discretionary effort [6, 7].

Despite these insights, contemporary scholarship increasingly argues that not all forms of organizational communication exert the same effects on employee creativity. In particular, the symmetry of internal communication has gained attention as a critical qualitative dimension. Symmetrical internal communication, rooted in two-way symmetrical communication theory, emphasizes mutual understanding, dialogue, and balanced influence between management and employees. Rather than relying on one-way information dissemination, symmetrical communication encourages listening, feedback, negotiation, and shared decision-making [8, 9]. This form of communication is argued to enhance trust, perceived fairness, and psychological safety—key antecedents of creative behavior.

The concept of symmetrical internal communication is especially relevant in modern organizations characterized by knowledge-intensive work, diverse workforces, and collaborative innovation processes. Employees engaged in creative tasks often require autonomy, voice, and opportunities to challenge existing assumptions. Symmetrical communication structures legitimize employee input and reduce power distance, thereby enabling individuals to express unconventional ideas without fear of negative consequences [9]. Empirical evidence suggests that when employees perceive internal communication as symmetrical and dialogic, they are more likely to engage in knowledge sharing, proactive problem-solving, and creative experimentation [7, 8].

Recent studies have begun to empirically link symmetrical internal communication to employee creativity and innovative work behavior. For example, research indicates that two-way communication climates enhance intrinsic motivation and creative self-efficacy, which in turn stimulate innovative behaviors [7, 10]. Similarly, studies in public relations and internal communication literature highlight that symmetrical communication fosters employee engagement and identification with organizational goals, creating favorable conditions for creativity to emerge [9]. However, while these studies establish direct associations, the mediating mechanisms through which symmetrical internal communication transmits the effects of broader organizational communication on creativity remain underexplored.

Parallel streams of research in organizational behavior further underscore the importance of contextual and mediating variables in explaining employee creativity. Leadership styles, organizational climate, motivation, well-being, and psychological resources have all been identified as intervening mechanisms linking organizational practices to creative outcomes [1, 11, 12]. For instance, transformational and servant leadership influence creativity through motivational and psychological pathways, including intrinsic motivation, psychological availability, and perceived support [10, 12, 13]. Similarly, organizational climates that support innovation, learning, and autonomy amplify the effects of structural and relational factors on creative performance [14, 15]. These findings collectively suggest that creativity is a multilevel phenomenon shaped by complex interaction effects rather than simple direct relationships.

Within this broader landscape, internal communication emerges as a potentially powerful yet under-theorized mediating mechanism. Organizational communication provides the structural and informational foundation, but it is the quality of internal communication—particularly its symmetry—that may determine whether information exchange translates into creative action. Symmetrical internal communication may act as a conduit through which organizational communication practices influence employees' psychological states, motivation, and willingness to engage in creativity. By fostering mutual respect and dialogue, symmetrical communication can transform informational resources into meaningful social exchanges that energize creative behavior [2, 8].

The relevance of examining this mediating role is further heightened by recent changes in work environments. Digitalization, remote work, and technology-mediated communication have altered how employees interact and collaborate, raising new challenges for maintaining dialogue, trust, and shared understanding. Studies indicate that perceived usefulness of digital communication tools, gamification, and digital work design can either enhance or constrain creativity depending on how communication processes are structured [16, 17]. In such contexts, symmetrical internal communication becomes even more critical, as it ensures that technological communication does not devolve into one-way control mechanisms but remains participatory and empowering.

Moreover, contemporary research highlights that creativity is influenced by a wide array of individual and contextual factors, including cultural intelligence, environmental design, motivation, mental health, and well-being [18-20]. These studies underscore that creative performance is embedded in complex socio-organizational systems, reinforcing the need to examine integrative models that account for multiple relational processes. Organizational communication, as a cross-cutting system connecting leadership, climate, motivation, and well-being, is therefore uniquely positioned to influence creativity both directly and indirectly.

Despite growing scholarly interest, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, many studies examine organizational communication or internal communication in isolation, without explicitly modeling their interrelationships and

combined effects on creativity. Second, empirical research on symmetrical internal communication has predominantly focused on outcomes such as engagement and trust, with comparatively limited attention to creativity as a focal outcome [9]. Third, there is a paucity of studies that rigorously test mediation models using advanced analytical techniques, such as structural equation modeling, particularly in public sector contexts where communication dynamics differ from private organizations [3, 5]. Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing both theory and practice.

From a practical perspective, understanding how organizational communication influences creativity through symmetrical internal communication has significant implications for managers and policymakers. Public organizations, in particular, face mounting pressure to innovate while operating under constraints of regulation, hierarchy, and accountability. Designing communication systems that promote dialogue, participation, and mutual influence may offer a viable pathway for enhancing employee creativity without undermining organizational control. By empirically demonstrating the mediating role of symmetrical internal communication, this study can provide evidence-based guidance for communication strategies aimed at fostering innovation in complex organizational settings [3, 5].

In sum, the extant literature highlights the centrality of organizational communication in shaping employee creativity, while also pointing to the critical role of communication quality and symmetry in determining creative outcomes. Integrating insights from social exchange theory, leadership and creativity research, and internal communication scholarship suggests that symmetrical internal communication may function as a key mechanism through which organizational communication exerts its influence on creativity. However, empirical research explicitly testing this mediating role remains limited, particularly within public sector organizations and non-Western contexts.

Accordingly, the aim of this study is to examine the effect of organizational communication on employee creativity, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of symmetrical internal communication.

## Methodology

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive–correlational in terms of nature and method, and it was conducted using a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of organizational communication on employee creativity, considering the mediating role of symmetrical internal communication; therefore, the study falls within the category of causal–analytical research. The data were collected cross-sectionally within a specific time period. The statistical population of the study included all employees of public organizations in the city of Tehran in 2025, the size of which was considered unlimited. To determine the sample size, given the size of the population and using Cochran's formula, 384 individuals were selected as the statistical sample. This sample size was deemed appropriate with respect to the requirements of structural equation modeling and statistical adequacy.

The sampling method used in this study was proportionate stratified random sampling. In this process, employees were first divided into homogeneous strata based on variables such as organizational unit or job level, and then samples were randomly selected from each stratum in proportion to its size. This method contributes to increasing the accuracy and generalizability of the results. Data collection in this study was conducted using a survey method, and the main data collection instrument was a standardized questionnaire. The research questionnaire consisted of three main sections: the organizational communication questionnaire, including 5 items measuring various dimensions of formal and informal communication within the organization; the symmetrical internal communication questionnaire, based on the two-way symmetrical communication

model, including 4 items; and the employee creativity questionnaire, including 6 items measuring the ability to generate new ideas, solve problems, and demonstrate innovation. All items were designed based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The questionnaires were administered to respondents in person.

To examine the validity of the research instruments, two approaches were used. Face and content validity: the questionnaires were reviewed by several professors in the fields of management and organizational communication, as well as subject-matter experts, and after applying the suggested revisions, their content validity was confirmed. Construct validity: confirmatory factor analysis was employed to assess construct validity. The results of the factor analysis indicated that the factor loadings of all items were above the acceptable threshold (0.5), and the fit indices of the measurement model were at a desirable level, indicating adequate construct validity of the research instruments.

To assess the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient and composite reliability (CR) were used. The Cronbach’s alpha values for all research variables (organizational communication, symmetrical internal communication, and employee creativity) were above 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability of the measurement instruments. In addition, the composite reliability values were also above the threshold of 0.7, further confirming the reliability of the research instruments.

In this study, the data were analyzed at two levels: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. In the descriptive statistics section, indicators such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the demographic characteristics and research variables. In the inferential statistics section, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the research hypotheses and examine the relationships among variables. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS software.

## Findings and Results

Initially, in order to gain a better understanding of the nature of the population under study and to become more familiar with the research variables, it was necessary to describe the data before conducting statistical analyses. Examination of the demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that the highest frequency was in the age group “30 to 40 years,” while the lowest frequency belonged to the age group “over 40 years.” This indicates that the majority of respondents in this study were between 30 and 40 years of age. In this study, 221 respondents were male and 163 were female, indicating that most of the responses were provided by men. In addition, the highest frequency was observed in the “bachelor’s degree” group, while the lowest frequency belonged to the “diploma and below” group. This suggests that most participants had higher educational attainment.

To measure each of the research variables, a number of items were included in the questionnaires. In this section, these variables were described using statistical indicators. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of each research variable, including the mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Variables*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Organizational Communication	3.045	0.698	0.487	0.524	1.216
Employee Creativity	3.042	0.806	0.650	0.854	0.445
Symmetrical Internal Communication	3.330	0.687	0.472	0.486	-0.220

Measures of central tendency indicate the average value of the score distribution. Measures of dispersion show the extent to which the values of a distribution are spread out. The standard deviation refers to the dispersion of respondents' scores around the mean. The larger the standard deviation, the greater the dispersion of scores from the mean, indicating greater heterogeneity in the measured characteristic, and vice versa. According to Table 1, among the research variables, organizational communication has the highest mean value.

Before testing the research hypotheses, the normality of the research indicators must be examined using the one-sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.

**Table 2**

*One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test for the Research Variables*

Variable	Significance	Result
Organizational Communication	0.001	Non-normal
Employee Creativity	0.000	Non-normal
Symmetrical Internal Communication	0.000	Non-normal

As shown in Table 2, the significance levels of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for the research variables are less than 0.05, indicating that the data do not follow a normal distribution. Due to the non-normality of the data, the PLS approach was used to perform structural equation modeling.

A measurement model is a model in which the relationships between observed variables (indicators) and latent variables are considered and measured. To assess the fit of the measurement models, the following criteria were used:

The significance of the factor loadings between the items and their corresponding latent variables.

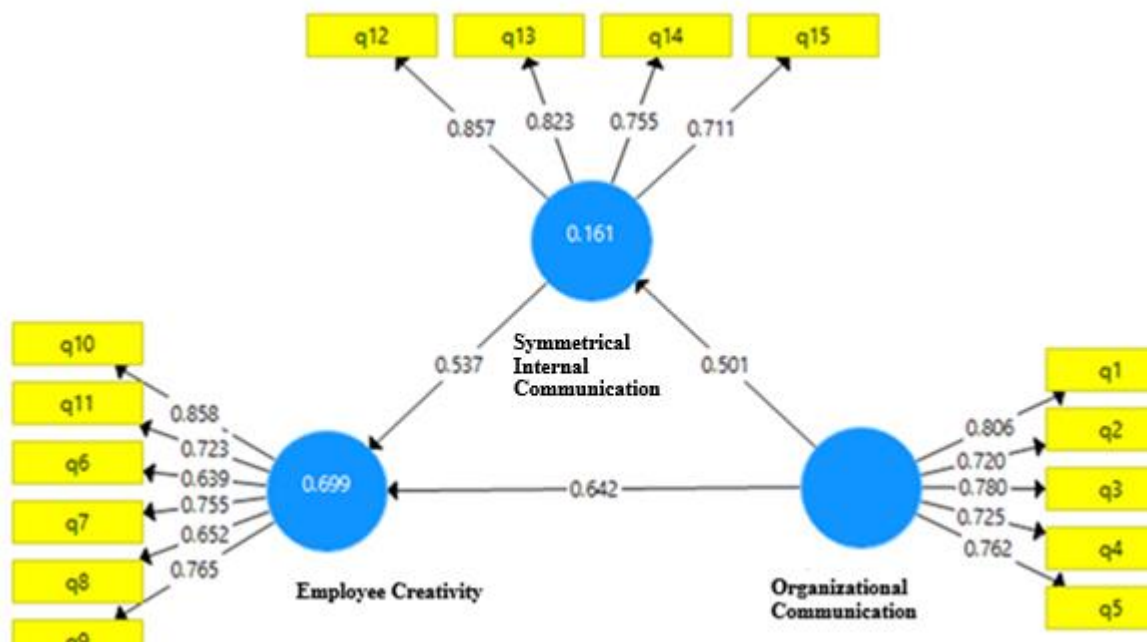
Reliability, assessed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability.

Convergent validity, examined using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) criterion.

Figures 1 and 2 present the structural equation model corresponding to the research hypotheses.

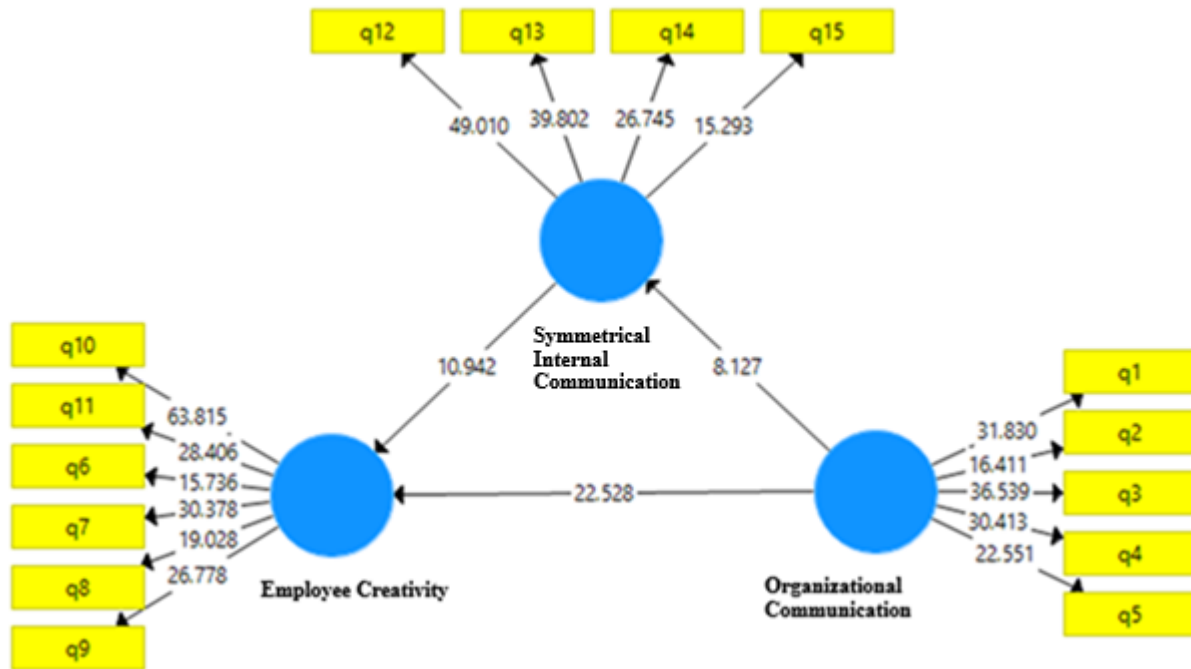
Figure 1

*Standardized path coefficients for the research hypotheses*



**Figure 2**

*Results of the Student's t-test (bootstrap t-values) for examining the significance of the research hypotheses*



The first, second, and third criteria of the measurement model include: the significance of factor loadings between items and their corresponding latent variables (convergent validity), reliability (Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability), and convergent validity (AVE).

To evaluate the measurement model in this study, factor loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and Cronbach’s alpha were used.

Based on the measurement model results, the standardized factor loadings of all manifest variables were greater than 0.5 and therefore acceptable. In addition, the bootstrapping values (t-statistics) in all cases were greater than the critical value of 1.96, indicating that the correlations between the observed variables and their corresponding latent variables are statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that each main construct has been measured appropriately.

Cronbach’s alpha values for all constructs were above 0.7, indicating high convergent reliability. Moreover, composite reliability values for all constructs were reported to be above 0.7, indicating that the constructs have adequate composite reliability.

Convergent validity is established when composite reliability is greater than 0.7 and AVE is greater than 0.5. In addition, composite reliability should be greater than AVE. When these conditions hold, convergent validity is confirmed.

Discriminant validity assesses the capability of a measurement model to distinguish the observed indicators of a given latent variable from other observed indicators in the model. In practice, it complements convergent validity and is assessed through examination of item cross-loadings. To evaluate discriminant validity, Chin (1988) recommended that the indicators of a construct should have their highest loading on their own construct, implying relatively low cross-loadings on other constructs. Gefen and Straub (2005) further suggested that the loading of each indicator on its intended construct should be

at least 0.10 greater than its loading on other constructs (i.e., based on the cross-loading table). (Chin, 1988; Gefen & Straub, 2005)

According to Table 3, all items have the highest factor loading on their respective construct, and the minimum difference between the loading on the intended construct and the loadings on other constructs exceeds 0.10. This indicates that the research constructs exhibit acceptable discriminant validity.

**Table 3**

*Item Cross-Loadings on the Research Constructs in the Study Sample*

Item	Symmetrical Internal Communication	Employee Creativity	Organizational Communication
Q1	0.656	0.677	0.703
Q2	0.325	0.421	0.649
Q3	0.394	0.369	0.467
Q4	0.269	0.248	0.522
Q5	0.374	0.311	0.566
Q6	0.217	0.793	0.674
Q7	0.183	0.561	0.359
Q8	0.326	0.559	0.350
Q9	0.236	0.689	0.491
Q10	0.230	0.679	0.597
Q11	0.361	0.718	0.055
Q12	0.801	0.521	0.728
Q13	0.682	0.452	0.305
Q14	0.501	0.492	0.037
Q15	0.531	0.313	0.106

Diagnostic validity: To assess this type of validity, the cross-loading output table from the software can be used. The logic of using the cross-loading table is that, for each indicator, the largest factor loading must correspond to its own dimension or latent variable, and the other loadings on the remaining latent variables must be smaller (i.e., the same cross-loading criterion described above). Accordingly, the diagnostic (discriminant) validity of the research questionnaire is also confirmed.

The Fornell–Larcker criterion further states that the square root of AVE for a construct should be greater than the correlations between that construct and other constructs. This indicates that the construct correlates more strongly with its own indicators than with other constructs. Table 4 reports the results related to this criterion.

**Table 4**

*Correlation Coefficients Among Latent Variables and the Square Root of AVE*

Variable	Organizational Communication	Employee Creativity	Symmetrical Internal Communication
Organizational Communication	0.592		
Employee Creativity	0.254	0.514	
Symmetrical Internal Communication	0.339	0.312	0.598

The square root of AVE values for the latent variables in this study, placed on the main diagonal of the matrix, are greater than the inter-construct correlations placed below and to the left of the main diagonal. Therefore, this criterion can be considered acceptable and the discriminant validity of the model is confirmed.

The structural model is a model in which the relationships among exogenous (independent) and endogenous (dependent) latent variables are examined. The structural model evaluates only the latent variables and the relationships among them.

The numbers displayed on the paths indicate the path coefficients. To test the significance of the path coefficients, Student’s t-values were computed using the bootstrapping procedure. If the Student’s t-value exceeds 1.96, the path coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level.

R<sup>2</sup> pertains to endogenous (dependent) latent variables and indicates the explanatory power of independent variables over dependent variables. Three reference values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are commonly considered benchmarks for weak, moderate, and strong R<sup>2</sup>, respectively. In this study, the R<sup>2</sup> values for the endogenous constructs were calculated as 0.161 for employee creativity and 0.699 for symmetrical internal communication.

Predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>): This criterion indicates the predictive power of the model for the dependent variables. For interpreting Q<sup>2</sup>, values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large predictive relevance, respectively. A positive Q<sup>2</sup> is desirable. The Q<sup>2</sup> values for the model variables were 0.319, 0.298, and 0.244, which are positive and at an acceptable level. Accordingly, the model’s predictive power for the variables is considered satisfactory.

GOF index: The index introduced by Tenenhaus et al. (2005) is the Goodness of Fit (GOF), a global fit criterion calculated as the geometric mean of average communality and average R<sup>2</sup>, as follows. (Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, & Lauro, 2005)

$$GOF = \sqrt{(\text{communality} \times \bar{R}^2)} = \sqrt{(0.568 \times 0.43)} = 0.494$$

This index, similar to LISREL fit indices, ranges between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 indicating better model quality. However, it should be noted that, unlike chi-square-based indices in LISREL-type models, this index does not evaluate the extent of fit between the theoretical model and the collected data. Rather, it examines the overall predictive capability of the model and whether the tested model has been successful in predicting endogenous latent variables.

PLS-SEM methodologists classify GOF values below 0.10 as small, between 0.10 and 0.25 as medium, and above 0.36 as large. Based on these criteria, the model fit index for the study sample is 0.494, which is considered large. Therefore, it can be concluded that the tested model demonstrates an appropriate fit in the study sample.

The most important part of the statistical analysis is testing the hypotheses and addressing the embedded research questions. In practice, after describing demographic variables and the main study variables, evaluating the questionnaires through confirmatory factor analysis (measurement models), determining the distributional properties, and exploring relationships among variables, the hypotheses were tested in this section using path analysis. Decisions regarding acceptance or rejection of hypotheses were based on the t-statistic (T-VALUE) and the significance level. The path coefficients and their significance results are presented in the table below.

**Table 5**

*Structural Model Assessment Results for Testing the Research Hypotheses*

Path / Hypothesis Statement	Path Coefficient (β)	Significance (t-value)	Test Result	
Organizational communication affects employee creativity.	0.642	22.528	Hypothesis supported	
Organizational communication affects symmetrical internal communication.	0.501	8.127	Hypothesis supported	
Symmetrical internal communication affects employee creativity.	0.537	10.942	Hypothesis supported	
Mediation Hypothesis Statement	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Result
Organizational communication affects employee creativity through the mediating role of symmetrical internal communication.	0.642	0.537 × 0.501 = 0.269	0.911	Hypothesis supported

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings of the present study provide robust empirical support for the proposed conceptual model linking organizational communication to employee creativity through the mediating role of symmetrical internal communication. The results demonstrate that organizational communication has a positive and statistically significant direct effect on

employee creativity. This finding reinforces the argument that communication processes within organizations are not merely instrumental mechanisms for information transmission but constitute a fundamental social infrastructure that shapes employees' cognitive, motivational, and behavioral orientations toward creative work. When employees perceive organizational communication as clear, timely, and supportive, they are more likely to access diverse information, exchange ideas, and reinterpret work-related challenges in novel ways, which collectively enhance creative performance [3, 4].

The positive association observed between organizational communication and employee creativity is consistent with prior empirical studies that emphasize the enabling role of communication in fostering innovative behavior. Research in both public and private sector contexts has shown that effective communication climates increase employees' creative self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and willingness to propose new ideas [5, 7]. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding aligns with social exchange theory, which posits that employees reciprocate favorable organizational practices—such as transparent and respectful communication—by engaging in discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization, including creativity and innovation [2]. In this sense, organizational communication can be interpreted as a form of socio-emotional resource that signals organizational support and trust, thereby motivating employees to invest cognitive and emotional effort in creative activities.

The results further indicate that organizational communication has a significant positive effect on symmetrical internal communication. This finding suggests that broader organizational communication practices shape not only the quantity of information exchanged but also the quality and symmetry of internal interactions. When organizations prioritize openness, feedback, and dialogue, internal communication is more likely to evolve toward a two-way symmetrical form characterized by mutual understanding and balanced influence between management and employees. This result is consistent with the theoretical framework of symmetrical communication, which emphasizes that communication structures are socially constructed and embedded within broader organizational communication systems [8, 9]. Empirical evidence from previous studies similarly suggests that strategic organizational communication practices foster participatory internal communication climates that legitimize employee voice and feedback [6, 7].

A central contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the significant effect of symmetrical internal communication on employee creativity. The findings reveal that symmetrical internal communication directly enhances employee creativity, underscoring the importance of dialogic and participatory communication processes in stimulating creative behavior. This result supports prior research indicating that when employees experience communication as reciprocal and inclusive, they are more likely to share ideas, challenge existing routines, and engage in experimentation without fear of negative repercussions [9, 10]. Symmetrical communication fosters psychological safety and trust, which are widely recognized as critical antecedents of creativity, particularly in complex and uncertain work environments [1].

The positive relationship between symmetrical internal communication and creativity can also be interpreted through motivational and psychological mechanisms. Two-way communication enhances employees' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness—core components of intrinsic motivation that are strongly linked to creative performance [10, 21]. Moreover, symmetrical communication enables employees to better understand organizational goals and constraints, allowing them to align their creative efforts with organizational needs rather than pursuing ideas in isolation. This alignment increases the likelihood that creative ideas are not only generated but also implemented, thereby translating individual creativity into organizational innovation [11, 12].

Most importantly, the mediation analysis confirms that symmetrical internal communication plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between organizational communication and employee creativity. The results show that organizational communication influences creativity both directly and indirectly through symmetrical internal communication, with the total effect being substantially stronger than the direct effect alone. This finding highlights that while organizational communication provides the structural and informational foundation, it is the symmetry and dialogic quality of internal communication that channels these resources into creative outcomes. In other words, organizational communication becomes most effective in fostering creativity when it is enacted through reciprocal, participatory, and trust-based internal communication processes [8, 9].

This mediating role is theoretically meaningful and aligns with contemporary perspectives that emphasize the importance of relational mechanisms in organizational behavior. Rather than assuming a linear and direct influence of communication on creativity, the findings suggest a more nuanced process in which communication quality shapes employees' psychological experiences and social interactions, which in turn drive creative behavior. Similar mediation patterns have been reported in studies examining the roles of organizational climate, intrinsic motivation, and psychological resources in linking leadership and communication practices to innovation [13-15]. The present study extends this line of research by explicitly positioning symmetrical internal communication as a key explanatory mechanism.

The findings are also consistent with emerging research on creativity in digitally mediated and contemporary work settings. As organizations increasingly rely on digital tools and hybrid work arrangements, the risk of communication becoming one-directional and control-oriented intensifies. Studies suggest that perceived usefulness of digital communication systems and gamified work designs enhance creativity only when employees feel that communication remains interactive and empowering [16, 17]. The present results imply that symmetrical internal communication can mitigate the potential downsides of technological mediation by preserving dialogue, feedback, and mutual influence, thereby sustaining creative engagement in digital work environments.

Furthermore, the results resonate with broader interdisciplinary research highlighting the contextual embeddedness of creativity. Studies examining cultural intelligence, workplace well-being, environmental design, and mental health all point to the importance of supportive social contexts for creative performance [18-20]. Organizational communication, particularly in its symmetrical form, can be viewed as an integrative mechanism that connects these diverse contextual factors by shaping how employees interpret their environment and relate to others. By facilitating dialogue and shared meaning-making, symmetrical internal communication may amplify the positive effects of supportive climates, leadership styles, and well-being initiatives on creativity.

From a sectoral perspective, the findings are especially relevant for public organizations, which often operate under hierarchical structures and formalized procedures that may constrain open communication. Prior research indicates that effective internal communication can partially offset bureaucratic rigidity by enhancing flexibility, innovation, and employee engagement [3, 5]. The present study provides empirical evidence that fostering symmetrical internal communication within public organizations can serve as a strategic lever for enhancing employee creativity without undermining accountability or formal control mechanisms. This insight contributes to the growing literature on public sector innovation by highlighting communication as a manageable and impactful organizational resource.

Overall, the discussion of findings underscores that employee creativity is a socially embedded phenomenon shaped by the interplay between organizational structures and relational processes. Organizational communication sets the stage, but symmetrical internal communication determines how that stage is used—whether as a platform for compliance and routine or as a space for dialogue, experimentation, and creativity. By empirically validating this mediation model, the study advances theoretical understanding of communication–creativity linkages and provides a more refined explanation of how organizational communication practices translate into creative outcomes.

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to draw definitive causal inferences among the study variables. Second, the reliance on self-reported questionnaire data may raise concerns related to common method variance and social desirability bias. Third, the study was conducted within public organizations in a single metropolitan context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or cultural settings.

Future research could build on the present findings by employing longitudinal or experimental designs to better capture the dynamic and causal relationships between organizational communication, symmetrical internal communication, and employee creativity. Comparative studies across public and private sectors, as well as cross-cultural investigations, would also help clarify the contextual boundary conditions of the proposed model. Additionally, future studies may incorporate other potential mediators or moderators, such as psychological safety, leadership styles, or digital communication intensity, to further enrich understanding of communication-driven creativity.

From a practical standpoint, organizations should invest in developing communication strategies that go beyond information dissemination and actively promote dialogue, feedback, and employee voice. Managers can foster symmetrical internal communication by creating formal and informal platforms for two-way interaction, encouraging participatory decision-making, and responding constructively to employee input. Training programs aimed at enhancing communicative leadership and listening skills can further strengthen these efforts and contribute to a more creative and innovative organizational climate.

### **Acknowledgments**

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who cooperated in carrying out this study.

### **Authors' Contributions**

All authors equally contributed to this study.

### **Declaration of Interest**

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

## Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

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