



UNIVERSIDADE
CATÓLICA
PORTUGUESA

EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNAL
COMMUNICATION DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE:
A CASE STUDY OF RESTRUCTURING AND LAYOFFS.

Dissertation submitted to Universidade Católica
Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in
Communication Sciences - Strategic Communication and
Leadership

By

Maria Ana Camilo Baranda

Faculty of Human Sciences

September 2025



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Abstract

While organizational restructuring and layoffs are popular tactics for cutting costs and increasing competitiveness, they can also jeopardize the trust, involvement, and wellbeing of employees (Cascio, 1993; Chhinzer, 2023; Ramlall, 2014). Good internal communication is essential to reducing these adverse effects, but little is known about how workers in Portugal, in particular, view communication during organizational transformation (Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024; Santos, 2021).

This study uses a qualitative interpretivist approach to examine how employees perceive internal communication amid restructuring and layoffs. Thematic analysis was used to examine semi-structured interviews with eight participants, which included communication experts from various industries and impacted employees (Braun & Clarke, 2006; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Fischer et al., 2014).

According to research and the results of this study, relational messaging and briefings lower stress and promote resilience, while open, honest, and empathic communication improves trust, engagement, and confidence (Hylén & Persson, 2024; Viana & Machado, 2024; Lamim, Rocha, & Duarte, 2023). For good long-term performance and organizational flexibility, communication must be in line with employees' emotional needs and the organization's values.

Key words: Internal communication, Organizational change, Employee well-being, Change management

Resumo

Embora a reorganização organizacional e as demissões sejam táticas populares para reduzir custos e aumentar a competitividade, estas também podem comprometer a confiança, o envolvimento e o bem-estar dos funcionários (Cascio, 1993; Chhinzer, 2023; Ramlall, 2014). Uma boa comunicação interna é essencial para reduzir estes efeitos adversos, mas pouco se sabe sobre como os trabalhadores em Portugal, em particular, encaram a comunicação durante a transformação organizacional (Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024; Santos, 2021).

Este estudo utiliza uma abordagem interpretativa e qualitativa para examinar como os colaboradores entendem a comunicação interna em momentos de reestruturação e demissões. A análise temática foi utilizada para examinar entrevistas semiestruturadas com oito participantes, que incluíram especialistas em comunicação de vários setores e funcionários afetados (Braun & Clarke, 2006; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Fischer et al., 2014).

De acordo com a literatura e as conclusões deste estudo, mensagens com que o colaborador se identifica e briefings reduzem o stress e promovem a resiliência, enquanto a comunicação aberta, honesta e empática melhora a confiança, o envolvimento e a segurança (Hylén & Persson, 2024; Viana & Machado, 2024; Lamim, Rocha, & Duarte, 2023). Para um bom desempenho a longo prazo e flexibilidade organizacional, a comunicação deve estar alinhada com as necessidades emocionais dos colaboradores e os valores da organização.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação interna, Mudança organizacional, Bem-estar dos colaboradores, Gestão de mudança

Introduction

Layoffs and organizational restructuring are widely used by organizations to reduce costs, remain competitive, or respond to changing market conditions (Cascio, 1993; Chhinzer, 2023). Internal communication plays an ever-changing function in an increasingly dynamic and distributed workforce. The organization's culture and long-term performance, as well as the morale, engagement, and general well-being of its employees, can all be significantly impacted by these actions, even if they are frequently required from a strategic standpoint (Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024; Ruck, 2019). Research on how employees view and feel corporate communication during these times is still limited despite the considerable significance. Since communication not only transmits information but also influences employees' emotional reactions, sensemaking, and trust in leadership, it is imperative to comprehend these views (Ruck, 2019; Chhinzer, 2023). By investigating how employees perceive internal communication during layoffs and restructurings, this study aims to close this gap and offer helpful suggestions for assisting employees during times of organizational transition.

The research question guiding this study is How do employees perceive and experience internal communication during organizational restructuring and layoffs? To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following objectives: first, to understand which characteristics employees associate with different internal communication strategies during layoffs and restructuring; second, to investigate how employees perceive communication characteristics, such as clarity, tone, and inclusivity, and how these impact confidence in leadership, morale and engagement; third, to explore how employees perceive and emotionally respond to internal communication during organizational change; and finally, to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving internal communication strategies during periods of restructuring and layoffs. Employees who have gone through organizational restructuring and layoffs within organizations are the subject of the study. Without examining organizational results or economic performance, it focusses on their opinions, feelings, and experiences with internal communication.

Adding to the significance of comprehending employee views, it is critical to look at the practical experiences of layoffs and restructuring in addition to their overall effects, especially in particular organizational and national settings.

Employees' perceptions of the changes, their feelings, and their trust in the leadership are all influenced by how an organization communicates during these times

(Lewis, 2011; Chmielecki, 2015). While ineffective communication can increase resistance, mistrust, and fear, effective communication can reduce negative reactions, sustain engagement, and promote resilience (Gilley, McMillan, & Gilley, 2009; Buchholz & Knorre, 2023).

It is crucial to investigate how employees truly view and experience communication during times of restructuring and layoffs, as these difficulties draw attention to a disconnect between organizational communication methods and their emotional requirements.

Employees often report of feeling nervous, disengaged, or misinformed, even though organizations typically employ communication strategies during organizational change situations (Husain, 2013; Kriz, Jolly, & Shoss, 2021). According to Palmer, Dunford, and Buchanan (2017) and Constantin & Baias (2015), traditional practices of internal communication usually place more emphasis on information exchange than on employees' emotional needs or opinions. Employee engagement and trust may be damaged because of their perception that communications are inadequate, inconsistent, or impersonal (Baptista, 2003; Pfeil, Setterberg, & O'Rourke IV, 2003). Thus, study examines how employees perceive and experience communication during organizational restructuring and layoffs to bridge this gap. During these difficult moments, the objective is to develop tactics that increase trust, clarity, and empathy (Abrantes et al., 2024; Davis, Robertson, & Reynolds, 2024).

Layoffs and organizational restructuring in Portugal are influenced by national labor laws and cultural norms around hierarchy, which affect how workers interpret and respond to company communications (Instituto da Segurança Social, 2020; Santos, 2021). According to Abrantes, Bakenhus, and Ferreira (2024) and Mateus (2022), Portuguese workers frequently read messages not just for informational substance but also for indications of leadership support and trust. Assessing how internal communication techniques meet employees' emotional and informational requirements during layoffs is particularly crucial because of these contextual aspects (Davis, Robertson, & Reynolds, 2024; Baptista, 2003). This study attempts to find communication strategies that improve trust, clarity, and participation during organizational change by concentrating on Portuguese reality (Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024; Davis, Robertson, & Reynolds, 2024).

The study's theoretical and practical ramifications are significant. The relationship between internal communication and employees' experiences during organizational

change, especially in the context of layoffs and restructuring, is better understood theoretically thanks to this contribution. The study broadens existing change management frameworks (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Kotter, 2014) by emphasizing the dual importance of informational clarity and attention to employees' emotional needs, as well as the role of communication as a critical component in maintaining trust, engagement, and organizational resilience. According to Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira (2024) and Davis, Robertson, & Reynolds (2024), the results offer organizations practical advice on how to create and execute internal communication strategies that help staff members through trying times by promoting trust, clarity, and a sense of inclusion. The study's contextualization within the Portuguese context also provides insights into how organizational norms, cultural expectations, and national labor laws influence communication practices and employee perceptions, making the findings especially applicable to businesses in comparable settings.

To guarantee a clear presentation of the research method and findings, the thesis is divided into five main sections. A review of the literature on internal communication, employee experiences, change management and layoffs and organizational restructuring, is presented in the first section. The research methodology, including the study design, participant selection, data collecting, and analytic processes, is covered in the second section. The study's results are presented in the third section, which also highlights the opinions, feelings, and experiences of employees on internal communication. The results are interpreted and linked to theoretical frameworks and practical implications in the fourth section, which also examines these findings in light of the body of current literature. The thesis is finally concluded in the fifth section, which also addresses study limitations, summarizes the major contributions, and makes suggestions for further research and practice in the area of organizational change communication.¹

¹ Several online tools, including QuillBot (<https://quillbot.com>), DeepL (<https://www.deepl.com>), Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com>), and ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com>), were used to assist with translation, and grammatical, spelling, and structural correction, while writing this dissertation.

Literature Review

1. Internal communication

This chapter establishes the groundwork for comprehending the complex function of internal communication in corporate environments. It goes into the definition and importance of internal communication, looks at the channels and technologies that are used to support it, and discusses the main ideas, difficulties, and best practices related to successful communication. By placing these components in the context of organizational change, specifically restructuring and layoffs, this chapter prepares the reader for a more thorough examination of how staff members view and assess communication during these changes.

A company's ability to communicate internally is essential for establishing a cohesive work atmosphere, connecting employees and leadership, and coordinating individual efforts with goals. It is critical for keeping staff informed, motivated, and aligned with the organization's strategic direction. Internal communication has an even more important role during times of organizational change, especially during layoffs and reorganization. Effective internal communication during such changes not only allows for the distribution of critical information, but it also helps to decrease uncertainty, reduce resistance to change, and retain trust within the workforce (Buchholz & Knorre, 2023; Snyder, 2021).

How information is communicated internally during these challenging circumstances can influence not just the success of the transition process, but also the morale, trust, and involvement of the workforce (Ruck, 2019; Kotter, 2014). Effective internal communication entails more than just the sharing of information. It is a strategic function that influences organizational culture², fosters trust, and motivates employees.

According to scholars such as Buchholz and Knorre (2023), internal communication goes beyond formal announcements to include meaningful discourse that ties employees to the organization's mission, values, and ambitions. This is especially important during organizational transitions, when uncertainty and resistance to change

² Organizational culture refers to the common values, attitudes, and practices that shape an organization's identity and impact behavior. Buchholz and Knorre (2023) assert that by fostering common values and expectations, internal communication expresses and upholds organizational culture. According to Meirinhos and Barreto (2018), fostering employee engagement and loyalty can be achieved by matching communication techniques with culture. According to Snyder (2021), communication is crucial to preserving unity and alignment in culturally diverse organizations, while Schultz et al. (2012) explore how culture influences organizational behavior.

are at their highest. According to McCown et al. (2023), technologies like employee input channels and feedback mechanisms ³are also crucial for fostering a collaborative workplace where staff members feel appreciated and acknowledged.

Internal communication has changed because of the growing complexity of contemporary organizations, the introduction of digital tools, and the diversity of the global workforce. Traditional top-down communication models have evolved into dynamic systems that include formal and informal channels, utilizing resources such as intranets, instant messaging platforms, and virtual collaborative spaces (Snyder, 2021). These advancements enable firms to create more staff participation and cooperation, especially during difficult transitions. However, they also necessitate a more nuanced approach to communication strategy, especially when dealing with delicate matters like layoffs or restructuring.

1.1. Internal Communication Definition

Internal communication is an expansive concept that includes both formal and informal contacts and is critical in ensuring that employees are aligned with the organization's goals and generate a shared sense of purpose (Buchholz and Knorre (2023). Moreover, Buchholz and Knorre (2023) discuss that internal communication promotes clarity and uniformity across hierarchical levels. How information is exchanged internally substantially impacts the organisation's culture, productivity, and overall operational efficiency.

Internal communication is vital to an organisation's successful operation. It offers a binder that unites the various components of the organisation, promoting cooperation and coordination. According to Cornelissen (2004), internal communication is more than just information exchange; it is also a key factor of organisational cohesion. Effective information dissemination ensures that employees understand their roles and

³ Feedback systems provide for two-way communication between employees and executives, establishing an environment of transparency, trust, and involvement. According to Ruck (2019), town hall meetings and employee surveys give workers a forum to voice their ideas. Feedback is crucial for improving communication tactics and resolving employee concerns, according to McCown et al. (2023). Regular feedback guarantees that staff members feel acknowledged and appreciated, improving alignment with company objectives, according to Gilley et al. (2009). Buchholz and Knorre (2023) emphasize the importance of feedback loops in fostering a more inclusive communication environment.

responsibilities, as well as how their contributions fit into the larger company goals. Internal communication encourages a shared commitment to the organisation's mission⁴. Furthermore, internal communication extends beyond the transmission of roles and responsibilities. According to Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter (2012), informal interactions that contribute to developing interpersonal connections within a company are also considered internal communication. Formal or informal interactions play a significant role in shaping an employee's comprehension of the company culture and values, affecting their engagement and commitment.

Kunsch (2003) builds on this idea, emphasizing how the interaction of formal and informal communication contributes to an open and collaborative organizational environment. Formal communication offers structure and conveys critical messages regarding corporate goals, policies, and strategies (Kunsch, 2003). Conversely, informal communication bridges the gaps created by formal processes by providing an environment for impromptu interactions that promote employee trust, creativity, and camaraderie (Kunsch, 2003). In addition to ensuring effective information distribution, these communication channels work together to influence the social and emotional climate of the workplace (Kunsch, 2003). According to Kunsch (2003), companies that intentionally strike a balance between formal and informal communication techniques are better able to establish a coherent, welcoming, and stimulating work environment.

As a result, internal communication has an impact on the emotional and social atmosphere in which workers work, as well as on the direction of organizational procedures. Internal communication has a significant impact on interpersonal dynamics and overall company culture, in addition to ensuring that tasks and objectives are communicated effectively. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), how information is disseminated inside an organization can influence employees' feelings of trust, inclusion, and organizational belonging. Employees feel appreciated and understood in a supportive atmosphere when there is timely, transparent, and sympathetic communication.⁵

⁴ Mission defines an organization's purpose and fundamental values, which act as a guidepost for synchronizing internal operations and external reputation. It captures the basic reason for the organization's existence, encouraging employee solidarity and a sense of shared purpose. According to Schultz et al. (2012), a well-defined mission strengthens organizational identity and coherence. Snyder (2021) emphasizes the importance of internal communication in bolstering this mission by linking individual endeavors to more comprehensive strategic objectives. According to Ana Tkalac Verčič et al. (2022), communication tactics that are in line with the mission also improve employee alignment and engagement.

⁵ Sympathetic communication in organizational contexts entails more than just exchanging information; it also necessitates creating an environment of empathy and human connection. Kunsch (2003) emphasizes

Furthermore, informal communication has a huge impact on the emotional atmosphere of an organizations. Employees can benefit from informal connections including social bonding, peer support, and casual talks when navigating the challenges of organizational life, especially during times of transition or uncertainty, according to Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter (2012). Even though formal communication may seem impersonal or remote, these exchanges offer a psychological safety net that helps employees feel connected. Employee morale and engagement are directly influenced by the emotional atmosphere created through successful internal communication. Snyder (2021) highlights that employees who believe their organization is emotionally supportive are more likely to show resilience during difficult circumstances, such as layoffs or restructuring. In contrast, failing to address the social and emotional parts of communication can result in disengagement, dissatisfaction, and a breakdown in collaboration. This emphasizes the dual importance of internal communication: not only as a means of improving operational efficiency, but also as a vital driver of a healthy corporate climate.

Moreover, the rise of distant and hybrid work models, driven by the global COVID-19 epidemic, has increased the complexity of internal and corporate communication. While the phrases "internal communication" and "corporate communication" are sometimes used interchangeably, they are two separate but related ideas. The sharing of information among teams, employees, and leadership within an organization is the special focus of internal communication. Its fundamental goal is to align employees with company goals, increase engagement, and create a coherent work environment (Buchholz & Knorre, 2023).

Corporate communication, on the other hand, covers a broader range of topics, addressing both internal and external audiences, including consumers, investors, and the general public (Cornelissen, 2004). The goals of corporate communication strategies are to manage the organization's public image, communicate its ideals, and establish and preserve its reputation. In order to guarantee consistency between internal operations and external messaging, corporate communication usually transcends organizational boundaries, even when internal communication is a component of it (Cornelissen, 2004). Internal and corporate communication overlap is particularly noticeable at times of

the importance of emotional awareness in strategic organizational communication in order to foster trust and enhance internal relationships. Employees will feel supported with this strategy, especially during times of crisis or organizational upheaval Kunsch (2003) .

organizational upheaval or crisis, like when hybrid work arrangements are adopted. Buchholz and Knorre (2023) suggest that in remote work environments, effective internal communication necessitates coordinated efforts to keep employees interested and informed despite physical distance. Internal communication has two purposes in this situation: it serves as a means of encouraging participation and providing emotional support, which helps remote workers feel like they belong. It also serves as a tool for knowledge dissemination. As a result, whereas corporate and internal communication both aim to achieve messaging coherence and consistency, internal communication is in a unique position to attend to the needs and concerns of employees, especially in times of change and uncertainty. This distinction is especially important in the current hybrid work period for firms trying to strike a compromise between external reputation management and internal cohesion (Cornelissen, 2004; Buchholz & Knorre, 2023).

Strategies that address employee needs, promote involvement, and stimulate dialogue have to be given top priority by organizations in addition to information dissemination. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), this dual focus guarantees that internal communication continues to be a key component of organizational performance, especially during periods of transition and uncertainty. Whether formal or informal, top-down or bottom-up, internal communication is critical in building organisational cohesion, fostering trust, and enhancing productivity. As organisations continue to evolve in response to technological advances and shifting workplace dynamics, the importance of effective internal communication will only increase, necessitating ongoing adaptation and innovation in communication strategies.

Furthermore, Kunsch (2003) emphasizes the strategic value of internal communication in promoting group cohesiveness and organizational flexibility. She emphasizes that good internal communication is more than just exchanging information; it is also about developing a shared understanding of corporate goals and fostering a feeling of collective identity (Kunsch, 2003). During times of transition or uncertainty, firms can better handle issues and promote employee alignment by incorporating transparent and empathetic communication tactics (Kunsch, 2003). Furthermore, she underlines the importance of internal communication in knowledge management since it allows the organization to leverage collective ideas, foster innovation, and support decision-making at all levels (Kunsch, 2003).

Finally, a key component of organizational effectiveness is internal communication, which influences how employees interact with their work and one

another as well as how information is exchanged. Effective internal communication promotes a feeling of purpose, trust, and ensures that individual efforts are aligned with company goals (Buchholz & Knorre, 2023). Internal communication improves individual and team performance by facilitating employees' understanding of their duties within the larger organizational environment through clarity and transparency⁶ (Cornelissen, 2004). Furthermore, internal communication is critical to establishing a positive organizational culture⁷. It ties employees with the organization's vision and values, instilling a sense of belonging and dedication. According to Snyder (2021), firms with strong internal communication systems are better prepared to face problems such as structural changes or crises because their employees feel informed, engaged, and supported. Contrarily, poor communication can undermine organizational cohesiveness and productivity by resulting in miscommunication, low morale, and disengagement (Dahlman & Heide, 2020).

Consequently, the following section will emphasize several of these strategies.

1.2. Operational aspect of internal communication

Internal communication within an organization is frequently separated between formal and informal channels. Emails, company memos, reports, and organisational announcements are all examples of formal communication. These channels are often top-down, meaning that management communicates with employees. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), formal communication is meant to provide information that is essential to the organizations' operations and guarantee that directives, aims, and objectives are understood and adhered to. Informal communication, on the other hand, is less regimented and more spontaneous. Conversations among colleagues, break-time talks, and informal social interactions are all examples of non-formal communication routes. Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter (2012) assert that informal communication is as important in shaping the work environment because it enables staff members to provide information that would be challenging to convey formally, including opinions on leadership choices or workplace culture. Through informal communication, interpersonal

⁶ Transparency refers to the open and honest sharing of information inside an organization, which ensures that employees are aware and in line with leadership decisions. Transparency promotes trust by giving accurate and timely information, according to Besley et al. (2021). Transparent leadership communication is crucial for reducing uncertainty during organizational transitions, according to Gilley et al. (2009). According to Cornelissen (2004), open and honest methods foster communication and lessen disinformation, which increases staff trust in the organization's direction.

⁷ The concept of organizational culture will be explored in greater detail in subsequent subchapters.

relationships can be strengthened, which is crucial for improving team cohesion and employee morale.

The relationship between formal and informal communication is crucial in an organization. While informal communication encourages employee involvement and a collaborative culture, formal communication establishes the official guidelines and frameworks necessary for organizational effectiveness. According to Constantin and Baias' (2015) research, both styles of communication are interconnected; organizations that use informal communication to support formal communication approaches typically have more engaged and productive employees.

The direction of information flow is an important distinction in internal communication. The majority of traditional organizations rely on top-down communication, where management or leadership communicates with staff members. This approach ensures that the leadership's vision is shared by all staff members and that strategic decisions and policies are effectively communicated. Top-down communication is commonly associated with formal channels such as executive memos, meetings, and reports (Cornelissen, 2004). While communication from the top down ensures that the entire organization is aware of the goals and strategies of the leadership, communication from the bottom up is as important. Employee perspectives, challenges, and development proposals are communicated to management through bottom-up communication, which gives leadership insight into employee viewpoints. Employees who receive bottom-up communication feel valued and acknowledged, which fosters an atmosphere of transparency and trust (Buchholz and Knorre, 2023).

Constantin and Baias (2015) emphasize that effective internal communication is not one-way. Employee engagement and inventiveness are often better at companies that promote two-way communication through suggestion campaigns, open-door policies, and feedback systems (Ruck, 2019). According to Constantin and Baias (2015), two-way communication is a continuous information exchange in which leadership and staff both participate and foster a discussion that advances understanding. Employees are encouraged to express their thoughts, problems, and suggestions, and leadership actively listens and responds to these contributions, promoting a participatory workplace culture (Buchholz & Knorre, 2023). Employee engagement and value are increased through this interactive approach, which also improves trust and transparency across organizational levels (Cornelissen, 2004). Employees can voice their opinions through feedback loops, such as frequent meetings or online surveys, for example, and leaders can modify policies

and plans in response to first-hand knowledge (Ruck, 2019; Snyder, 2021). By ensuring that decision-making processes are informed by a variety of viewpoints, these repeated exchanges foster creative solutions and better organizational alignment (Buchholz & Knorre, 2023). In addition to fostering an inclusive culture, instituting two-way communication methods increases employee motivation by making employees feel valued and essential to the company's success (Cornelissen, 2004; Snyder, 2021).

Nonetheless, one of the disadvantages of top-down communication is that it frequently results in information silos, in which employees at various levels of the organization are not fully aware or engaged. In order to tackle this issue, prosperous companies integrate both top-down and bottom-up communication strategies to facilitate the free exchange of information, leading to a more open and inclusive work environment (Ruck, 2019).

1.3 Concepts Associated with Internal Communication

Internal communication consists of more than just communicating information within a corporation. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), internal communication is a strategic function within organizations that foster openness, establishes trust, and aligns employees with the company's aims and values. By fostering a sense of unity and purpose, this alignment increases worker loyalty and productivity. As a result, these characteristics increase employee productivity and loyalty. Additionally, Dahlman and Heide (2020) stress that good internal communication fosters trust and transparency, facilitates employee involvement, and improves leadership communication—all of which are critical components that support the organization's overall success. Moreover, internal communication is a key component of organizational performance since it helps to shape company culture, support change management ⁸initiatives, and improve employee well-being (Snyder, 2021).

⁸ Change management refers to the methods and processes used by companies to successfully navigate and implement changes. Gilley and Maycunich (2000) define change management as requiring clear and consistent communication to lessen resistance. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), open communication is crucial for resolving employee grievances and encouraging participation throughout changes. According to Kerber & Buono (2004), interactive communication techniques foster trust, while Snyder (2021) concentrates on minimizing productivity disruptions by providing timely information.

The emotional dedication employees have to their company and its objectives is referred to as employee engagement⁹. According to McCown et al. (2023), good internal communication leads to employee engagement because it ensures employees are aware, aligned, and motivated to contribute meaningfully to the organization's success. Employees that are engaged are more productive, show more loyalty, and serve as brand advocates for their firm.

By creating a feeling of purpose and assisting staff in understanding how their specific responsibilities fit into the larger objectives of the company, internal communication promotes employee engagement, claim Buchholz and Knorre (2023). By making sure that workers are informed, included, and in line with the organization's objective, effective internal communication is essential to fostering engagement (McCown et al., 2023; Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024). By meeting both informational and emotional requirements, enhancing trust, and creating a feeling of community within the company, internal communication in the Portuguese setting also promotes employee engagement and well-being (Mateus, 2022; Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024). Employees are more likely to participate enthusiastically and take responsibility for their work when they are aware of how their jobs fit into the organization's larger goals. Internal communication, which extends beyond simple information exchange and is closely linked to fundamental organizational principles, has a significant impact on employee engagement, satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. Building trust, promoting involvement, and bringing employees into line with the organization's values all depend on internal communication, according to Buchholz and Knorre (2023). Portuguese studies that highlight the relational and emotional aspects of communication further support this claim (Mateus, 2022; Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024).

In addition to the role that internal communication plays in promoting alignment and engagement, it is crucial to take into account how organisational culture, leadership, and change management impact communication tactics and affect worker performance and well-being (Snyder, 2021; Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024).

⁹ Employee engagement is the emotional and intellectual commitment that employees have to their organization and its aims. Employee alignment with the organization's vision and values is facilitated by internal communication, according to McCown et al. (2023). Ruck (2019) emphasizes the importance of feedback loops and other forms of participative communication in helping staff members feel appreciated. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), effective communication is crucial for increasing employee engagement, while Snyder (2021) adds that motivated and devoted workers are more likely to be engaged.

Employee engagement, trust and transparency, leadership, organizational culture, change management, and employee well-being are all key ideas that influence how communication tactics promote loyalty, productivity, and unity in a organization. Effective communication is the cornerstone of establishing a cooperative, welcoming workplace where staff members feel educated and appreciated, according to Snyder (2021). Each topic will now be thoroughly investigated, emphasizing its significance and relevance to internal communication.

1.3.1 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the emotional commitment employees have to their organization and its aims. This dedication fuels motivation, productivity, and loyalty, making it an essential component of good internal communication. Internal communication is essential for promoting employee engagement because it keeps staff members informed, on the same page, and engaged to the organization's goals and vision (McCown et al., 2023). Employees that are actively involved in the organization's success are more likely to accept responsibility for their work and make proactive contributions. Employees who get clear and consistent communication are better able to comprehend the purpose of their roles within the larger organizational context, which increases their sense of engagement. Employees in companies with good internal communication are more likely to be engaged because they experience a sense of connection to the company's vision and values, according to Snyder (2021). Furthermore, two-way contact with feedback is required for deeper involvement. Ruck (2019) notes that when employees feel their voices are heard and acknowledged, they are more likely to remain dedicated and proactive. Employees feel empowered and valued in a participative workplace culture that fosters communication and teamwork.

1.3.2 Trust and Transparency

Trust and transparency are essential components of a strong company culture, and they are intimately related to the success of internal communication. Transparency is the open and honest sharing of information, whereas trust signifies employees' belief in their leaders and the organization's direction. Internal communication is the major means for

promoting both. According to Dahlman and Heide (2020), accurate and timely communication is essential for building trust. When workers believe that the information they are given is accurate and trustworthy, they are more likely to trust leadership and organizational decisions. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), a more active and effective workforce results from employees feeling informed and included, which boosts trust in leadership. Transparency builds trust by minimizing the spread of rumours and disinformation, which can impair morale and engagement. According to Snyder (2021), firms that promote transparency foster an open atmosphere in which people feel secure and confident in their positions. The transition and paragraph will appear as follows:

Further, transparency is not just a practice but a leadership-driven value that defines organizational culture and promotes openness across all levels. Transparency in communication fosters an open and trusting workplace environment. Besley et al. (2021) emphasize that transparency creates a culture of openness, enabling employees to feel more secure and engaged in their roles. They contend that reducing scepticism and fostering inclusivity are two benefits of publicly disclosing organizational decisions and the reasoning behind them. The relevance of leadership practices in promoting transparency is emphasized by Gilley et al. (2009), who point out that leaders who set an example of open communication foster an organizational culture that is more trusting and participatory. This strategy is especially important during times of transition or uncertainty, when trust is critical to preserving stability and morale. Knowing that their efforts are appreciated and in line with company objectives motivates workers to participate more actively as a result of this transparency.

1.3.3 Leadership Communication

Setting the tone for how information is disseminated and received throughout the company makes leadership communication essential to internal communication. Creating organizational narratives, restating values, and ensuring that staff members are in line with strategic goals are all crucial tasks performed by leaders. Employee trust, loyalty, and engagement are more likely to be sparked by leaders who communicate often and authentically, claims Ruck (2019). In addition to sharing knowledge, effective leadership communication also includes explaining the "why" behind organizational objectives. According to Dahlman and Heide (2020), effective leaders convey both the overall

objectives and the background information that supports them, allowing staff members to understand how their specific responsibilities affect the company's performance. Employee commitment and loyalty are further strengthened when executives communicate in an open and transparent manner, creating a feeling of connection between the workforce and the organization's mission.

1.3.4 Organizational Culture

Internal communication is critical for developing and reinforcing an organization's culture, the shared values, beliefs, and practices that drive behaviour. Communication is the essential vehicle for articulating and preserving this culture. Internal communication guarantees that workers comprehend and adhere to the organization's fundamental values in their day-to-day work, according to Buchholz and Knorre (2023). Aligning communication with the organizational culture promotes a sense of belonging and group identity. Frequent reminders of the organization's values, mission, and vision aid in the internalization of these concepts by staff members, who then incorporate them into their conduct and decision-making processes. A company that has a harmonious culture and communication is more cohesive, collaborative, and team-oriented, all of which are factors in long-term success. Expanding upon these ideas, culture has a strategic role in defining organizational identity and keeping talent in addition to influencing communication. According to Meirinhos and Barreto (2018), a strong organizational culture fosters a sense of belonging and purpose among employees, making it an important retention strategy. They underline that communication tactics that are consistent with cultural values serve to strengthen employees' emotional connection to the firm. According to Schultz et al. (2012), culture is built by shared narratives and symbols that align with employees' personal values, underscoring the importance of internal communication in identity-building. Organizations may create a coherent environment in which employees feel empowered and connected with the organization's goals by including these identity-building aspects into communication tactics.

1.3.5 Change Management¹⁰

Every organization will experience change at some point in its existence, and managing change effectively requires good internal communication. Change management refers to the tactics and activities that assist employees adjust to organizational changes such as mergers, restructuring, or policy modifications. Internal communication, according to Snyder (2021), is essential for lowering uncertainty since it makes sure staff members are aware of the reasons for changes, what to anticipate, and how their jobs may be impacted.

Kotter (2014) elaborates on the significance of dealing with uncertainty by emphasizing the fundamental requirement to create a feeling of urgency in any change endeavour. To drive successful change projects, Kotter (2014) highlights the importance of creating a feeling of urgency. According to Kotter (2014), establishing a feeling of urgency is a crucial first step in change management. Organizations can unite staff members around a common goal and encourage proactive engagement in the transition process by recognizing the need for change early on (Kotter, 2014). He highlights that urgency is about developing a profound comprehension of why change is necessary for the life and development of an organization, not about panic or pressure. In addition to keeping employees informed about impending changes, this sense of urgency guarantees that they are both academically and emotionally committed to the process. Employees are more inclined to support changes and help the company be flexible and responsive during times of transition when they are aware of the risks (Kotter, 2014).

Employee fear and reluctance to change are reduced when open and proactive communication is maintained. Buchholz and Knorre (2023) underline the need of keeping communication lines available throughout the transformation process to keep employees engaged and productivity disruptions to a minimum. Employees who feel informed and supported are more inclined to accept and adjust to changes. This allows the organizations to make transitions more seamless.

Furthermore, Kotter (2014) emphasizes how crucial leadership is to sustain momentum and encouraging alignment during change programs. The second paragraph should then be included. Furthermore, Kotter (2014) contends that leading organizations through transition requires strong leadership. For employees to

¹⁰ These concepts will be further addressed in greater detail in chapter two.

participate in and contribute to the change work, leaders must develop a compelling and unambiguous vision that describes the intended results (Kotter, 2014). Leaders may build momentum and reduce opposition by including employees in decision-making and continuously talking about the transition's progress and successes. To establish a culture of alignment and resilience, Kotter (2014) emphasizes that communication during transition must be constant, open, and concentrated on reaffirming the goal. Incorporating Kotter's paradigm into change management initiatives guarantees a unified strategy for accomplishing organizational goals while also lowering uncertainty.

Gilley and Maycunich (2000) expand on Kotter's focus on leadership by highlighting the importance of clarity, consistency, and empathy in communication during transition. Effective change management relies on deliberate internal communication to ensure a smooth transition. According to Gilley and Maycunich (2000), effective communication techniques during transition must emphasize clarity, consistency, and empathy in order to reduce resistance and retain employee involvement. They support the use of comprehensive communication plans that promote alignment and lessen uncertainty by outlining the justification, anticipated results, and execution procedures. According to Gilley et al. (2009), leaders that actively listen to and engage with staff members during times of change foster trust and encourage teams to adjust more easily. This highlights the importance of leadership in this process. Throughout times of change, this dual emphasis on strategy and leadership guarantees that staff members feel educated and supported.

1.3.6 Employee Well-Being

Internal communication also promotes a welcoming and inclusive work atmosphere, which benefits employee well-being. Employees are reassured by effective communication that their problems are acknowledged, their contributions are valued, and their well-being is prioritized. Organisations that employ compassionate and sympathetic communication approaches report improved levels of engagement, morale, and production (Ruck, 2019).

According to recent research, transparent, compassionate internal communication that reflects organisational values and shows that employee worries and contributions are truly valued is closely linked to employee well-being during organisational change. This

is in addition to the fact that communication itself has an impact (Abrantes, Bakenhus, & Ferreira, 2024; Davis, Robertson, & Reynolds, 2024). The notion that communication tactics need to be both educational and emotionally encouraging in order to maintain participation and morale amid difficult changes is further supported by this.

The relationship between corporate principles and leadership tactics is highlighted by the emergence of employee well-being as a pillar of internal communication. Leadership communication that emphasizes empathy and actively attends to employees' needs is essential to promoting employee well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Ryan and Deci (2001), being happy is more than just not feeling stressed; it also entails meeting basic psychological requirements like relatedness, competence, and autonomy. The workplace becomes a place for growth and fulfilment when managers create an atmosphere where staff members feel supported in these areas (Deci & Ryan, 2017). These fundamental psychological demands are met by leadership that promotes work-life balance and offers chances for meaningful participation, guaranteeing that workers flourish on both a personal and professional level (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Engagement, resilience, and general well-being have been demonstrated to be much improved by leadership communication that actively prioritizes staff support and exhibits an awareness of emotional and professional requirements (Viana & Machado, 2024; Lamim, Rocha, & Duarte, 2023). In addition to the psychological requirements framework previously addressed, leaders can enhance employees' sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy by incorporating empathy into daily interactions and organizational messaging (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 2017).

By bringing company ideals and employee expectations into alignment, Meirinhos and Barreto (2018) contend that strategic communication is essential to human resource retention. According to Meirinhos and Barreto (2018), their research shows that empathic and transparent communication techniques improve employees' feeling of community and match their personal and group objectives with those of the company. According to Ruck (2019), open and honest leadership communication fosters trust and a culture where staff members feel appreciated and free to express their concerns. In addition to ensuring alignment with organization's goals, this transparency promotes resilience amid organizational crises (Ruck, 2019).

By promoting two-way interaction, internal communication bridges the gap between leadership strategies and employee well-being (Ruck, 2019). Leaders that

actively listen to their staff and participate in genuine communication foster a culture of respect and compassion (Meirinhos & Barreto, 2018). Additionally, during times of restructuring, management briefings and empathic messaging can significantly lower employee stress and foster psychological safety, making sure that staff members feel supported while they adjust to change (Hylén & Persson, 2024). Trust is strengthened and a resilient corporate culture is fostered by integrating these practices with two-way communication channels, which closes the gap between employee experiences and leadership intents (Ruck, 2019; Meirinhos & Barreto, 2018). Employee dedication and devotion to the company are increased by such methods, which also increase employee happiness (Ruck, 2019). Employees respond positively to internal communication campaigns that highlight work-life balance or offer tools for personal growth, which promotes sustained engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2017).

Establishing a workplace that prioritizes well-being requires that internal communication be in line with company goals (Ruck, 2019). In order to foster an inclusive and effective work environment, Ruck (2019) highlights that communication must take into account the organization's basic principles while attending to employee demands. A culture of shared success and progress can be fostered by leaders who place a high priority on this alignment, which can help close the gap between employee goals and company objectives (Meirinhos & Barreto, 2018). Furthermore, such consistency improves the sustainability of communication strategies and reinforces the organization's commitment to employee well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Organizations that prioritize employee well-being can ensure a staff that is engaged, resilient, and aligned with the company's goals.

1.4 Channels and Tools of Internal Communication

The success of any organization relies heavily on effective internal communication, which is facilitated by the methods and tools used for this purpose. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), the selection of appropriate tools is crucial for fostering employee engagement, enhancing collaboration, and ensuring alignment within the organization. These tools simplify information sharing and enable employees to stay informed and connected. Snyder (2021) highlights that the evolution of internal communication has introduced innovative digital platforms alongside traditional methods, offering organizations diverse options for effective communication strategies.

This section will explore the primary instruments and channels for internal communication, ranging from conventional approaches such as face-to-face meetings to advanced digital tools like intranets and instant messaging systems.

As digital communication grows, innovative tools play an increasingly important role in redefining internal communication. The increasing significance of these technologies in organizational communication is further supported by recent market research. Digital tools are becoming increasingly important in internal communication strategies, according to recent studies. The global employee engagement software market was estimated to be worth USD 928.3 million in 2023, indicating that such solutions are increasingly being used to boost engagement and streamline procedures (Grand View Research, 2023). Because organizations depend on these technologies for efficient internal communication, this market is expected to expand between 2024 and 2030 (Grand View Research, 2023). Companies that integrate sophisticated platforms can improve cooperation, accessibility, and link communication activities with overall company goals (Grand View Research, 2023).

Internal communication networks refer to the formal and informal routes via which information flows within an organization. Assuring that the appropriate information reaches the appropriate individuals at the appropriate time, these networks are essential to operational success. Official information is distributed consistently throughout the company thanks to formal networks like emails, intranets, and newsletters, which offer organized and standardized channels for communication (Dahlman & Heide, 2020). However, informal networks are essential for building contacts, maintaining professional connections, and exchanging ideas that would not come up through official channels. They comprise impromptu conversations and exchanges that take place outside of formal processes (Snyder, 2021). Effective formal and informal communication networks are particularly important in large, decentralized companies where there is a greater chance of misunderstandings. According to Dahlman and Heide (2020), these networks make it easier for information to be shared quickly and accurately, which is crucial for preserving operational efficacy. Additionally, effective communication networks help organizations avoid the silos that frequently hinder cooperation and decision-making, which promotes increased flexibility and resilience when faced with obstacles or changes (Snyder, 2021). Additionally, by improving departmental and team communication, these networks lessen inefficiencies like goal misalignment and duplication of effort. As noted by Buchholz and Knorre (2023), strong internal

communication networks play a crucial role in increasing productivity by guaranteeing that staff members understand their roles and duties within the broader organization. Employee engagement, teamwork, and proactive contributions to corporate success are all enhanced when communication is streamlined.

Organisations use various methods to communicate with their employees, and choosing the proper channels for the intended audience and goal is crucial to the success of internal communication. Each instrument presents different benefits and difficulties depending on its use, frequency, and the organisation's needs. Email, intranets, in-person and virtual meetings, instant messaging, and newsletters are the primary means of corporate communication. Any organization's success is dependent on good internal communication, which may be achieved through a combination of offline and online methods. These technologies are used in different but complimentary ways to improve cooperation, encourage employee engagement, and bring people into line with the organization's overarching objectives. Face-to-face interactions, for example, continue to be essential for establishing trust and tackling complex issues. In-person contacts enable executives to build stronger bonds with staff members, uphold company principles, and promote open communication, which makes them especially useful in times of transition or emergency, claim Buchholz and Knorre (2023). Another offline tool that's crucial for preserving a feeling of community and informing staff members about updates and accomplishments within the company are internal newsletters. Dahlman and Heide (2020) emphasize the strategic significance of newsletters in acknowledging employee efforts and encouraging morale, provided they are well-designed and connected with company goals.

Digital tools such as email, intranets, virtual meetings, and instant messaging platforms have altered the internal communication landscape. AI integration has become a significant development in internal communication, building on the transformative power of digital tools and providing previously unheard-of levels of customization and engagement. Artificial intelligence (AI) integration is a growing trend that is altering internal communication tactics. AI makes it possible to distribute material in a hyper-personalized way, enabling organizations to modify messages to suit the communication preferences and styles of each individual (Powell Software, 2023). According to Powell Software (2023), personalization improves employee engagement by providing pertinent and meaningful information that resonates with a variety of audiences within the

company. In order to create more inclusive and productive communication spaces, AI-driven solutions are becoming essential as they develop further (Powell Software, 2023).

Email, although being one of the oldest digital platforms, remains a key component of corporate communication. It is a dependable channel for official communication, including policy updates or leadership announcements, because it is asynchronous and employees can receive updates whenever it is convenient for them (Dahlman & Heide, 2020). Communication tools are essential for forming organizational identity and strategic engagement in addition to their operational roles. According to Ana Tkalac Verčič et al. (2022), internal communication technologies can strengthen employer branding by aligning employees with the organization's mission and values, leading to a stronger sense of identity. Stronger emotional commitment is produced when employees perceive their efforts as essential to the success of the company. To improve employee happiness and loyalty, Meirinhos and Barreto (2018) underline the importance of including cultural and motivational factors into effective communication plans. These features raise communication technologies from simply operational utilities to strategic instruments for cultivating a devoted and aligned team. Conversely, intranets are particularly useful in large or decentralized organizations as they act as centralized hubs for information sharing. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), intranets improve openness and consistency by providing employees with access to current information and organizational resources. Regular maintenance and upgrades are essential for ensuring its efficiency and relevance. With the growth of remote and hybrid work, virtual solutions like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet have become even more crucial. Snyder (2021) emphasizes that virtual meetings are critical for preserving connectivity and communication among geographically separated teams. Especially in international settings, these technologies help organizations close communication gaps and promote real-time connection. Virtual settings, however, do not have the nonverbal clues that are present in in-person relationships, which can make it difficult to communicate during delicate conversations. These platforms are enhanced by instant messaging apps like Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp, which facilitate brief, casual conversations. Although they facilitate decision-making and expedite processes, they require distinct boundaries to guarantee that professional communication stays fruitful and distraction-free (Snyder, 2021).

Achieving corporate objectives requires the strategic integration of various tools into a coherent communication structure. Offline resources, like as face-to-face meetings

and newsletters, are useful for establishing trust, nurturing connections, and reinforcing cultural norms. Online communication tools such as email, intranets, and virtual platforms improve accessibility, uniformity, and timeliness. Buchholz and Knorre (2023) assert that companies can develop an integrated communication strategy that caters to the various needs of their workforce by using a balanced approach that makes use of both offline and online resources. Furthermore, Snyder (2021) observes that when used effectively, digital tools not only improve operational efficiency but also increase employee engagement by keeping them informed and engaged to company goals.

Finally, the channels and tools used for internal communication are varied, each serving different functions depending on the context and goals of the organisation. Organisations must carefully select the channels that best suit their workforce and objectives, from the more traditional email and in-person meetings to the digital tools of intranets, instant messaging platforms, and virtual meetings. Effective internal communication tools are critical for increasing employee engagement, improving cooperation, and keeping employees informed and aligned with the organization's strategic goals. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), the way information moves through an organization is directly impacted by the thoughtful selection and planned use of communication technologies. For example, when utilized correctly, intranets and emails improve communication accessibility and clarity, ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, Dahlman and Heide (2020) emphasize that communication tools should do more than just provide information; they should also help employees feel connected to one another, which will increase trust and develop alignment with company goals. Snyder (2021) emphasizes that digital platforms like virtual meeting software and instant messaging tools are essential for sustaining real-time communication and decision-making in the setting of distant and hybrid work paradigms. Organizations must balance the use of online and offline communication channels to handle the issues that these tools can bring about, such as information overload or a decrease in interpersonal interaction.

Additionally, according to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), this balance is essential for promoting a sense of belonging and supporting employee well-being, especially as companies move toward more flexible arrangements. Additionally, making the most of these tools requires an awareness of more general ideas related to internal communication, such as transparency, engagement, and trust. Dahlman and Heide (2020) contend that in order to strengthen the organization's mission and promote unity among

its employees, communication tools must be in line with its culture and values. Organizations may create strong internal communication systems that drive engagement and operational success by combining these tools with a solid understanding of strategic principles.

1.5 The Importance of Strategic Internal Communication

Strategic internal communication involves deliberately aligning communication methods with organizational goals. This practice transcends merely sharing information; it is a critical tool for cultivating transparency, building trust, enhancing productivity, and ensuring operational success. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), effective internal communication strategies are essential for creating alignment between organizational objectives and employee actions, fostering a shared sense of purpose. Similarly, Cornelissen (2004) highlights that strategic communication facilitates clarity and consistency, both of which are vital for organizational cohesion. This section explores how strategic internal communication fosters trust, identifies critical components for its effectiveness, relates to productivity, emphasizes the importance of internal communication networks, and outlines evaluation metrics.

Strategic internal communication is crucial for building trust inside an organization, especially during periods of uncertainty or upheaval. The foundational result of good communication is trust, which guarantees that workers stay inspired, involved, and in line with company objectives. Transparency, or the openness with which information is shared, is a key component of this trust. Snyder (2021) asserts that companies that place a high priority on openness in their communication tactics foster an atmosphere where workers feel safe and appreciated. In order to help employees comprehend the organization's direction and the elements impacting it, this openness entails not just communicating decisions but also providing an explanation of the logic behind them. Strategic communication connects employee perceptions with leadership intent, resulting in fewer misunderstandings and resistance to change. Using internal communication strategically is even more important during times of upheaval, like layoffs or reorganizations. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), even in situations where decisions are challenging, open and regular communication helps preserve employee confidence. Employees are more inclined to trust management and stick with the company when they feel educated and involved in the process. By guaranteeing

timeliness, consistency, and clarity, strategic communication actively strengthens confidence in addition to distributing information.

Strategic communication requires precise execution, as unclear messaging can lead to confusion and uncertainty (Buchholz and Knorre, 2023). According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), effective communication guarantees that staff members comprehend their duties and responsibilities completely and lowers the possibility of mistakes. Consistency is equally crucial because it reinforces the organization's ideals and goals. In contrast, inconsistent message can diminish trust and confidence in leadership (Snyder, 2021). Additionally, McCown et al. (2023) emphasizes the importance of timeliness, stating that providing information at the appropriate moment allows employees to successfully respond to corporate priorities. Finally, feedback mechanisms play an important part in strategic communication by making it a two-way process. These technologies let employees to express their problems, make comments, and ask questions, resulting in a dynamic and responsive communication environment. Feedback loops allow organizations to continuously improve their communication tactics, guaranteeing that they are in line with the needs of their workforce and the objectives of the company (Dahlman and Heide, 2020). When trust, clarity, consistency, timeliness, and feedback are all integrated, internal communication transforms from a tool to a strategic function that propels organizational success.

Companies must use a range of metrics to evaluate the success of internal communication plans and make sure they accomplish their desired outcomes. In order to pinpoint areas that require improvement and match communication methods with organizational goals, evaluation is essential. Employee surveys are one of the most often used techniques, as they provide direct insights into how employees view communication efforts. According to Chmielecki (2015), these surveys can evaluate how well employees comprehend the goals of the company, how well they feel they are informed about changes, and how satisfied they are with the communication procedures as a whole. Metrics like message coherence, relevance, and clarity are frequently included in these surveys, providing a thorough understanding of how well information is spreading. To capture complex employee viewpoints, qualitative feedback mechanisms like focus groups, suggestion boxes, and meetings are essential in addition to quantitative techniques.

In contrast to surveys, which frequently concentrate on numerical metrics, qualitative tools enable staff members to express their thoughts and experiences in greater

detail. According to McCown et al. (2023), such systems give CEOs a better grasp of the specific difficulties that employees encounter, allowing the firm to tailor its communication methods accordingly. For instance, frequent feedback sessions can improve engagement and trust by revealing if staff members believe their opinions are respected. Performance indicators are also used as indirect but accurate proxies for assessing internal communication. The effectiveness of internal communication techniques is frequently demonstrated by metrics like improved employee engagement, lower attrition rates, and increased productivity. On the other hand, decreases in these metrics could indicate that communication initiatives are not meeting the demands and expectations of staff members (Snyder, 2021). Ineffective communication, for example, may result in misaligned goals or disengagement, leading to increased attrition or project delays. Organizations that frequently analyse these indicators can spot patterns and alter their strategy to promote greater alignment and operational success. In result, evaluating internal communication efficacy necessitates an integrated approach that incorporates both indirect performance measurements and direct employee feedback. Organizations can use these tools to ensure their communication methods are effective, relevant, and adaptive to changing worker needs.

Strategic internal communication is essential for encouraging transparency, establishing trust, increasing productivity, and assuring operational success. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), internal communication must be clear and consistent in order for employees to understand their roles and responsibilities and to connect their actions with the strategic goals of the company. Timely communication is crucial, according to Snyder (2021), who also points out that providing information at the appropriate time keeps staff members aware and prepared to handle organizational responsibilities. Furthermore, Chmielecki (2015) emphasizes the importance of employee surveys in assessing communication tactics since they offer first-hand knowledge of how well staff members understand and interpret internal communications. In order to evaluate and improve communication techniques in response to changing organizational needs, McCown et al. (2023) also stress the use of performance indicators, such as productivity measurements and employee engagement scores.

Expanding on the fundamental elements of strategic internal communication that were previously covered, it is critical to investigate how these tactics not only help employees align with company objectives but also foster long-term engagement, trust, and wellbeing. Examining important findings from recent studies, such as Mateus (2022)

and Meirinhos and Barreto (2018), can help us comprehend the transformative potential of internal communication strategies designed to meet contemporary workplace issues. Fostering transparency, building trust, increasing productivity, and guaranteeing operational success all depend on strategic internal communication. By promoting long-term involvement and reaffirming shared values, Meirinhos and Barreto (2018) contend that internal communication is a vital instrument for bringing staff members into line with company goals. This alignment promotes a shared commitment to accomplishing objectives by assisting staff in understanding the organization's strategic vision (Meirinhos & Barreto, 2018). According to Mateus (2022), internal communication has a crucial role in promoting employee well-being by attending to their emotional and psychological needs, which are necessary for preserving cooperation and trust in work environments.

Another critical component of successful internal communication methods is timely communication. Meirinhos and Barreto (2018) emphasize that providing employees with relevant and correct information at the proper moment reduces misunderstanding, increases transparency, and allows employees to act decisively in accordance with organizational priorities. According to Meirinhos and Barreto (2018), for example, they emphasize how timely and organized internal updates lower the possibility of false information, enhancing employee and leadership trust. Furthermore, Mateus (2022) emphasizes the importance of timely communication in dynamic work situations, such as those that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when digital platforms became essential for sustaining operational continuity and interpersonal connectivity.

Frameworks for strategic internal communication also require feedback systems. According to Meirinhos and Barreto (2018), encouraging two-way communication allows employees to express problems, discuss ideas, and provide constructive feedback, resulting in a more inclusive environment where all voices are appreciated. In addition to improving employee happiness, this inclusivity enables organizations to adapt their communication tactics to the demands of their workforce (Meirinhos & Barreto, 2018). In addition, Mateus (2022) emphasizes that transparent and easily available feedback mechanisms strengthen staff involvement and trust, especially by showing that management is open to suggestions and flexible enough to adjust to changing circumstances.

Strategic communication not only fosters trust and engagement, but it also enhances employee wellness. Mateus (2022) contends that internal communication

should prioritize well-being, especially in remote and hybrid work environments where interpersonal connections may be strained by physical separation. In these situations, good communication makes sure that workers feel linked and supported, which promotes cooperation and resilience in spite of distance (Mateus, 2022). Furthermore, Meirinhos and Barreto (2018) underline that when employees perceive organizational communication to be sympathetic and inclusive, they are more likely to have a feeling of belonging and stay dedicated to their jobs.

Additionally, keeping top talent and enhancing overall organizational effectiveness depend heavily on strategic internal communication. According to Meirinhos and Barreto (2018), communication tactics that emphasize cultural alignment and shared values help to increase employee retention by developing emotional attachments to the firm. Similarly, Mateus (2022) observes that since traditional communication frameworks frequently ignore employees' psychological and emotional requirements, effective communication methods improve employee loyalty.

In summary, to handle the complexity of contemporary organizational dynamics, strategic internal communication incorporates feedback, clarity, consistency, and empathy. Organizations may promote trust, boost engagement, and preserve long-term productivity by putting employee well-being and inclusion first through transparent and responsive communication methods (Meirinhos & Barreto, 2018; Mateus, 2022). Internal communication is guaranteed to be a transformative practice that improves organizational culture and resilience in addition to being a tool for operational efficiency with this strategy.

1.6 Challenges in Internal Communication

Despite being crucial to an organization's success and unity, internal communication confronts many obstacles. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), hierarchical systems can produce bottlenecks that cause information flow to be delayed or distorted. Snyder (2021) notes that cultural discrepancies, such as differences in language and communication methods, present significant obstacles, particularly in global enterprises. Kerber and Buono (2004) discuss how resistance to change, particularly during organizational transitions, might impede effective communication. Emerging themes like as diversity, inclusivity, and artificial intelligence (AI) integration pose distinct challenges (Snyder, 2021; Buchholz and Knorre 2023) These difficulties can

lower employee morale, impair productivity, and ultimately jeopardize company success. This section investigates these hurdles, investigates their consequences, and develops solutions to overcome them.

1.6.1 Hierarchical Barriers

The hierarchical structure of an organization is one of the most major barriers to efficient internal communication. In highly hierarchical organizations, information frequently flows top-down, beginning with leadership and progressing through managerial levels. As important communications move through several levels of management, this strategy may cause bottlenecks that delay or skew them, as noted by Buchholz and Knorre (2023). Reduced morale and disengagement may result from lower-level employees feeling left out of decision-making processes. Furthermore, bottom-up communication, in which employees can share ideas, express problems, or provide feedback, is sometimes limited in hierarchical organizations. Snyder (2021) observes that a lack of upward communication prevents supervisors from receiving useful ideas from frontline workers and generates the impression among employees that their opinions are unimportant. To address this, deliberate efforts must be made to establish open feedback loops and enable staff to engage in meaningful interactions with management.

1.6.2 Cultural Barriers

Cultural differences present still another major obstacle, especially in international organizations. Variations in language, communication styles, and cultural conventions can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, particularly when messages are not adapted to listeners' different cultural backgrounds. According to Snyder (2021), companies need to modify their messaging to appeal to a variety of workforce groups, underscoring the significance of cultural sensitivity in internal communication. Employees in various departments or locations may understand company messaging differently when cultural variations are not taken into consideration, fragmenting communication. Regardless of background, it is crucial to develop culturally inclusive communication practices to make sure that every employee feels appreciated and understood. The need of developing communication methods that take into account the

various linguistic and cultural requirements of employees is emphasized by Buchholz and Knorre (2023). Furthermore, Snyder (2021) highlights that cross-cultural training programs, language assistance, and customized messaging are useful strategies for getting beyond these obstacles and creating a more welcoming work atmosphere. These strategies ensure that communication is understood by every worker, minimizing miscommunications and fostering corporate unity.

Cultural sensitivity is critical for addressing communication barriers in diverse and multinational organizations. Differences in language, communication styles, and cultural norms can lead to misunderstandings and fragmented communication. To bridge these gaps, organizations must develop culturally inclusive communication strategies tailored to the diverse backgrounds of their workforce. Buchholz and Knorre (2023) emphasize the importance of localized messaging, which involves adapting communication to reflect regional or cultural nuances. Providing language support and fostering cross-cultural training programs are also effective ways to ensure that all employees feel understood and valued. By prioritizing cultural sensitivity, organizations can create a more unified communication environment that reduces misinterpretations and builds stronger relationships across teams and regions.

1.6.3 Resistance to Change

During times of organizational transition, including reorganizations, mergers, or the adoption of new technologies, resistance to change is a frequent problem. When changes challenge established roles, habits, or procedures, employees frequently oppose them, especially if they feel misinformed or left out of decision-making. Ineffective communication, according to Kerber and Buono (2004), makes resistance worse because workers may think that changes are poorly handled or unwarranted. Organizations must put an emphasis on open, honest communication that answers employee concerns, describes anticipated results, and explains the reasoning behind changes in order to reduce resistance. Buchholz and Knorre (2023) underline the significance of keeping communication channels open throughout transitions so that employees feel informed, included, and supported. In addition to fostering a sense of responsibility and alignment with the organization's changing goals, this method lessens ambiguity.

1.6.4 Emerging Challenges: Diversity, Inclusion, and Artificial Intelligence

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) have become key corporate priorities, but they also pose unique communication issues. Diverse experiences, needs, and viewpoints among employees must be taken into account for effective internal communication. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), inclusive communication methods are vital for ensuring that all employees feel heard, respected, and valued. Failure to prioritize inclusion can alienate specific employee groups, resulting in disengagement and mistrust of leadership (Ruck, 2019). Likewise, there are advantages and disadvantages of incorporating AI tools into internal communication. AI-powered solutions, including as chatbots and automated responses, can help to expedite communication and deliver prompt assistance to employees. Snyder (2021) cautions that over-reliance on AI might result in impersonal interactions and communication breakdowns, especially when dealing with complex or sensitive subjects. Trust may also be weakened if staff members are opaque about how AI systems impact their jobs. Organizations must strike a balance between strategically deploying AI and retaining open, human-centered communication processes.

Digital overload¹¹, a growing problem in corporate communication, is the result of employees being overloaded with extraneous or excessive information via digital platforms. Although collaborative software, intranets, and instant messaging facilitate communication, excessive usage of these tools can result in disengagement and information fatigue. In order to keep employees from feeling overburdened, Dahlman and Heide (2020) caution that companies need to carefully control the amount and relevancy of digital communication.

Digital overload, a problem made worse by excessive use of contemporary communication systems, is a critical issue in the field of internal communication. Digital overload, a growing problem in corporate communication, is the result of employees being overloaded with extraneous or excessive information via digital platforms (Snyder, 2021). Information overload can result from using these tools excessively, making it difficult for staff members to sort and prioritize the large volume of messages and updates

¹¹ Digital overload happens when employees receive an overload with excessive or irrelevant digital communication, resulting in diminished productivity and engagement. According to Ana Tkalac Verčič et al. (2022), there are dangers associated with excessive use of digital platforms like intranets and instant messaging. According to Dahlman and Heide (2020), if communication is not strategically handled, information fatigue may develop. Snyder (2021) emphasizes how crucial it is to simplify digital communication in order to prioritize critical updates and keep staff members' attention.

they get every day. Snyder (2021) emphasizes that firms must create a balance to ensure that communication is effective without overwhelming personnel. To combat this, many firms are implementing streamlined communication strategies that prioritize clarity and relevance, relying on feedback channels to continually improve their approach.

Strategies for reducing digital overload combine technology solutions and organizational policies. According to Besley et al. (2021), communication specialists play a crucial role in selecting pertinent information so as not to overburden staff members. Information fatigue can be avoided by setting clear communication goals and removing unnecessary communications. Furthermore, in order to increase clarity and relevance, Chmielecki (2015) supports organized communication regulations that restrict the frequency of digital messages while promoting succinct, focused content. According to Constantin and Baias (2015), feedback channels are crucial because they allow staff members to voice concerns about digital fatigue and help create more efficient communication plans. According to Kunsch (2003), leadership can also cultivate a culture of deliberate communication in which tools are utilized appropriately to improve teamwork without causing distractions. Organizations can maintain a productive balance by using these principles, ensuring that digital tools promote engagement and efficiency rather than hinder them.

1.6.5 Impacts of Ineffective Communication

The success of an organization as a whole can be significantly impacted by inefficient internal communication. Employee morale suffers as a result of miscommunication, which frequently results in misconceptions, perplexity, and annoyance. According to Snyder (2021), employees who believe they have been deceived or excluded from critical talks are more inclined to disengage, leading in lower productivity and more attrition. These problems are further made worse by communication silos, in which departments or teams function autonomously without regard for corporate objectives. According to Ruck (2019), silos prevent collaboration, generate inefficiencies, and result in a fractured corporate culture. There is a greater chance of mistakes and lost opportunities when employees operate in silos because they may find it difficult to understand how their contributions fit into the overall organizational strategy. Employee anxiety and mistrust are exacerbated by inadequate

communication during times of crisis or change, such as layoffs or restructuring, which destabilizes the company (Kerber & Buono, 2004).

1.7 Strategies for Overcoming Communication Barriers

Organizations can use a variety of techniques to address these difficulties and improve internal communication. Programs for training and development are essential for improving employees' communication abilities, especially when it comes to utilizing new technology, handling opposition to change, and negotiating cultural differences. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), training makes the workplace more inclusive and productive by giving workers at all levels the skills they need to interact effectively. Setting up feedback loops is another useful method. According to Ruck (2019), methods such as employee surveys, suggestion boxes, and open forums facilitate two-way communication by providing a platform for employees to voice problems and provide feedback. Through consistent feedback collection and action, organizations may foster a more inclusive and responsive communication environment. Another important factor in removing obstacles to communication is utilizing technology. Across departments and geographical locations, connectivity can be improved with AI-driven technologies, instant messaging platforms, and collaborative software. These technologies are especially useful in resolving communication silos, as Snyder (2021) notes, guaranteeing that staff members stay in line with company goals. Organizations must, however, guarantee that these technologies are used properly and that personnel receive necessary training in order to maximize their usefulness.

Furthermore, addressing issues related to diversity requires encouraging inclusive communication methods. In order to accommodate various employee groups, maintain accessibility, and promote candid discussions on inclusion and equity, organizations should modify their communication techniques (Buchholz & Knorre, 2023). Organizations that prioritize diversity can build a more unified and engaged staff.

Organizational performance depends on effective internal communication, but this is frequently hampered by obstacles like hierarchy, cultural differences, opposition to change, and new issues like diversity and inclusion and AI integration. Especially during periods of transition or crisis, these obstacles may result in low morale, decreased production, and organizational fragmentation. Hierarchical systems can impede communication, according to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), whereas Snyder (2021)

emphasizes the value of cultural sensitivity in meeting the demands of a varied workforce. Furthermore, Ruck (2019) contends that promoting inclusion and utilizing suitable tools can assist alleviate these issues. Dahlman and Heide (2020) emphasize the importance of technology and feedback loops in removing barriers to communication. In order to ensure that internal communication continues to be a strategic advantage, firms may cultivate a more engaged and productive workforce by proactively tackling these hurdles.

1.8 Best Practices for Effective Internal Communication

Implementing successful internal communication techniques is essential for cultivating an engaged and productive team as noted by Buchholz and Knorre (2023). Employee engagement and productivity are increased when employees are in line with the organization's beliefs and goals, which is made possible via internal communication, claim Buchholz and Knorre (2023). However, in dynamic and diverse organizational environments, communication problems are unavoidable, as Snyder (2021) notes. To solve these problems, companies must implement best practices that ensure their communication plans are not only effective, but also flexible to their specific needs and features.

Internal communication's effectiveness depends on its capacity to guarantee operational efficiency, promote engagement, and establish alignment inside organizations. Internal communication, according to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), is essential for establishing trust, increasing employee engagement, and preserving organizational cohesiveness. For internal communication techniques to continue to be effective, Snyder (2021) highlights that they must take into account particular organizational traits including size, culture, and workforce diversity. Best practices in internal communication offer a disciplined framework for tackling these difficulties and accomplishing organizational goals. Building on previously stated ideas, this part examines important tactics and their real-world implementations, offering specific instances to highlight their applicability.

1.8.1 Clarity and Consistency: Foundational Practices

Effective internal communication begins with clear and consistent messaging. Clarity ensures that employees understand their responsibilities, corporate goals, and

crucial updates. For example, effective communication regarding the goals and consequences of restructuring during organizational change helps to lessen resistance and misunderstanding. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), clarity reduces the possibility of misunderstandings and misalignments, especially in situations with significant stakes, such as crisis management or restructuring. Consistency, on the other hand, supports the organization's beliefs and goals while increasing trust in the leadership. Consistent communication between departments and at all levels lowers ambiguity and boosts staff trust in the organization's direction, according to Snyder (2021). For instance, reiterating organizational principles and strategic aims in regular internal newsletters guarantees that staff members stay in line with the leadership's vision even during times of transition.

1.8.2 Two-Way Communication and Feedback Mechanisms

Organizations benefit from two-way communication because it promotes transparency, openness, and trust. Ruck (2019) highlights the necessity of setting up avenues for employees to express their issues and provide feedback, such as town hall meetings, surveys, and suggestion boxes. For example, regular general meetings enable managers to communicate changes while also encouraging employees to give views, resulting in a participatory work culture. Feedback loops are also useful for discovering communication gaps and improving strategy. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), integrating employee input fosters a trusting environment and shows that their perspectives are appreciated. For example, a firm could conduct anonymous staff surveys to see whether recent communication techniques were effective and then use the findings to make necessary changes.

1.8.3 Leveraging Digital Tools

Through the ability to collaborate and share resources in real time across departments, time zones, and geographical locations, digital tools have completely transformed internal communication. Microsoft Teams is one example of tool that promote effective teamwork, whereas intranet platforms act as centralized repositories for organizational resources. In large, dispersed companies, digital platforms are crucial

for ensuring smooth communication, as noted by Buchholz and Knorre (2023). An intranet may give staff members vital resources like corporate regulations and training materials, while Microsoft Teams can simplify daily conversations.

Digital tool integration into internal communication systems is a response to the changing needs of dynamic communication practices and globally dispersed workforces. Over the past few decades, organizational structural changes and technological improvements have significantly changed internal communication. The emergence of networked and decentralized organizations has made it necessary to create new communication tactics suited to dynamic and complicated work settings. The demands of today's globally distributed workforces cannot be satisfied by traditional communication techniques like in-person meetings and paper-based notes, notwithstanding their continued value. In order to take use of technology and promote cooperation across heterogeneous teams, companies must modify their internal communication procedures, as this evolution illustrates (Buchholz & Knorre, 2023; Snyder, 2021). Internal communication now requires the use of digital tools like intranets, instant messaging services, and collaborative software. According to Snyder (2021), these solutions enable real-time communication across numerous geographic locations and time zones, removing hurdles that historically hampered multinational enterprises. For instance, regardless of their physical location, employees may collaborate easily using platforms like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and WhatsApp. In contrast, intranets act as centralized servers for company data, guaranteeing that staff members can access vital materials and updates at any time (Buchholz & Knorre, 2023).

Nonetheless, organizations need to weigh the benefits of digital technologies against the possibility of digital overload. Dahlman and Heide (2020) caution that an over-reliance on digital communication might cause employees to get overloaded with messages and updates, which can result in fatigue and decreased productivity. To prevent overwhelming employees, firms should prioritize key communications and optimize communication methods.

1.8.4 Personalization and Cultural Sensitivity

Internal communication is more relevant and effective when it is tailored to the needs of employees. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), message impact is

enhanced through segmentation—customizing communication based on employee roles, departments, or geographies. For instance, frontline staff can benefit from brief updates on operational changes, while senior managers might need in-depth reports on strategic choices.

Cultural sensitivity is another important factor, especially in global firms. According to Snyder (2021), communication techniques must take into account language difficulties, cultural norms, and time zone differences in order to be inclusive. For example, translating internal communications into different languages and scheduling meetings to accommodate foreign teams displays an organization's dedication to inclusivity.

1.8.5 Alignment with Organizational Culture

The culture and values of an organization must be reflected and reinforced through internal communication. Communication tactics that reflect cultural values improve employee engagement and promote their sense of belonging to the company, according to Ruck (2019). A corporation that prioritizes innovation, for example, may use brainstorming sessions and collaboration platforms to foster cross-functional idea sharing.

Digital tools have also contributed to cultural shifts in communication by blurring the boundaries between formal and informal interactions, fostering a more cohesive and integrated work environment.

Transparency and inclusion are also values that organizations should apply to their communication strategies. A feeling of common purpose is created through general meetings where leadership candidly discusses organization's performance and strategic updates, building belonging and trust.

1.8.6 Flexibility for Remote and Hybrid Workforces

Internal communication techniques have changed due to the increase of remote and hybrid work, which calls for more adaptability and inclusivity. While intranets offer centralized resource access, digital platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp allow remote workers to stay in touch with their teams. Snyder (2021)

emphasizes that virtual general and regular video meetings are especially helpful in maintaining alignment and participation among distant teams. To ensure remote workers feel as involved as those on-site, companies can, for example, conduct virtual general meetings every two weeks to address employee problems and provide updates. According to Buchholz and Knorre (2023), intranet systems can also act as a central repository for resources, guaranteeing that workers can access information from anywhere.

1.8.7 Integrating Best Practices with Organizational Characteristics

Rather than employing a uniform strategy, internal communication tactics must consider the distinct characteristics of every organization. Buchholz and Knorre (2023) assert that the channels and approaches required are influenced by the size and structure of the organization. To achieve alignment, larger organizations usually use multi-layered strategies like departmental newsletters and cross-functional meetings, but smaller organizations may achieve alignment through more informal and direct leadership contacts. Sectoral context influences communication priorities. While creative sectors encourage openness, collaboration, and flexible communication, regulated organizations stress official and well-documented channels to ensure compliance (Buchholz and Knorre, 2023).

Internal communication becomes more pertinent and successful when techniques are adapted to an organization's operational needs and culture, according to Ruck (2019). Rather than approaching techniques like feedback loops, personalization, clarity, and consistency as isolated actions, it is vital to include them into the communication culture. Employee engagement and trust are strengthened when communication is consistent with corporate principles. It also aids employees in understanding change. Additionally, as Ruck (2019) notes, problems like cultural diversity and distant labor require deliberate adaption in order to maintain inclusivity and relevance. When properly aligned with organisational characteristics, internal communication may be a powerful performance and resilience accelerator. Ultimately, optimal practices are dependent rather than universal.

2. Organizational Change

2.1 Understanding Organizational Change

Organizational change is the process by which companies adjust their structures, strategies, cultures, or operations in response to changing internal and external demands (Kotter, 2014). In an increasingly dynamic and unpredictable company environment, it is a key mechanism for guaranteeing long-term sustainability, encouraging innovation, and improving operational efficiency (Silva & Correia, 2022). To stay competitive, organizations need to constantly adjust to things like changing consumer expectations, regulatory frameworks, technology changes, and global economic fluctuations (Palmer et al., 2017). Organizations run the risk of inefficiency, stagnation, and eventual obsolescence without this flexibility (March, 1981).

Internally, the demand for organizational change is often driven by efforts at restructuring, digital transformation, and leadership changes (Ford et al., 2008). Employees must realign with changing organizational objectives as a result of new strategic priorities, cultural changes, and decision-making procedures brought about by leadership transitions (Kotter, 2014). Similar to this, the goal of organizational restructuring is to increase efficiency and streamline processes, whether through internal process reengineering, mergers, or acquisitions (Silva & Correia, 2022). As automation, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence (AI) reshape employee roles, job structures, and collaboration models, the growing dependence on digital technology speeds up change even more (Baptista et al., 2020). Organizations that don't adopt digital transformation run the danger of losing their market relevance and experiencing operational inefficiencies (Silva & Correia, 2022).

Organizations have to react to external factors such as consumer behavior changes, market competition, and disruptive technologies that are constantly changing industries (Palmer et al., 2017). Organizational processes have changed due to the quick adoption of automation, data analytics, and AI-driven decision-making; this calls for strategic agility and innovation (Baptista et al., 2020). Organizations also have to deal with regulatory pressures that need constant adaptation to ethical and legal norms, such as data privacy regulations, environmental sustainability plans, and compliance requirements (Silva & Correia, 2022). A sense of urgency that propels successful change projects can

be generated by those that proactively match their operations with these external demands (Kotter, 2014).

The scope and scale of organizational change can vary, ranging from small-scale modifications aimed for ongoing enhancement to major shifts that radically alter the organization's strategy, structure, and culture (Palmer et al., 2017). According to Ford et al. (2008), transformational changes frequently necessitate complete leadership strategies, cultural shifts, and organized change management frameworks, whereas incremental improvements improve efficiency. Because resistance, cultural dynamics, and leadership effectiveness have a substantial impact on outcomes, scholars stress that an organization's ability to successfully negotiate both the technical and human aspects of change is critical to the success of any change program (Silva & Correia, 2022).

Organizations can use structured change management models, which offer frameworks for organizing, carrying out, and maintaining transformation, to manage change successfully (Kotter, 2014; Palmer et al., 2017). The following section delves into different types of organizational change, such as strategic, structural, people-oriented, and process-driven transformations, as well as established models like Kotter's 8-Step Model (Kotter, 1996; Kotter, 2014), Lewin's Three-Step Model (Lewin, 2011), and Bridges' Transition Model (Bridges, 2009). These frameworks, which address both the technological and human aspects of change, provide organized techniques to help firms navigate difficult transitions (Silva & Correia, 2022; Ford et al., 2008). Organizations can create all-encompassing strategies to promote innovation, increase resilience, and guarantee long-term success in a changing organization environment by combining these techniques (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024; Leitner, 2023).

2.1.1 Types of Organizational Change

In order to help organizations stay flexible and competitive in ever-changing contexts, organizational change can take many different forms, such as adjustments to people, processes, structures, and strategy (Gilley, McMillan, & Gilley, 2009; Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017). These categories emphasize how change initiatives frequently impact human dynamics as well as operational systems, highlighting the significance of coordinating structural changes with efficient leadership and communication techniques (Kotter, 2014; Baptista, 2003). As organizations react to

internal and external demands to preserve resilience and sustainability, these types of change frequently overlap rather than existing in isolation (Silva & Correia, 2022). According to Kotter (2014), strategic change is the term used to describe significant modifications to an organization's vision, mission, or overarching goals that are frequently brought about by changes in the market, pressure from competitors, or technological disruptions. To preserve a competitive edge, long-term objectives must be realigned. To match with changing consumer expectations, organizations may shift from product-centric to customer-centric strategies, enter new markets, or engage in sustainable organization models (Silva & Correia, 2022).

Furthermore, while new managerial philosophies and decision-making techniques are needed to steer the company through a shifting environment, strategic change frequently calls for leadership transformation (Palmer et al., 2017). To successfully implement strategic change, a organization must have a well-defined strategy to transformation management. While a lack of involvement or inadequate preparation causes many change initiatives to fail, organized change models offer a way to match corporate objectives, employees, and leadership (Kotter, 2014). Kotter's 8-Step Model, which provides a methodical strategy to maintaining momentum and overcoming resistance, is one of the most commonly used frameworks for managing strategic transformations (Palmer et al., 2017). Kotter's 8-Step Model is still one of the most popular frameworks for managing organizational change, having been first presented in *Leading Change* (Kotter, 1996). Eight essential elements are outlined in the model, which offers a methodical and sequential approach: creating urgency, assembling a steering coalition, formulating a vision, sharing the vision, motivating action, producing short-term victories, consolidating gains, and establishing cultural changes (Kotter, 1996). The focus on employee participation and the model's organized approach to maintaining momentum throughout change projects are the main reasons it is still widely employed, according to Palmer et al. (2017).

By presenting the *Accelerate* framework, Kotter (2014) built upon his initial model in recognition of the need for more agility in contemporary organizations. This new approach recognizes that, while traditional hierarchical structures are good at preserving operating efficiency, they can impede rapid adaptability to external changes. Kotter (2014) suggested a dual operating system as a solution to this problem, in which organizations keep their official management structures while including a network of change agents that spur creativity and strategic adaptability.

According to Kotter (2014), the *Accelerate* framework departs from a rigidly linear change process in favor of a more adaptable, dynamic system where change is not merely an endeavor but rather a continual capability ingrained in the company. Organizations that combine hierarchical leadership with a dynamic, network-driven model can improve their ability to predict and respond to change, ensuring both stability and adaptability in a fast-paced organization environment (Palmer et al., 2017).

To increase productivity and scalability, structural transformation entails making adjustments to an organization's reporting structures, organizational hierarchy, or organization procedures (Baptista et al., 2020). Mergers, acquisitions, decentralization initiatives, or the implementation of new governance models can all lead to this kind of shift (Palmer et al., 2017). Structural changes have grown more common as organizations incorporate digital technology, especially in response to the demand for cross-functional and agile teams (Silva & Correia, 2022). For example, as new workflows, automated procedures, and redesigned worker roles appear, companies that use enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems frequently experience structural transformation.

Additionally, by decreasing reliance on conventional office-based hierarchies, remote and hybrid work arrangements—which have been driven by digitalization and global concerns like the COVID-19 pandemic—have further changed organizational structures (Baptista et al., 2020). According to Palmer et al. (2017), restructuring initiatives necessitate a well-managed transition process to guarantee efficiency advantages without interfering with organization operations or employee engagement. Such changes can be difficult to implement because employees frequently find it difficult to adapt to new workflows, governance models, and reporting structures (Ford et al., 2008). Organizations can use Lewin's Three-Step Model, which offers an organized procedure for enacting and strengthening change, to help ensure seamless structural transitions (Lewin, 2011). Kurt Lewin's Three-Step Model offers a fundamental framework for comprehending and controlling organizational structural change. Three separate steps make up this model: unfreeze, change, and refreeze (Lewin, 2011). The unfreeze phase highlights the importance of disrupting established norms, challenging organizational inertia, and creating a sense of urgency for change (Kotter, 2014). In order to prepare staff for upcoming changes, firms must actively eliminate any antiquated procedures, frameworks, or hierarchies that impede growth (Palmer et al., 2017).

New procedures, organizational structures, or operational plans are implemented during the change phase; a seamless transition depends on effective communication and

employee involvement (Ford et al., 2008). At this point, leadership is essential for directing, reducing opposition, and highlighting the advantages of the change (Silva & Correia, 2022). Lastly, institutionalizing the change, integrating new processes into the company culture, and guaranteeing long-term sustainability are the main objectives of the refreeze phase (Palmer et al., 2017). Without this reward, employees may revert to old habits, compromising the structural transformation's effectiveness (Lewin, 2011).

When organizations need to restructure processes and hierarchies due to structural change scenarios like mergers, acquisitions, or digital transformations, Lewin's model is still very applicable (Baptista et al., 2020). According to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024), organizations can more securely manage intricate structural changes and guarantee that new organizational structures are long-lasting and productive by adhering to this methodical strategy.

Changes in employee behaviors, skill sets, and organizational culture brought about by structural or strategic changes are referred to as people-oriented change (Kotter, 2014; Silva & Correia, 2022). This kind of transition is especially pertinent in the context of digital transformation since workers must acquire new technology skills to adapt to changing work settings (Silva & Correia, 2022; Baptista et al., 2020). Particularly for companies implementing automation, artificial intelligence, and data-driven systems, reskilling and upskilling initiatives have become essential (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024; Kotter, 2014). Additionally, people-oriented change now includes cultural transformation programs like diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which foster more resilient and inclusive workplaces (Silva & Correia, 2022; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024).

Employees may find it difficult to adjust to these new demands, though, especially if they conflict with long-standing customs or beliefs (Kotter, 2014; Leitner, 2023). In addition to a lack of technical readiness, resistance frequently arises from feelings of unease and confusion about the process of change (Leitner, 2023; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). An important determinant of whether change attempts are welcomed or opposed is employee psychological preparedness, as noted by Mukhlis and Tyas (2024). According to Leitner (2023), employee agency and involvement can be fostered through participative tactics that reduce emotional reactions like dread, disengagement, or anxiety.

In order to overcome these obstacles, leadership is essential in creating a psychologically secure workplace where staff members feel encouraged during the change (Kotter, 2014; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). In addition to organized planning and

effective communication, this calls for the development of support networks that adapt to the emotional realities of change (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). According to recent studies, employees perceive higher levels of trust and adaptability when leaders mix bottom-up engagement strategies with top-down advice (Leitner, 2023; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). According to Kotter (2014), these observations support the idea that workers should be empowered to engage as change agents rather than passive beneficiaries.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that people-oriented change is a continuous process that goes beyond initial implementation. For new behaviors and cultural norms to be successfully maintained over time, ongoing support, acknowledgment, and adaptation are required (Kotter, 2014; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). Leitner (2023) emphasizes the value of resilience as an organizational capability, emphasizing the necessity of inclusive leadership techniques and emotional intelligence in integrating change into the organization's structure. Through the integration of human-centered execution and strategic intent, organizations can assure long-term transformation success, foster participation, and lessen resistance (Kotter, 2014; Leitner, 2023; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024).

According to Bridges (2009), the neutral zone is a time of uncertainty when staff members are unable to rely on the previous system yet have not yet completely transitioned to the new one. If not handled appropriately, this stage may result in lower morale and productivity (Silva & Correia, 2022). Organizations can help ease the shift by cultivating a trusting culture, providing ongoing training, and ensuring that employees have the resources they need to adapt (Leitner, 2023).

When workers completely accept the change, internalize new methods of operation, and identify with the new organizational culture, the last stage, known as "new beginnings," takes place (Bridges, 2009). Organizations now need to use reward programs, recognition, and ongoing engagement efforts to strengthen commitment (Kotter, 2014).

Employee buy-in is essential to the success of digital transformation and cultural change projects, where Bridges' model is most useful (Baptista et al., 2020). According to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024), organizations may effectively handle opposition, boost morale, and develop a resilient workforce that can adjust to continuous change by comprehending the emotional intricacies of change.

The goal of process transformation is to improve productivity, efficiency, and creativity by rethinking operational procedures and organizational workflows (Kotter,

2014). The necessity for enterprises to reconsider old procedures has increased due to the growing use of digital tools, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence (Baptista et al., 2020). According to Silva and Correia (2022), digital transformation has prompted companies to automate repetitive operations, deploy data-driven decision-making, and include agile approaches to enhance flexibility. Process automation is being used more and more by organizations in sectors like healthcare and finance to enhance client experiences, lower operating costs, and expedite compliance. Nevertheless, change management techniques are also necessary for process transformation in order to guarantee that staff members comprehend and accept new operational models without opposition or productivity hiccups (Palmer et al., 2017).

Organizations may guarantee more seamless transitions, lower resistance, and maintain long-term success by comprehending the many forms of organizational change and implementing structured change management models. Frameworks like Kotter's 8-Step Model, Lewin's Three-Step Model, and Bridges' Transition Model give organizations the tools they need to successfully navigate complexity, even though strategic, structural, people-oriented, and process changes each bring their own set of difficulties (Kotter, 2014; Palmer et al., 2017). The necessity for these adjustments is examined in the following section, which also emphasizes the significance of proactive adaptation in a changing corporate environment (Ford et al., 2008).

2.1.2 Internal and External Drivers of Change

The ability of an organization to integrate internal and external change drivers is critical to its long-term survival in an increasingly uncertain organization environment. Organizations should embrace agility, foster a culture of continuous learning, and align strategic priorities with emerging market trends in order to thrive in a rapidly changing environment (Leitner, 2023).

The trajectory of organizational transformation is shaped by a combination of internal and external factors that affect operational execution as well as strategic direction (Palmer et al., 2017). Internally, organizational reorganization, leadership changes, and process inefficiencies frequently spur change, necessitating a realignment of roles, structures, and culture (Kotter, 2014; Silva & Correia, 2022). Since they often result in changes to vision, communication methods, and decision-making processes that

necessitate extensive organizational adaptation, leadership transitions in particular are among the most significant (Palmer et al., 2017; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). In order to shape change activities, reduce resistance, and promote stakeholder alignment, effective leaders are essential (Leitner, 2023).

Another significant internal catalyst for change is operational inefficiency. Productivity and creativity can be impeded by issues including inflexible hierarchies, antiquated procedures, and inadequate resource allocation (Silva & Correia, 2022). Organizations need to adopt digital integration and process improvement techniques to stay competitive because they increase agility and optimize processes (Kotter, 2014). Organizations that proactively implement digital tools and streamline internal processes are better positioned for long-term success in quickly changing contexts, as noted by Leitner (2023).

By redefining roles and changing current operating models, restructuring projects like departmental realignments, mergers, or acquisitions also promote internal transformation (Palmer et al., 2017). In order to preserve morale and guarantee seamless transitions, these initiatives frequently produce uncertainty and call for effective communication and inclusive planning (Silva & Correia, 2022). For instance, Gomes and Romão (2013) stress the value of structured project management frameworks that include staff members in the change process in order to reduce resistance and disruption in the Portuguese public sector.

One example of how external stakeholder effect drives transformation is the usage of digital platforms, which has resulted in significant operational changes in several industries (Palmer et al., 2017). For companies that do not include client input in their transformation activities, market misalignment and customer churn are frequent issues (Ford et al., 2008). By incorporating input from external stakeholders early in the change process, organizations may foresee potential issues, create collaborative solutions, and ensure that transformation programs adhere to industry standards (Kotter, 2014).

An important external force is the development of technology. Whole industries have changed due to the quick rise of cloud computing, big data analytics, and artificial intelligence; in order to remain competitive, organizations must realign their skills and tactics (Baptista et al., 2020). Companies that embrace technological change through staff reskilling and leadership assistance achieve increased resilience and market relevance, as shown by Mukhlis and Tyas (2024).

Organizations must cultivate a culture that supports digital agility in addition to implementing new technologies. According to Leitner (2023), incorporating technology into the organizational vision and coordinating it with worker development fosters creativity and adaptation. To promote these cultural changes, leadership dedication, encouragement of innovation, and ongoing training are crucial (Silva & Correia, 2022).

Another important external issue that forces firms to adjust is regulatory compliance. Companies must update governance structures to maintain compliance with legal requirements due to frequent changes in labor legislation, data protection rules, and environmental standards (Palmer et al., 2017). According to Gomes and Romão (2013), legislative reforms in Portugal have resulted in significant organizational changes in public institutions, highlighting the importance of flexibility and foresight in strategic planning.

As demands for digital experiences, moral organization conduct, and customized services increase, so should consumer expectations (Silva & Correia, 2022). Brand loyalty and long-term market positioning are more likely to be attained by organizations that actively communicate with their clients and take their input into account when developing their transformation plans (Kotter, 2014). According to Leitner (2023), companies that use data-driven insights and bottom-up feedback loops to match innovation with customer requirements obtain a competitive advantage.

In the end, companies are more likely to promote innovation, develop resilience, and sustain long-term success if they can successfully integrate both internal and external sources of change (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). In order to create agile systems that can navigate a organization landscape that is changing quickly, leaders must bridge the gap between strategic realignment and external response (Palmer et al., 2017).

2.1.3 The Role of Leadership in Organizational Change

As the main factor that synchronizes strategic objectives with operational execution, leadership is essential to the beginning, direction, and maintenance of organizational change (Kotter, 2014). Every level of the organization benefits from transformation initiatives that are successfully implemented, widely accepted, and effectively communicated thanks to effective leadership (Gilley et al., 2009). According

to Ford et al. (2008), change leaders serve as facilitators, encouraging staff members to welcome change, reducing opposition, and cultivating an adaptable corporate culture.

Leadership in change management, according to Kotter (2014), involves more than just implementing new rules; it also entails forming a transformational vision, including stakeholders, and fostering a change-friendly atmosphere. According to Palmer et al. (2017), leaders who are unable to articulate a clear purpose frequently encounter increased opposition and a decline in organizational alignment. Thus, trust-building and successful change initiatives depend on regular communication, openness, and inclusivity (Silva & Correia, 2022).

Leaders must first develop a compelling vision that outlines the goals and anticipated results of the transformation in order for organizational change to be successful (Kotter, 2014). To ensure that workers understand the reasoning behind the change, this vision should be in line with the organization's values and long-term plan (Leitner, 2023). Leaders can boost staff commitment and decrease uncertainty by making a compelling and compelling case for change (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024).

According to Gilley et al. (2009), leaders are also essential in assembling groups of change agents, or important people who push for change in various organizational units. These change agents serve to support leadership's vision, act as go-betweens for employees and management, and create momentum for change (Kotter 2014). According to research, companies with clear change leadership structures see less resistance, more innovation, and easier transitions (Leitner, 2023).

Inclusive leadership is essential for effective organizational change management, especially during complex transitional change. According to case studies in Portuguese companies like WestSEA-Viana Shipyard, managers who actively involve staff members in decision-making, recognize their efforts, and encourage candid communication greatly lower employee resistance to change and improve organizational alignment (Viana & Machado, 2024). By encouraging different points of view and establishing psychological safety, which enables staff members to express concerns and offer feedback, higher levels of trust and engagement are developed (Ford et al., 2008; Silva & Correia, 2022). Additionally, during transformation efforts, staff involvement in the creation of new procedures through participatory approaches can increase commitment and decrease uncertainty (Gomes & Romão, 2013; Kotter, 2014). Buy-in and alignment are further increased when digital communication tools are used to facilitate involvement,

particularly in organizations going through quick structural or cultural changes (Baptista et al., 2020; Viana & Machado, 2024).

According to Palmer et al. (2017), executives must sustain staff morale and proactively address their concerns because organizational change frequently causes uncertainty and dread. It may increase motivation and maintain momentum during the transition process to acknowledge and celebrate minor accomplishments (Kotter, 2014). Team check-ins, and anonymous surveys are examples of regular feedback systems that enable leaders to address resistance early and modify their change strategies as needed (Ford et al., 2008).

One of the most frequent problems that leaders encounter is resistance to change, which can take the shape of both active (open opposition) and passive (lack of involvement) manifestations (Palmer et al., 2017). Workers may find it challenging to adapt when moving from conventional public-sector processes to innovative private-sector techniques, as demonstrated by case studies in Portuguese enterprises such as WestSEA-Viana Shipyard (Viana & Machado, 2024). These obstacles are more likely to be lessened by leaders that take a supporting stance, providing mentoring, emotional support, and unambiguous direction (Gilley et al., 2009). According to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024), leadership philosophies that prioritize empowerment, empathy, and flexibility are crucial for overcoming resistance to change and building resilience, particularly when managing organizational identity and culturally ingrained practices (Viana & Machado, 2024).

Leaders in today's continuously changing organization environment need to make sure that their companies are flexible and ready for any changes in the future, in addition to managing change well (Kotter, 2014). According to Lewis (2011) and Palmer et al. (2017), leaders must combine structured and flexible approaches, as evidenced by the distinction between planned and emergent change. While emergent change necessitates flexibility and prompt decision-making in response to unforeseen situations, planned change adheres to a methodical approach with predetermined goals (Ford et al., 2008). Organizations may effectively manage both planned and unplanned changes by combining formal planning with adaptive reactions, as evidenced by examples from the Portuguese context, such as the transition at WestSEA-Viana Shipyard.

An organization's ability to manage uncertainty and adjust to changing circumstances is greatly improved by agility-focused leadership strategies such incorporating real-time feedback channels, encouraging cross-functional cooperation,

and decentralizing decision-making (Leitner, 2023). These practices are crucial for creating resilient organizations because they enable people at different levels to make significant contributions to decision-making processes and encourage quicker, context-driven reactions to change (Leitner, 2023). Agile leadership becomes strategically necessary in digitally transformed environments, such as those influenced by automation and phantomization (Baptista et al., 2020).

In digitalized companies, agility is not just a structural change but a new way of organizing that dynamically combines human and digital configurations, as Baptista et al. (2020) highlight. By providing dispersed teams with technology and decision autonomy, leaders that use agile methodologies encourage experimentation, iterative learning, and adaptation (Leitner, 2023). Adaptive methods paired with structured methodologies enable leaders to manage teams through complex transformations while sustaining organizational performance, as evidenced by transitional leadership in Portuguese enterprises such as WestSEA-Viana Shipyard (Viana & Machado, 2024). Organizations may quickly test, improve, and execute strategies in response to internal demands as well as external market signals because to this agility, which promotes continuous learning (Baptista et al., 2020).

Finally, by establishing adaptable, empowered work structures that can maintain innovation and operational continuity under duress, agile leadership enhances organizational resilience (Leitner, 2023).

For organizational transformation to be successful, leadership is still essential. To ensure transformation success, leaders must explain their vision, promote inclusivity, and maintain staff morale whether they are leading structural changes, technology adoption, cultural evolution, or strategic realignment (Kotter, 2014; Palmer et al., 2017). According to Silva and Correia's (2022) research, companies that use leadership-driven change models have improved stakeholder engagement, increased resilience, and long-term competitive benefits.

Leadership must strike a balance between top-down orders and bottom-up involvement, combining strategic planning with flexible response, to bring about long-lasting change (Leitner, 2023). According to Viana and Machado (2024) and Baptista et al. (2020), agile and transitional contexts adopt structured methodologies together with adaptive solutions to effectively manage complicated obstacles. In addition to overcoming current obstacles, organizations can set themselves up for long-term success

in an organizational environment that is becoming more complicated and unstable by cultivating a culture of ongoing learning and change (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024).

2.2 Managing organizational change

Organizational change is a complex process that necessitates a methodical strategy that combines strategic planning with an awareness of human behavior (Kotter, 2014). Organizations have to deal with a variety of intricate internal and external factors, such as changing leadership, developing technology, shifting regulations, and consumer demands, all of which call for constant adaptation (Kotter, 2014). Successful change management¹² involves balancing stability with flexibility, ensuring that organizations maintain operational efficiency while remaining agile in the face of disruption (Palmer et al., 2017).

In order to help organizations navigate transformation processes, a number of theories and models have developed over time. These offer systematic approaches for organizing, carrying out, and maintaining change (Ford et al., 2008). Frameworks like the Bridges Transition Model, Lewin's Three-Step Model, and Kotter's Eight-Step Model provide information about the strategic, emotional, and structural facets of change (Bridges, 2009; Lewin, 2011; Kotter, 2014). Furthermore, in order to handle unforeseen obstacles, organizations must combine proactive planning with adaptive response, as shown by the distinction between planned and emergent change (Palmer et al., 2017).

Stakeholder engagement is essential to successful transformation, regardless of theoretical frameworks (Leitner, 2023). To align change projects with larger industry trends and stakeholder expectations, organizations must actively incorporate external stakeholders like consumers, suppliers, and regulators in addition to internal stakeholders like leaders, managers, and employees (Kotter, 2014; Gomes & Romão, 2013).

The importance of stakeholders in transformation processes, important change management frameworks, and striking a balance between structured and flexible change management strategies are all covered in this section. Organizations may create strong

¹² Change management is a structured approach that helps organizations transition from a current state to a desired future state while minimizing disruption (Gilley et al., 2009; Lewis, 2011). It encompasses planning, communication, employee engagement, and leadership strategies to ensure successful implementation (Kotter, 2014).

strategies that support long-term resilience and competitiveness in an organizational environment that is becoming more and more dynamic by incorporating these viewpoints. These strategies can also help transitions go smoothly (Silva & Correia, 2022; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024).

2.2.1 Planned Versus Emergent Change

Planned change and emergent change are the two main methods to organizational change, and each has unique benefits and difficulties depending on the organizational environment (Palmer et al., 2017). To guarantee resilience, adaptability, and long-term success, organizations need to know how to strike a balance between these strategies (Kotter, 2014).

According to Palmer et al. (2017), planned change is a methodical, systematic process that is usually created through long-term strategic planning, goal-setting, and execution roadmaps. To guarantee congruence with company goals, organizations using this strategy develop thorough action plans, set specific goals, and monitor progress (Kotter, 2014). According to Ford et al. (2008), this model is most helpful in stable contexts where organizations can anticipate risks, allocate resources efficiently, and handle change in a systematic way. Organizational reorganization, digital transformation plans, and extensive technology deployments are a few instances of planned change (Lewis, 2011). Kotter's 8-Step Model, which offers a methodical procedure to promote organizational transition while preserving stability, is one of the most well-known frameworks for planned change (Kotter, 2014).

According to Palmer et al. (2017), companies must be ready to adjust quickly to unforeseen obstacles because not all change can be predicted. According to Ford et al. (2008), "emergent change" describes impromptu, adaptive transformation processes that take place in reaction to unforeseen internal or external causes. In contrast to planned change, emergent change is unstructured and frequently necessitates quick decisions, adaptable leadership, and ongoing education (Husain, 2013). This concept is especially applicable to sectors that are going through global crises, regulatory changes, or technological upheaval (Kotter, 2014).

An excellent illustration of emergent change is the COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled firms to quickly adopt remote work modes, deploy digital communication

tools, and reorganize operational structures in the face of an unprecedented emergency (Husain, 2013). In uncertain situations, organizations that adopted emergent change principles were able to maintain workforce engagement, stay operational, and swiftly adjust their strategy (Palmer et al., 2017). Organizations must constantly adjust to new technologies and worker expectations as a result of continual emergent change dynamics brought about by automation and artificial intelligence breakthroughs (Leitner, 2023).

Planned and emergent change do not have to conflict with one another (Kotter, 2014). According to research, the most successful companies combine the two strategies, using formal frameworks to direct change while retaining the flexibility to adjust as needed (Ford et al., 2008). By integrating a dual operating system, Kotter's Accelerate model, for instance, expands upon his first planned change framework. It combines more adaptable, network-based change initiatives with traditional hierarchical structures (Kotter, 2014). By striking a balance between stability and adaptability, this method enables organizations to respond quickly to new challenges while maintaining the viability of long-term strategic objectives (Palmer et al., 2017).

Navigating both planned and unexpected changes requires leadership, which is another crucial component of change management (Gilley et al., 2009). According to Ford et al. (2008), leaders need to be able to implement systematic transformation initiatives and foster an innovative and flexible culture. According to Kotter (2014), companies that cultivate a proactive leadership approach are better able to identify new risks, seize opportunities, and maintain long-term growth.

Additionally, research shows that organizations that successfully manage planned and emergent change have higher levels of market response, employee engagement, and innovation (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). According to Baptista et al. (2020), technological companies like Google and Microsoft, for example, use organized innovation strategies while retaining the freedom to change course in reaction to new market trends.

Adapting organizational tactics to particular situations requires an understanding of the distinctions between planned and emergent change (Palmer et al., 2017). Organizations can preserve competitive advantage in a fast-changing environment, develop agility, and strengthen resilience by combining aspects of both strategies (Kotter, 2014). Organizations that successfully combine adaptive skills and organized change management improve their ability to prosper in challenging and uncertain situations (Ford et al., 2008).

2.2.2 The Role of Stakeholders in Organizational Change

Because it affects acceptance, implementation, and long-term sustainability, stakeholder engagement is essential to the success of organizational change programs (Kotter, 2014). According to Ford et al. (2008), change initiatives frequently run into opposition or fall short of their goals when stakeholders are not actively involved. Companies are more likely to guarantee alignment, lower uncertainty, and promote long-term commitment when they involve internal and external stakeholders at every stage of the change process (Palmer et al., 2017).

Effective organizational transformation is largely driven by internal stakeholders, such as managers, employees, and leaders (Kotter, 2014). According to Gilley et al. (2009), leaders are in charge of developing a culture that values flexibility, expressing the need for change, and creating a compelling and clear vision. Change initiatives frequently suffer from low involvement, inadequate resource allocation, and a lack of strategic direction when leadership is ambiguous or nonexistent (Silva & Correia, 2022). In order to reduce resistance and disruption, managers play a crucial intermediary role by coordinating resources, addressing front-line difficulties, and translating high-level change goals into operational realities (Palmer et al., 2017).

According to Gomes and Romão (2013), organizations that use bottom-up techniques, where people actively contribute to change instead of passively receiving it, tend to encourage more creativity and long-term benefits. Employees that actively participate feel more ownership over the process and the outcomes, which motivates them to contribute ideas and take the initiative to address problems (Gomes and Romão, 2013). In addition to increasing the variety of perspectives considered throughout the decision-making process, this type of involvement speeds up identifying practical solutions that mesh well with daily living. These tactics help build resilience by improving trust and group problem-solving skills (Silva & Correia, 2022), making employees feel more prepared and secure in adapting to unforeseen occurrences. Additionally, according to Silva and Correia (2022), bottom-up participation enhances the unofficial networks that facilitate change by facilitating information exchange and team support, which together build organizational capacity to maintain transformation over time.

It is also necessary to involve stakeholders at every level of the transformation process. Internal input aids in planning by assisting in the identification of possible resistance, goal alignment, and readiness enhancement (Palmer et al., 2017). Real-time

stakeholder feedback facilitates adaptive decision-making and prompt course corrections throughout the implementation phase (Kotter, 2014). Following implementation, stakeholder insights aid companies in consolidating learning and enhancing subsequent efforts through reflection and evaluation (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). Organizations can improve the quality of change execution and strengthen long-term resilience and strategic cohesiveness by including stakeholder input at each phase (Leitner, 2023).

External stakeholders, like as suppliers, consumers, and government agencies, are just as important in influencing organizational transformation as internal stakeholders (Palmer et al., 2017). According to March (1981), these groups have an impact on organizational strategy through changing consumer expectations, market needs, and compliance obligations. For organizations to foresee changes in the industry, maintain regulatory compliance, and match company strategies with external realities, they must proactively engage external stakeholders (Kotter, 2014). March (1981) asserts that changing market trends, consumer tastes, and technology advancements frequently need adaptability. For example, organizations have been forced to reconsider their supply chains, operations, and customer engagement strategies due to the growing demand for digitally integrated services and ethical organizational practices (Palmer et al., 2017).

According to Ford et al. (2008), regulatory bodies also have a significant influence on the extent and urgency of organizational transformation. Organizations must review their operational procedures and make the required adjustments in order to comply with new labor laws, environmental legislation, and data protection obligations (Palmer et al., 2017). Organizations must actively engage regulatory agencies since non-compliance can lead to financial penalties, legal repercussions, and harm to their brand (Kotter, 2014). Organizations can use regulatory changes as a chance to improve corporate responsibility, boost industry reputation, and promote sustainable organizational practices rather than seeing compliance as a barrier (Gomes & Romão, 2013).

In the end, successfully managing organizational change requires an efficient stakeholder engagement strategy (Ford et al., 2008). According to Kotter (2014), the most resilient organizations strike a balance between external responsiveness and internal leadership, making sure that change programs are widely supported, strategically aligned, and constantly improved. Organizations may improve decision-making, boost commitment, and lower resistance by integrating stakeholder input at every level of the process. This promotes a transformation process that is more impactful and durable (Palmer et al., 2017).

2.3 Challenges and Barriers to Organizational Change

Organizational change is essential for organizations to remain competitive, foster innovation, and respond effectively to evolving market dynamics (Kotter, 2014). However, various operational, behavioral, and cultural challenges can obstruct the successful execution of transformation initiatives (Palmer et al., 2017). According to Silva and Correia (2022), these challenges arise from both internal and external pressures and can significantly affect organizational resilience.

One of the most persistent internal barriers is employee resistance to change, often rooted in uncertainty, job insecurity, or discomfort with new responsibilities (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). Resistance may manifest through open opposition or passive disengagement, both of which undermine change efforts (Palmer et al., 2017). According to Leitner (2023), when employees are not emotionally supported or meaningfully involved in the process, organizational adaptability is weakened, especially during disruptive transitions.

Another major challenge lies in leadership deficiencies. Ineffective leadership, characterized by poor communication, lack of trust-building, and absence of clear vision, can deepen resistance and slow down the pace of transformation (Kotter, 2014). As noted by Mukhlis and Tyas (2024), leaders play a critical role not only in articulating the strategic direction but also in empowering teams, addressing fears, and building psychological readiness for change. When leadership fails to create an inclusive and transparent environment, misalignment and disengagement often follow (Silva & Correia, 2022).

Organizational inertia presents a deeper structural and cultural challenge. This inertia, defined by rigid hierarchies, legacy systems, and long-standing routines, often prevents organizations from responding swiftly to change (March, 1981). Leitner (2023) emphasizes that overcoming inertia requires both structural flexibility and a shift in mindset, particularly in environments resistant to experimentation or collaborative problem-solving.

Technological resistance is another aspect of inertia, especially in companies that delay the adoption of digital tools and data-driven processes. As Silva and Correia (2022) note, without a digital-first culture and proper employee upskilling, technology-driven change becomes significantly harder to implement. Proactive digital transformation, supported by strong leadership and training, has been shown to reduce friction and increase innovation potential (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024).

These challenges, employee resistance, leadership gaps, and organizational inertia, can significantly hinder transformation efforts if left unaddressed (Palmer et al., 2017). In some cases, they can lead to project failure, cultural disintegration, or strategic misalignment (Kotter, 2014). According to Leitner (2023), organizations that proactively build resilience, foster employee involvement, and prioritize transparent communication are better equipped to manage the emotional and systemic complexities of change.

Comprehensive barrier assessments are necessary to anticipate risks and tailor interventions that enhance adaptability. As Mukhlis and Tyas (2024) argue, change must be approached as a continuous and human-centered process, where leadership empathy and organizational agility play key roles. By understanding these obstacles and integrating strategic responses, organizations can transform resistance into commitment and inertia into momentum for sustained growth (Silva & Correia, 2022).

2.3.1 Employee Resistance to Change

The psychological, cultural, and structural elements of the workplace contribute to employee resistance, which is one of the biggest obstacles to organizational change (Ford et al., 2008). According to Palmer et al. (2017), employees frequently view change as a disturbance to their established routines, which causes them to feel anxious, uncertain, and skeptical of new procedures or leadership choices. Fear of the unknown, a sense of losing control, or worries about job security can all be the source of this resistance, especially when initiatives involving automation, digital transformation, or restructuring are involved (Kotter, 2014). Resistance is typically stronger in hierarchical companies where workers depend on stability and predictability since changes in approach might lead to role ambiguity and upset established power dynamics (Husain, 2013).

Employee reactions to change are significantly influenced by the psychological component of resistance. Because of cognitive biases that favor stability and predictability, people are inherently prone to reject changes to familiar situations (Palmer et al., 2017). Workers may become defensive if they believe that suggested adjustments call into question their professional competency or diminish their knowledge (Ford et al., 2008). When change is implemented without sufficient justification, this feeling of uncertainty is intensified and negative feelings like disengagement, irritation, and worry

are reinforced (Lewis, 2011). Furthermore, social dynamics among teams can amplify resistance, which is not only an individual response. Coworkers' resistance to change or cynicism about it frequently spreads, strengthening group resistance and decreasing collaboration. (Gilley et al., 2009).

Active resistance and passive resistance are the two main ways that opposition to change can appear, and both provide unique difficulties for organizations (Kotter, 2014). Direct and obvious opposition, such as protests, outspoken objections in meetings, reluctance to follow new regulations, and even attempts to thwart change initiatives, are examples of active resistance (Palmer et al., 2017). According to Lewis (2011), employees who actively resist may purposefully postpone responsibilities, publicly contest management choices, or try to mobilize coworkers against suggested changes. On the other hand, passive resistance is more covert and frequently more difficult to identify since workers may not overtly voice their disapproval but instead stop participating in the process (Ford et al., 2008). According to Palmer et al. (2017), these behaviors may include decreased motivation, absenteeism, decreased productivity, or less involvement in meetings pertaining to transformation initiatives. Passive resistance might be more subtle because its root reasons might not be known, making it challenging for leaders to identify and handle (Husain, 2013). In contrast, active opposition is frequently addressed immediately.

Companies must undergo organizational change in order to promote innovation, stay competitive, and adjust to the quickly changing needs of the market (Kotter, 2014). However, a variety of obstacles that originate from both internal dynamics and external constraints frequently impede the implementation of transformation programs (Palmer et al., 2017). If these issues are not proactively resolved, they may seriously impair the efficacy of change initiatives (Silva & Correia, 2022).

Employee resistance to change, which frequently stems from uncertainty, fear of losing one's job, or anxiety over changing responsibilities and routines, is one of the most prevalent internal hurdles (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). Such resistance may impede the adoption of new tactics or systems and can take many different forms, ranging from outspoken opposition to passive disengagement (Palmer et al., 2017). Leitner (2023) asserts that emotional reactions to organizational changes are often the source of resistance, especially when workers feel left out of the change process or are unclear about its advantages. According to Silva and Correia (2022), this emphasizes the

significance of open communication and collaborative methods in reducing resistance and fostering psychological safety.

Organizational change is made even more difficult by leadership issues. According to Kotter (2014), leaders need to integrate transformation with corporate objectives while articulating a compelling vision. Employee morale declines and change initiatives stall when leadership is unable to build confidence, provide consistent guidance, or encourage engagement (Palmer et al., 2017). Mukhlis and Tyas (2024) point out that during transitions, a lack of sympathetic and flexible leadership exacerbates employee resistance and erodes organizational cohesiveness. On the other hand, leaders who adopt agile and inclusive approaches are better at handling ambiguity and rallying people behind change (Leitner, 2023).

According to Kotter (2014), organizational inertia, the propensity of institutions to oppose change because of ingrained practices, legacy systems, and cultural rigidity, is another significant obstacle. According to Palmer et al. (2017), hierarchical organizations are frequently the source of this inertia since they view innovation as disruptive rather than helpful. Organizations with firmly ingrained norms and static procedures find it difficult to adjust to digital transformation, which leads to lost possibilities for strategic evolution, claim Silva and Correia (2022). By imposing administrative and technical restrictions that impede flexibility, legacy infrastructures further stifle innovation (Leitner, 2023).

According to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024), companies that do not cultivate agility run the risk of becoming outdated in the face of rapidly changing markets and technology. Implementation may be delayed and responsiveness to new difficulties may be diminished in a culture that is hostile to experimentation or ongoing learning (Silva & Correia, 2022). Therefore, proactive measures that support flexibility, digital proficiency, and decentralized decision-making are necessary to overcome inertia (Leitner, 2023).

When combined, organizational inertia, leadership voids, and employee resistance create a trifecta of obstacles that jeopardize the effectiveness of change projects (Palmer et al., 2017). Organizations may experience drawn-out transitions, increased resistance, and even the collapse of transformation initiatives if these problems are not adequately handled (Kotter, 2014). Effective management of these obstacles requires both top-down and bottom-up approaches, such as skill development, inclusive leadership, and emotionally intelligent change communication, according to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024).

Organizations may reduce risk and foster a culture of transformation as an ongoing, collaborative process by identifying these basic issues and implementing evidence-based solutions (Silva and Correia, 2022). In addition to addressing resistance as it develops, this requires implementing preventive measures into organisational processes, such as continual communication, frequent stakeholder feedback loops, and opportunities for collaborative decision-making (Palmer et al., 2017). By encouraging a sense of shared responsibility, these proactive strategies might encourage employees to welcome change rather than fight it, claims Kotter (2014). Furthermore, early employee participation in transformation projects increases psychological safety and trust, two elements that are essential for lowering both active and passive resistance, according to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024). Transparent, sympathetic, and adaptable leadership can help organizations become more resilient in the face of shifting difficulties (Leitner, 2023). This will enable them to transform change from a disruptive event into an ongoing process of learning and creativity. Therefore, rather than being merely a defensive tactic, addressing the root causes of resistance is a strategic facilitator that prepares companies to manage impending changes with greater stability and alignment. These obstacles will be covered in more detail in the sections that follow, providing leaders and change agents with useful advice on how to handle challenging organizational changes.

Organizations are better equipped to foresee problems and create proactive engagement measures when they have a deep awareness of the underlying causes, symptoms, and internal contributors of employee resistance. To guarantee that change initiatives are greeted with openness rather than resistance, it is imperative to address the psychological, cultural, and structural aspects of resistance (Palmer et al., 2017).

2.3.2 Leadership Challenges

Although inadequate leadership is a major barrier that can sabotage transformation initiatives, leadership is essential in promoting organizational change (Kotter, 2014). Employee resistance frequently results from leaders who lack a clear vision or who are unable to explain the reasoning behind change initiatives, which lowers morale and causes disengagement (Palmer et al., 2017). According to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024), leadership weaknesses have a direct impact on organizational performance because they generate ambiguity, misalignment, and a lack of commitment to change

projects. Employee uncertainty and operational inefficiencies may result from a lack of clear leadership as they struggle to comprehend the goals and advantages of transformation (Ford et al., 2008).

Top-down decision-making, in which managers enforce change without taking into account staff feedback, is another significant leadership difficulty (Leitner, 2023). Employees may feel alienated from the process and perceive change as an external imposition rather than a collaborative effort, which leads to resistance and alienation (Silva & Correia, 2022). The success of change initiatives can be seriously hampered by leadership styles that do not include participatory decision-making (Ford et al., 2008). According to Leitner (2023), companies that implement bottom-up leadership practices, in which staff members actively participate in determining change, typically see increased employee engagement and more seamless transitions. Leadership-driven resistance can be lessened by promoting collaboration, empowering staff to participate in change projects, and encouraging two-way communication (Kotter, 2014).

Another significant obstacle to successful change is inadequate leadership communication (Gilley et al., 2009). Employees may misunderstand the goals of change if leaders don't communicate clearly, which might result in misunderstandings, conjecture, and elevated anxiety (Husain, 2013). Effective leaders must continuously communicate the change's vision, anticipated effects, and the part that staff members will play in the transformation process, claim Palmer et al. (2017). This calls for regular updates, public discussion boards, and clear justifications of strategic choices (Kotter, 2014). Leaders are more successful in obtaining staff buy-in and lowering resistance when they create a culture of trust through open and constant communication, according to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024).

In addition to communication, leaders have to manage power dynamics and organizational conflicts that arise during change (Silva & Correia, 2022). Change initiatives may be slowed down or stopped entirely by conflicting interests, disparate departmental agendas, and opposition from key stakeholders (Baptista et al., 2020). Therefore, in order to maintain the momentum of change projects and ensure alignment between disparate groups, leadership must serve as mediators (Ford et al., 2008). To further exacerbate resistance, Gomes and Romão (2013) claim that poor leadership in handling these conflicts might result in fragmented change implementation, where various organizational components move at different rates.

Adapting to digital transformation and technological change is another major leadership problem. Many executives struggle to overcome the limitations of legacy systems, integrate developing technology, and balance human-digital interactions (Baptista et al., 2020). Leaders must adopt an agile organizational culture that welcomes technology-driven change, retrain staff, and update operational frameworks in light of the shift to digital work and automation (Palmer et al., 2017). Organizations run the danger of falling behind rivals and encountering enduring opposition to new technologies if proactive leadership in digital adaption is lacking (Kotter, 2014).

Lastly, in order to successfully lead staff members through the uncertainties of transition, leaders need to cultivate emotional intelligence and empathy (Ford et al., 2008). Leadership emotional support is essential since change can cause fear, worry, and job insecurity (Lewis, 2011). Building psychological safety is facilitated by leaders who actively listen to their staff members' worries, offer comfort, and recognize each person's unique contributions to the transition (Palmer et al., 2017). Mukhlis and Tyas's (2024) research demonstrates that leaders who develop emotional intelligence help their staff members become more resilient, which increases engagement and lowers the possibility of resistance.

In a nutshell top-down decision-making, poor communication, resistance to digital transformation, an inability to address emotional and cultural elements, and a misaligned vision are the main causes of leadership difficulties in organizational change (Kotter, 2014; Palmer et al., 2017). In order to overcome these obstacles, leaders need to adopt inclusive leadership models, give clear communication top priority, deal with power dynamics, and cultivate emotional intelligence to help staff members through changes (Leitner, 2023; Silva & Correia, 2022). A resilient workforce and successful, long-lasting change are more likely to be fostered by organizations that invest in strong, flexible leadership (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024).

2.3.3 Organizational Inertia

Organizational inertia refers to an organization's inherent resistance to change in its methods, culture, and structures. According to March (1981), this inertia is often the result of established routines and processes that create comfort zones for both leaders and employees. Legacy systems, in particular, create substantial impediments to digital

transition. In addition to limiting innovation, these antiquated procedures and technologies significantly raise operating expenses and decrease overall productivity (Gibbons, 2015). For instance, because of their reliance on antiquated procedures, big organizations like Blockbuster were unable to adjust to the shifting needs of the market, which ultimately caused them to become obsolete in the face of digital rivals like Netflix (Kotter, 2014).

Problems with legacy systems include restricted scalability, expensive maintenance costs, and incompatibilities with contemporary technologies. These obstacles were visible when General Electric (GE) tried to change its business model to become an industrial digital corporation. Palmer et al. (2017) state that GE experienced delays in deploying cloud-based solutions because of deeply ingrained systems that needed a great deal of customization, which resulted in a large resource investment. Similarly, in the banking industry, innovation and consumer satisfaction have been impeded by the delayed adoption of fintech solutions due to outdated IT systems (Gibbons, 2015).

According to Palmer et al. (2017), cultural resistance is one of the most pervasive types of organizational inertia and frequently arises when suggested changes go against firmly held beliefs, customs, or established working practices. Changes that go against the organization's historical identity or practices may make employees feel threatened, which can result in a range of behaviors from skepticism to active or passive resistance (Kotter, 2014). Kodak's failure to make the switch to digital photography is a prime illustration of this phenomena, as their cultural ties to film-based procedures overshadowed their strategic vision (Kotter, 2014).

In addition to being emotional, this opposition is institutional, ingrained in mental models and organizational procedures. Organizations that cannot foresee cultural barriers during transformation run the danger of alienating their employees, stifling creativity, and putting change initiatives on hold, claim Silva and Correia (2022). The adoption of new technologies frequently entails a change in power relations, employment expectations, and professional identities, making this especially pertinent in scenarios involving digital transformation (Silva & Correia, 2022).

Leitner (2023) further highlights that resistance frequently results from a misalignment between cultural preparation at the bottom and top-down change activities. Higher degrees of resistance are encountered by organizations that enforce change without fostering psychological safety or including staff members in decision-making

procedures. Consequently, cultural resistance ought to be viewed as a reasonable reaction to perceived dangers to identity and stability rather than as irrational disobedience (Leitner, 2023).

Leaders that encourage empathy, inclusivity, and continuous communication significantly reduce cultural resistance, according to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024). When it comes to managing changes that require employees to break old habits and adopt new ones, these procedures help to build trust, which is crucial. Kotter (2014) provides more support for this, pointing out that trust reduces uncertainty and promotes openness to new ideas, which are crucial for keeping momentum during transition. According to Palmer et al. (2017), empowering staff members to take charge of the change by promoting inclusion in decision-making procedures also reduces the perception of a danger to their professional identities. This trust-based atmosphere is particularly important in digital transformation contexts, Silva and Correia (2022) argue, because changes in roles and skills could otherwise make people feel more vulnerable (Silva & Correia, 2022). By combining open communication with active employee involvement, organisations can overcome temporary resistance and foster adaptation as a long-term cultural norm (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024; Kotter, 2014). Palmer et al. (2017) claim that active employee participation boosts commitment and reduces the perceived threat of change, while Kotter (2014) emphasises the value of open communication in maintaining alignment and reducing uncertainty. Change agents can actively shift organisational culture by laying the groundwork for trust and inclusion through constant leadership commitment, clear messaging, and symbolic gestures that support the planned transformation trajectory (Palmer et al., 2017; Silva & Correia, 2022).

Furthermore, change agents need to understand that culture is malleable and may be reshaped by visible leadership commitment, persistent communication, and symbolic acts (Palmer et al., 2017). Cultural adaption can be facilitated, for instance, by fostering a culture that is focused on learning, investing in digital literacy, and recognizing early adopters (Silva & Correia, 2022).

A complete approach that incorporates emotional support, participative leadership, and alignment between technical innovation and cultural transformation is ultimately necessary to address cultural resistance. Through the incorporation of these components, companies can transform resistance into a source of engagement, insight, and long-term resilience (Leitner, 2023; Mukhlis & Tyas, 2019).

Organizations need to put agility and flexibility first in order to overcome the inertia brought on by legacy systems. One strategy is phased migration, which minimizes operational disruptions by gradually replacing outdated systems with more contemporary ones. Upskilling staff to adapt to new technology is also essential for cultivating a digital-first culture (Husain, 2013). For example, under Satya Nadella's direction, Microsoft overcome inertia by making significant investments in staff training initiatives during its transition to a cloud-based environment (Palmer et al., 2017). In order to counteract the complacency that often accompanies organizational inertia, organizations also need to foster a culture of ongoing learning and adaptability (Baptista, 2003).

By guaranteeing that management and staff are in agreement, transparent communication strategies reinforce these initiatives even more. Organizations can lessen opposition and foster buy-in by clearly communicating the benefits of modernization to employees and including them in the transition process (Kotter, 2014). In the end, overcoming the obstacles presented by legacy systems necessitates a well-rounded approach that incorporates cultural change, employee engagement, and technology innovation (March, 1981; Gibbons, 2015).

2.4 Communication in Change Management

In order to manage organizational change, guarantee stakeholder alignment, lessen resistance, and promote participation, effective communication is essential (Kotter, 2014). Uncertainty, mistrust, and resistance to change are often the results of poor communication, while organizational cohesiveness is strengthened and the chances of a successful transformation are increased by clear, transparent, and consistent message (Husain, 2013). To ensure that leaders, employees, and external stakeholders receive pertinent and targeted information, communication strategies must be customized to the unique issues of various stakeholder groups (Gilley et al., 2009). While external stakeholders like investors and regulatory agencies need guarantees about strategic alignment and long-term stability, employees need information on how the change will impact their responsibilities (Palmer et al., 2017). Companies run the danger of offending important stakeholders if they don't have a well-structured communication strategy, which will increase resistance to change (Ford et al., 2008).

By using efficient communication techniques, leadership is essential in building the story of change (Kotter, 2014). To keep employees' faith and trust, leaders need to

present a compelling vision, explain the reasoning for the change, and give regular updates (Palmer et al., 2017). Structured internal communication is essential to preserving alignment and trust throughout change initiatives, claim Abrantes et al. (2024). Ineffective communication leads to increased resistance to change, disengagement, and confusion (Ford et al., 2008). The significance of openness in leadership communication is emphasized by Kotter (2014), who makes sure that staff members comprehend the reasons for change and how it fits with company goals. In order to facilitate the shift, leaders must also respond to employees' worries with empathy, recognizing their fears and offering reassurances (Gilley et al., 2009). Leitner (2023) highlights that in order to promote employee participation and trust in the change process, top-down communication is insufficient on its own and needs to be combined with bottom-up engagement. Microsoft's transition under Satya Nadella serves as an illustration of the efficacy of leadership-driven communication, as the company's culture shifted toward collaboration and creativity thanks in large part to open communication and employee participation (Palmer et al., 2017).

Employees must feel heard and appreciated during the change for communication to be effective, and it must be a two-way process (Kotter, 2014). Regular team briefings, suggestion boxes, and specialist digital feedback platforms are examples of structured internal communication techniques that help ensure that employees' problems are systematically gathered and handled, promoting psychological safety and a sense of inclusion (Abrantes et al., 2024). People are encouraged to voice their issues and opinions by establishing feedback channels including open forums, anonymous reporting tools, and employee surveys (Gilley et al., 2009). Regular feedback loops, according to Palmer et al. (2017), let organizations identify new resistance early on and take proactive measures to address issues before they become serious problems. Leadership that actively listens builds trust and gives staff members a sense of control over the transformation process (Ford et al., 2008). Silva and Correia (2022) claim that organizations that use participatory communication techniques see decreased resistance to change and increased levels of commitment. Unilever's sustainability transition serves as a real-world illustration of this strategy, as it integrated employee-driven projects into the organization's larger transformation plan, encouraging increased ownership and involvement (Palmer et al., 2017).

Organizations' approaches to communicating throughout change processes have been affected and altered by the increased emphasis on digital transformation. Digital

tools should be viewed as facilitators of more strategic, inclusive, and responsive interaction within the organization rather than as distinct from traditional communication paradigms (Kotter, 2014). Staff members can actively participate in the change process and share ideas in real time by using internal digital platforms such as discussion boards, feedback dashboards, and collaboration software. This improves engagement and alignment (Abrantes et al., 2024). When combined with participatory communication strategies, these tools ensure that digital channels not only disseminate information but also encourage conversation, reflection, and co-creation of solutions (Gomes & Romão, 2013). By combining traditional communication methods with interactive, technologically enabled approaches, organizations can increase transparency, build trust, and reduce resistance to change.

Digital collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Zoom have become crucial for maintaining engagement and operational coherence during transition as organizations increasingly function in remote and hybrid work environments (Palmer et al., 2017). In situations involving rapid change, these platforms facilitate knowledge exchange, facilitate real-time communication, and enable flexible decision-making (Baptista et al., 2020).

Crucially, the incorporation of digital technologies allows for two-way communication, which is critical for fostering trust and reducing opposition. Employees feel heard at every stage of the process because to participatory communication methods that use digital platforms, as Silva and Correia (2022) note. This process is further improved by AI-powered feedback systems that record sentiment and behavioral data in real time. Mukhlis and Tyas (2024) assert that companies who use AI-driven data into their communication strategy are in a better position to spot resistance early on, track engagement patterns, and take proactive measures with focused interventions.

Digital communication should be incorporated into the larger change story rather than being seen as a technological add-on. According to Leitner (2023), in order to enable both top-down clarity and bottom-up involvement, effective digital communication needs to be integrated into larger leadership and organizational culture strategies. Structured digital channels, like internal platforms for discussion, feedback, and knowledge sharing, allow employees to actively participate in the transformation process, which enhances a sense of ownership and involvement (Abrantes et al., 2024). Digital communication that adheres to participatory tactics promotes conversation, self-reflection, and cooperative problem-solving in addition to disseminating information (Gomes and Romão, 2013).

Throughout the change journey, this alignment guarantees that communication stays not just timely and accessible but also emotionally intelligent and strategically coherent (Leitner, 2023).

In finally, digital transformation changes how communication is organized, distributed, and experienced throughout the company in addition to the tools that are utilized. Digital communication, when effectively integrated, becomes a key component of effective change management, promoting active engagement, clarity, and alignment at all organizational levels (Palmer et al., 2017; Silva & Correia, 2022).

Effective communication influences how employees view, react to, and participate in transformation projects, which in turn acts as a catalyst for successful organizational change (Kotter, 2014). While transparent and engaging communication boosts morale, builds trust, and promotes an adaptable culture, poorly managed communication increases uncertainty, erodes leadership credibility, and encourages resistance (Palmer et al., 2017). In order to guarantee that messages uphold consistency throughout the process and reinforce strategic goals, Gomes and Romão (2013) stress the significance of coordinating communication strategies with more comprehensive change management frameworks. Furthermore, Abrantes et al. (2024) note that staff members can participate more actively in change processes when internal communication systems support collaborative conversations, two-way feedback, and participatory decision-making. This increases commitment and decreases resistance. According to Ford et al. (2008), companies that make investments in organized, interactive, and technology-enabled communication strategies see increased long-term agility, easier transitions, and higher employee morale. Effective change communication will continue to be a key factor in determining transformation success as companies operate in increasingly complex and fast-paced contexts (Palmer et al., 2017).

2.5 Best Practices for Managing Organizational Change

In order to effectively manage organizational transformation and negotiate the complexity of change, theoretical models, evidence-based methodologies, and real-world applications must be purposefully integrated (Kotter, 2014). In order to ensure that change initiatives are in line with both strategic objectives and the human factors that impact performance, organizations need to find a balance between structure and flexibility (Palmer et al., 2017). Organizations that do not implement organized change

management techniques frequently encounter heightened opposition, operational inefficiencies, and a decline in employee engagement, all of which impede long-term performance (Mukhlis and Tyas, 2024).

Making sure that technological and human elements are handled holistically to maintain transformation is a major problem in change management (Silva & Correia, 2022). According to research, companies are more likely to produce successful, long-term results when they approach change with a defined theoretical framework and a systematic implementation strategy (Gomes & Romão, 2013). According to Palmer et al. (2017), models like Bridges' Transition Model and Kotter's (2014) 8-Step Model provide systematic approaches that incorporate technical, strategic, and emotional factors into change initiatives. On the other hand, companies that don't match their transformation initiatives with workplace culture and employee expectations frequently face ingrained opposition and decreased flexibility (Leitner, 2023).

According to Baptista et al. (2020), organizations should develop agility instead of depending on static transformation models in the digital age, where change must be viewed as an ongoing and changing process. Organizations must create hybrid strategies that combine top-down strategic leadership with bottom-up employee participation in order to cultivate an adaptable workforce due to the rapid speed of digital transformation (Leitner, 2023). In order to achieve sustainable transformation, this section examines best practices for managing organizational change, emphasizing the importance of leadership-driven adaptation, ongoing communication, emotional reaction management, and employee involvement (Kotter, 2014; Silva & Correia, 2022).

2.5.1 Employee Involvement and Engagement

Since employee involvement directly affects staff trust, commitment, and resistance levels, it is a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of organizational transformation (Kotter, 2014). According to Mukhlis and Tyas (2024), companies with highly engaged personnel exhibit better overall performance, decreased resistance to change, and more adaptability. Organizations must use technology to improve employee participation, communication, and engagement during change processes as digitalization continues to disrupt workplaces (Baptista et al., 2020).

Companies have used structured engagement programs in the past to empower staff members and include their opinions into decision-making (Palmer et al., 2017). For instance, General Electric (GE) introduced its "Work-Out" program in the 1980s, encouraging staff members at all levels to point out inefficiencies and offer solutions (Palmer et al., 2017). In line with Kotter's (2014) idea of broad-based engagement and coalition creation, this strategy decreased opposition by encouraging a sense of ownership and cooperation. Similar to this, Procter & Gamble (P&G) greatly increased employee buy-in and decreased resistance by implementing cross-functional teams in the early 2000s to involve staff in strategic decision-making (Gilley et al., 2009). The strategy used by P&G is consistent with Kotter's (2014) focus on building guiding coalitions and sustaining momentum via inclusive leadership.

Digital engagement tools are becoming more and more important in today's change management plans. Organizations now use digital collaboration tools, enterprise social networks, and real-time communication channels to help employees participate in transformation projects (Silva & Correia, 2022). According to Baptista et al. (2020), employees can participate in change discussions, offer ideas, and receive transparent communication from leadership through digital technologies like Microsoft Teams, Slack, and AI-driven feedback systems. In order to keep staff members informed and involved in restructuring initiatives, Microsoft, for instance, made use of cloud-based engagement systems during its digital transformation (Leitner, 2023).

Data-driven feedback systems, which offer real-time insights into employee issues and attitudes, further strengthen employee engagement. To evaluate employee morale, anticipate resistance tendencies, and proactively resolve problems before they worsen, organizations can use AI-powered employee sentiment analysis solutions (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). Employees can express concerns and offer solutions through structured digital engagement frameworks, like online forums, virtual town halls, and anonymous pulse surveys, which improve psychological safety and trust across change processes (Gomes & Romão, 2013).

Initiatives for digital learning and upskilling, in addition to communication, are essential for preserving employee engagement and lowering resistance throughout change. Digital mentorship networks, AI-driven learning platforms, and virtual training programs can help firms seamlessly integrate new technology (Palmer et al., 2017). During its reorganization, for example, IBM used AI-powered adaptive learning systems, which allowed staff members to learn new digital skills and lessen their fear of losing

their jobs (Kotter, 2014). To improve involvement during organizational changes, Google's "Project Aristotle" also used team-based digital collaboration tools, supporting Kotter's (2014) idea of enabling workers to take wide action (Lewis, 2011).

Since digital transformation is a major factor in facilitating internal employee engagement in a world that is rapidly digitizing, firms must give it top priority. Organizations may promote an inclusive, transparent, and flexible culture by integrating digital communication tools, AI-powered feedback systems, and virtual learning platforms (Silva & Correia, 2022). Organizations can increase involvement, lower resistance, and guarantee long-term success in change management by incorporating digital techniques into employee engagement programs (Leitner, 2023).

Employee engagement methods in multinational firms must also consider cultural diversity. In order to ensure that all employees feel comfortable participating and giving their thoughts, open forums and feedback methods should be tailored to cultural preferences (Kotter, 2014). For example, group-oriented activities may promote more collaboration in collectivist cultures, whereas focused one-on-one discussions may help individualist societies (Palmer et al., 2017).

2.5.2 Managing Emotional Responses to Change

Change frequently triggers emotional responses including fear, worry, and uncertainty, which can impede progress if neglected (Ford et al., 2008). By fostering an atmosphere that is emotionally supportive, leaders can help recognize and lessen these reactions. To address these difficulties, organizations might use focused techniques such as resilience training and mental health programs (Ford et al., 2008). By providing access to stress counseling services and hosting open forums, IBM, for instance, was able to effectively manage employee anxiety during its e-business transformation (Kotter, 2014). IBM's strategy is consistent with Kotter's (2014) emphasis on empowering workers to take action and clearly conveying the vision. IBM demonstrated the value of building trust and involvement throughout the change process by addressing emotional obstacles through open communication and mental health care.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and other mental health support systems have also been shown to help employees manage stress during times of transition. As part of its emotional support strategy, Johnson & Johnson created peer mentorship programs

and offered stress reduction courses during its global restructuring in the late 2000s (Husain, 2013). These workshops not only helped employees manage their fears, but also increased trust and decreased resistance, which is consistent with Bridges' Transition Model, which stresses addressing the human and emotional components of change (Palmer et al., 2017).

To address emotional reactions to change, resilience training is another essential tactic. The resilience-building courses offered by Google's "Project Aristotle" gave staff members the tools they needed to weather organizational changes and continue to be productive (Lewis, 2011). These courses focused on developing emotional intelligence, adaptability, and teamwork, all of which are essential components of a positive work environment. Likewise, during its global restructuring, Coca-Cola introduced team-based resilience training, which boosted employee confidence and prepared them for their changing roles (Palmer et al., 2017). Such activities are directly related to Kotter's (2014) ideas of empowering workers and providing a conducive environment for change.

Programs for health and mindfulness have grown to be crucial parts of managing organizational change, enhancing resilience training initiatives. According to the Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (n.d.), one prominent example is Google's 'Search Inside Yourself' program, which was created to improve employees' emotional intelligence, stress management, and mindfulness. This program has proven to be very beneficial in increasing employee adaptability during transitions, lowering workplace anxiety, and cultivating self-awareness (Essig, 2012). Google has established a systematic method for enhancing mental health by incorporating neuroscience-based mindfulness techniques into the workplace, which makes change adoption easier. In a similar vein, companies such as Salesforce have adopted digital wellness programs, including mental health support platforms and guided meditation sessions, to guarantee that staff members feel appreciated and supported during transformation processes (Essig, 2012). These illustrations show how structured mindfulness programs are becoming more and more crucial for lowering resistance and developing a diverse, psychologically resilient workforce.

Palmer et al. (2017) argue that managing emotional responses during organizational transformation necessitates a multifaceted approach that includes mental health support as well as resilience training. Organizations that incorporate these tactics into their change management frameworks can ensure that their staff are emotionally prepared to navigate uncertainty while remaining productive. Building trust, lowering

resistance, and encouraging long-term commitment to the change process all depend on these kinds of initiatives, as shown by IBM, Google, Johnson & Johnson, Coca-Cola, and Unilever.

2.5.3 Continuous Communication

Continuous and transparent communication is the foundation of effective change management. According to Kotter (2014), using consistent message guarantees alignment, lowers uncertainty, and increases engagement. A significant example is Ford Motor Company's turnaround strategy in the 2000s, led by CEO Alan Mulally. To build trust and transparency, Mulally conducted weekly meetings to update all staff members on goals, obstacles, and progress (Palmer et al., 2017). In order to guarantee alignment and consistency, Ford uses weekly meetings, which is a practical implementation of Kotter's (1996) idea of overcommunicating the vision. By using this tactic, all staff members were informed and inspired to strive toward common objectives.

To keep staff members informed and involved during its digital transformation, Coca-Cola also adopted a multi-channel communication strategy. All organizational levels were able to get clear and consistent communications thanks to this strategy, which included internal newsletters, leadership blogs, and frequent video updates (Husain, 2013). This approach is in line with Kotter's (2014) theory of overcommunicating the vision, which states that in order to keep employees aligned and moving forward during the transformation process, they must constantly hear and comprehend the change narrative.

Effective communication during transition requires not only regular updates but also the use of feedback systems. For instance, Unilever implemented an anonymous employee survey system as part of their sustainability drive, allowing staff members to voice concerns, pose inquiries, and recommend enhancements. According to Ford et al. (2008), this reciprocal communication increased trust and fostered a feeling of inclusion and cooperation. Organizations like Coca-Cola and Unilever show how ongoing communication improves engagement, upholds transparency, and facilitates the effective execution of organizational transformation by fusing top-down communication with bottom-up feedback.

2.5.4 Leadership and Fostering Adaptability

Successful organizational change is dependent on leadership, which must be inclusive, transparent, and trusting to help employees navigate uncertainty. Resilience and flexibility can be enhanced by empowering teams, promoting a growth mentality, and maintaining open lines of communication, as demonstrated by visionary leaders like Satya Nadella of Microsoft and the leadership of Southwest Airlines. As evidenced by Salesforce's "All Hands" meetings, recognizing achievements bolstered commitment and aligned employees with long-term objectives. These processes reflect Ford et al.'s (2008) emphasis on empathy and morale building throughout change, as well as Kotter's (2014) emphasis on innovation, urgency, and ongoing engagement.

The successful integration of organized change procedures and concern for employees' emotional transitions is demonstrated by the usage of Bridges' Transition Model and Kotter's 8-Step Model in several case studies. Examples from Coca-Cola, Unilever, and Johnson & Johnson show how balancing coalition building, empowerment, and open communication with emotional support may reduce opposition and boost trust. Organizations may manage change in a sustainable way because to this theory-practice combination, which fosters resilience, adaptation, and long-term transformation in dynamic and uncertain contexts.

3. Layoffs and restructuring

Layoffs and organizational reorganization have become standard strategic responses to competitive pressures, technological development, and global economic turmoil in today's dynamic organizational environment (Chhinzer, 2023; Davis, Robertson, & Reynolds, 2024). These methods were once viewed as last resorts, but they are now aggressively used by firms wanting to remain nimble, decrease operational costs, or realign their structures with new performance goals and investor expectations (Davis et al., 2024; Watkins, 2024). As part of larger initiatives to incorporate flexibility and creativity into their organizational structures, organizations are increasingly starting to restructure not just during times of crisis but also during times of stability (Davis et al., 2024).

Restructuring is defined as the process of rearranging internal processes, workforces, or structures in order to increase organizational performance and responsiveness (Davis et al., 2024). According to Chhinzer (2023), layoffs are frequently the result of such changes, particularly when there is economic pressure or a need for strategic restructuring. Nonetheless, a consistent concept of restructuring has not always been upheld in the literature. Prior viewpoints frequently characterized restructuring more narrowly as a downsizing or cost-cutting tool, as mentioned in a number of earlier studies (e.g., Wilma Hylén & Wilma Persson, 2023; Santos, 2022). On the other hand, more recent research highlights a systematic and multifaceted approach to restructuring, in which workforce adjustment is only one of many results. This transition reflects a changing perspective on organizational transformation, from a reactive, efficiency-driven act to a more holistic process focused on long-term sustainability and creativity.

To fully comprehend employee experiences during organizational transformation, it is necessary to address both the strategic goal of restructuring and the human impact of layoffs (Davis et al., 2024). Cunha, Guimarães-Costa, Rego, and Clegg (2010) define a liminal space as a period of transition marked by ambiguity, uncertainty, and renegotiation of organizational norms. Managerial narratives often emphasize efficiency gains, innovation, or market adaptation during this period. Leadership and communication tactics have a crucial role in determining whether employees see restructuring as a good opportunity or as a disruptive and destabilizing occurrence during this transitional period. This illustrates that, in addition to operational and financial results, the organization's ability to preserve employee engagement, fairness, and trust

throughout the transformation process should be considered when assessing restructuring effectiveness.

Layoffs are used for purposes much beyond cost containment. According to Huang et al. (2024), layoffs are significant and frequently traumatic organizational events that have a profound impact on how workers view their workplace, management, and future job security. Particularly when they are viewed as unjust or poorly articulated, they are regularly linked to detrimental psychological impacts, such as stress, anxiety, decreased motivation, and increased work insecurity (Ramlall, Al-Sabaan, & Magbool, 2014; Oliveira & Silva, 2024). These affective reactions have the potential to drastically reduce organizational commitment and productivity, which would eventually jeopardize the stability that organizations seek to achieve by restructuring (Huang et al., 2024).

During corporate transformation, internal communication is critical for strategic success. In addition to merely conveying information, it helps to control expectations, mold employee attitudes, and preserve faith in management. According to Watkins (2024) and Davis et al. (2024), effective communication can promote emotional adjustment, ease transitions, and bolster the validity of leadership choices. In contrast, confusing, impersonal, or delayed communication can lead to employee bewilderment, resistance, and long-term skepticism (Watkins, 2024). This emphasizes the necessity of internal communication as a strategic practice integrated into change management processes, rather than just an operational role. According to Cunha, Guimarães-Costa, Rego, and Clegg (2010), restructuring often places companies and employees in a transitional period marked by uncertainty and changing expectations, where leadership narratives are essential for establishing meaning and guiding behaviour. Employee reactions and interpretations of workforce reductions are greatly impacted by the way managers communicate and justify these changes in these circumstances (Watkins, 2024).

Starting with a concentrated consideration of the idea, motivations, and consequences of organizational restructuring, this chapter delves into the intertwined dynamics of layoffs and restructuring. Next, it provides a structural and legal definition of layoffs, specifically in Portugal and the wider European environment (Santos, 2021). The chapter then looks at the psychological, organizational, and reputational effects of layoffs for both the fired and the surviving staff (Ramlall et al., 2014; Oliveira & Silva, 2024). Lastly, it provides real-world examples of leadership communication during layoffs, highlighting the crucial procedures that either maintain or erode employee trust during organizational changes (Lewis, 2000; Watkins, 2024).)

3.1 Understanding Organizational Restructuring

According to Davis, Robertson, and Reynolds (2024), organizational restructuring is the intentional process of changing a organizations' internal structure in order to increase productivity, competitiveness, or adaptability. This transformation may include changes to organizational structure, departmental roles, reporting lines, or procedures, and it is commonly performed in reaction to external market movements or internal strategic realignment (Davis et al., 2024). Restructuring has emerged as a crucial tool for firms to adapt to changing circumstances and stakeholder expectations in the current organizational environment, which is marked by digital acceleration and post-pandemic uncertainty (Davis et al., 2024).

According to Davis et al. (2024), modern restructuring is frequently characterized as a proactive solution rather than a reactive repair, allowing firms to reconsider their value creation models and workforce initiatives in light of future problems. This is a change from previous ideas about restructuring, which usually came after financial crises or downturns. The authors claim that rather than only cutting costs, recent restructuring projects increasingly seek to integrate flexibility and innovation into the fundamental architecture of organizations (Davis et al., 2024).

Mergers and acquisitions, globalization, technological disruption, and the desire for digital transformation are some of the common causes of restructuring (Chhinzer, 2023). According to Chhinzer (2023), these factors force firms to reconsider their operational models, which frequently results in the removal of unnecessary procedures, the reallocation of resources, or the incorporation of new organizational units. Companies may need to invest in cross-functional teams and deconstruct old silos as a result of digital transformation, which would drastically change current job roles and processes (Chhinzer, 2023).

Notwithstanding the fact that enhanced agility and alignment with strategic objectives are frequently the main objectives of restructuring, its impact on people cannot be disregarded (Chhinzer, 2023). According to Davis et al. (2024), structural changes frequently lead to major job redesign, redeployment, or redundancy, which causes uncertainty and anxiety among employees who are unsure about their future duties. According to Davis et al. (2024), these emotional and cognitive reactions are further heightened when restructuring is coupled with inadequate communication or when the justification for the change is not evident.

Additionally, during times of restructuring, Davis et al. (2024) observe that employee involvement and trust in leadership frequently decrease, particularly when workers believe that the decision-making process is opaque or unfair. Consistent, compassionate communication is essential during the shift, as the emotional atmosphere of the company becomes a crucial factor in determining how change is embraced (Davis et al., 2024). Even when faced with uncertainty, employees who feel educated and involved are more likely to stay dedicated (Davis et al., 2024).

Restructuring initiatives do not always result in layoffs. As a cost-cutting approach, some restructuring programs aim to reduce staff; others, however, concentrate on reskilling, transforming, and redeployment of current talent (Chhinzer, 2023). Nonetheless, layoffs are still a common result of large-scale reorganization activities, especially when firms are facing financial difficulties or preparing for mergers (Chhinzer, 2023).

According to Davis et al. (2024), the effectiveness of restructuring is determined by a number of interconnected factors, including the degree to which employees feel supported during the transition, the organization's ability to regain stability and trust after the changes are implemented, and the timeliness and simplicity of communication. Communication not only conveys information but also influences employees' emotional reactions and sensemaking processes (Lagoa, 2021). Consistent, transparent, and empathic message can build a sense of inclusion and a shared objective, as well as reduce resistance and uncertainty (Chhinzer, 2023; Lagoa, 2021). According to Davis et al. (2024) and Chhinzer (2023), staff members may become even more insecure, disengaged, and distrustful if the relational and human elements of restructuring are neglected, such as acknowledging their emotional needs, providing discussion forums, and demonstrating obvious leadership involvement. These negative views have the potential to erode organizational cohesion, diminish employee morale, and harm the company's standing among the remaining staff members and the broader stakeholder community (Davis et al., 2024; Lagoa, 2021). As a result, effective management of employee relationships and perceptions during the restructuring process is equally vital as strategic and operational execution (Davis et al., 2024; Lagoa, 2021).

In a case study of a cluster of public schools, Lagoa (2021) emphasizes how communication strategies based on regularity, clarity, and obvious leadership involvement greatly lower internal opposition and promote unity and direction. Even in non-profit and non-corporate settings, her research shows that employees' perceptions of

the emotional tone and perceived transparency of internal communications have a direct impact on how they process, interpret, and perceive change.

According to Lagoa (2021), constant and empathetic engagement promotes not only functional coordination but also psychological safety and institutional trust among employees. In the face of structural change, this reinforces the more general idea that internal communication is a purposeful relational activity that can maintain organizational resilience, lower uncertainty, and influence employee attitudes rather than just being a technological means of information transmission. Such findings highlight the importance of emotional and culturally sensitive communication tactics, particularly in complex and unstable environments.

3.2 Defining Layoffs and Their Organizational Context

Layoffs are generally understood to be involuntary terminations of employment that are started by the employer and are usually motivated by financial, strategic, or structural considerations rather than the performance of specific employees (Pfeil, Setterberg, & O'Rourke, 2003). This sets layoffs apart from dismissals, which typically result from poor performance or disciplinary measures. Although layoffs are frequently caused by crises or financial downturns, they are not always reactive. They are now a more integral aspect of proactive strategic management, which helps organizations to reduce labor costs, change their emphasis, or streamline operations (Appelbaum, Everard, & Hung, 1999).

In the larger macroeconomic framework, layoffs are frequently associated with periods of consumer demand decline, industrial contraction, or pressure to cut operational expenses brought on by the recession (Chhinzer, 2023). On the other hand, they also happen during times of growth, especially when organizations try to restructure their staff to accommodate changing technical or strategic demands. Particularly evident in industries like information technology and telecommunications, which are frequently early adopters of digital innovation and thus more exposed to quick structural changes, is the trend of job roles becoming redundant due to automation, digitization, and agile organizational models (Watkins, 2024). As digital transformation spreads, comparable dynamics are emerging in other sectors such as finance, retail, and manufacturing. According to Watkins' recent analysis of the tech industry's mass layoffs in 2022–2023, even the most inventive and successful organizations, like Google and Meta, used layoffs

to reposition themselves in the post-pandemic economy, which raises concerns about organizational identity and employee-employer loyalty.

Depending on the reason and anticipated length of time, layoffs in Portugal are governed by distinct legal frameworks that differentiate between different kinds of contract suspensions or terminations. One prominent instance is the "layoff simplificado" (simplified layoff) regime, which was implemented in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic and permitted firms to temporarily halt employment contracts or shorten regular workdays in exchange for partial state compensation (Santos, 2021). During a national economic and health crisis, this legal system was intended to provide emergency relief and agility while preventing mass layoffs and safeguarding jobs. National bodies such as Segurança Social Direta provide operational guides that outline the technical requirements for starting these layoffs, such as formal requests, accompanying documentation, and IBAN verification. Although operational difficulties and inconsistent adoption across industries were pointed out by opponents, these technologies guaranteed standardization and compliance.

Although the majority of research to now has been on the legal and administrative aspects of the "layoff simplificado" regime, some Portuguese academics have started to investigate the consequences for internal communication. According to Santos (2021), for instance, communication between employers and employees was frequently sporadic or reactive during contract suspension times, which increased workers' anxiety and feelings of uncertainty. Similar to this, Pinto (2021) emphasizes the necessity of open, prompt, and sympathetic internal communication as a way to reduce anxiety and maintain confidence in times of organizational crisis. Despite the fact that these studies do not only concentrate on the "layoff simplificado," they do demonstrate the need of internal communication in comparable job situations related to diseases. The Portuguese literature still has a significant gap in the form of thorough empirical studies that specifically address communication behaviors under this system.

Layoffs are frequently divided into two primary categories in academic and policy literature: temporary and permanent. Temporary layoffs indicate the interruption of the employment contract, with the option of reinstatement if organization's conditions improve. According to Santos (2021) and Appelbaum et al. (1999), these are usually employed for brief disturbances such seasonal downturns, public health emergencies, or particular operational halts. In addition to the legal and administrative differences between the two categories, this classification draws attention to the various strategic

goals and societal ramifications that underlie each workforce reduction strategy. For example, in order to prevent quick terminations during the COVID-19 epidemic, some organizations in Portugal and Europe implemented temporary furloughs under state-sponsored regimes (Santos, 2021). However, permanent layoffs, which are sometimes followed by severance money, reemployment assistance, or outplacement services, indicate a final termination of the employment relationship. According to Appelbaum et al. (1999), these can happen in situations like long-term restructuring, downsizing, organization mergers, or the liquidation of unprofitable divisions.

Research cautions against considering layoffs as solely technical or cost-cutting measures, despite the fact that they are frequently viewed as instruments to attain temporary financial respite or efficiency. Scholars are increasingly arguing that layoffs are organizational decisions that have significant social, cultural, and human repercussions. As Chhinzer (2023) highlights, institutional norms, managerial ideals, and stakeholder expectations all influence the decision to carry out layoffs in addition to economic necessity. How these layoffs are interpreted both internally and externally can be significantly impacted by the circumstances in which they are announced and carried out. Similar to this, Pfeil et al. (2003) emphasize the significance of preparation, empathy, and stakeholder-specific messaging, especially when informing the public, unions, and employees about layoffs.

In the end, research indicates that layoffs are not only organizational decisions but rather take place within broader contexts of social contracts, corporate ethics, and leadership rhetoric. In addition to financial indicators, its success or failure is determined by the degree to which the process is in line with the organization's long-term values, the openness of leadership communications, and the consideration given to the emotional and psychological reactions of staff members (Watkins, 2024; Lewis, 2000).

Inadequate management of layoffs can lead to serious negative consequences, such as a decline in employee morale, a decline in confidence in management, a rise in opposition to upcoming organizational changes, and harm to the organization's reputation (Watkins, 2024). The tone, clarity, and transparency of communication during layoffs are crucial in determining how employees feel and how the organization is viewed both before and after restructuring (Lewis, 2000). Employee trust is frequently damaged by layoffs that lack empathy or a clear explanation, which also increases the psychological toll on both those fired and those who stay with the company.

3.3 Impact and consequences of layoffs

According to Huang et al. (2024), layoffs are disruptive occurrences that have a significant impact on people, organizations, and workplace cultures. They are not just financial or structural decisions. The effects go far beyond the experiences of those who lose their employment; they also profoundly affect those who stay, changing the way workers view their occupations, their teams, and their managers (Huang et al., 2024). When layoffs are viewed as sudden, unwarranted, or inadequately stated, these procedures frequently result in decreased work engagement and increased emotional uneasiness (Huang et al., 2024).

Layoffs often result in high levels of psychological and emotional stress, including identity loss, frustration, and anxiety (Ramlall et al., 2014). Their capacity to prepare for the future and manage day-to-day living is frequently impacted by the uncertainty that comes with a layoff (Ramlall et al., 2014). This situation can be especially difficult for mid-career or older workers, who may additionally encounter obstacles to reentering the workforce and age discrimination (Oliveira & Silva, 2024). They are frequently in a worse situation than before, both emotionally and professionally, as a result of this combination of structural exclusion and emotional trauma (Oliveira & Silva, 2024).

Layoffs have an impact even on employees who stay with the company. According to Huang et al. (2024), the condition popularly known as "survivor syndrome" is typified by feelings of fear, remorse, elevated stress, and a deterioration in confidence in leadership. These cognitive and emotional disturbances frequently result in reduced production and a decline in organizational commitment (Huang et al., 2024). According to Huang et al. (2024), layoffs can cause a perceived break in the psychological contract, which refers to the unspoken expectations between employees and their employers. Employee engagement and performance may suffer long-term consequences if these expectations, like job security or fair treatment, are not met (Huang et al., 2024).

Layoffs have an impact on the organization as a whole in ways that go beyond personal and emotional responses (Davis et al., 2024). According to Davis et al. (2024), organizations tend to underestimate the long-term losses in talent, innovative ability, and institutional knowledge, even though the short-term goal is usually cost containment or operational agility. Workflow interruptions, a decline in team cohesiveness, and a decline in overall organizational performance might result from these losses (Davis et al., 2024). Additionally, companies that do not rebuild trust and openness following layoffs

frequently face increased turnover, disengaged employees, and damage to their reputation, as noted by Davis et al. (2024).

The necessity to treat layoffs as multifaceted processes influenced by many internal perspectives rather than as discrete judgments is further supported by this dual impact on organizational functioning and individual perception. Layoffs are usually framed as strategic and necessary responses to external constraints from the viewpoint of communication and human resources experts. These positions are frequently supported by stories of organizational survival, agility, or reinvention. Internal communication becomes a managerial tool in this context, with the goal of limiting reputational risk, decreasing opposition, and maintaining some level of order in the face of uncertainty. Conversely, workers frequently see the same information through an emotional and personal lens, and layoffs may cause them to feel less included, signal a breach of the psychological contract, and cause them to worry about the future. Official message that does not connect with lived experience can result from this misalignment in framing and interpretation, which can increase disengagement and mistrust within the organization.

The current study acknowledges this dissonance by using a dual-perspective approach to examine how organizational actors produce internal communication during layoffs and how impacted employees receive it. Through the collection of qualitative data from workers and decision-makers in various industries, the study aims to identify not only the strategic goals of communication techniques but also the symbolic and emotional meanings that employees attach to them. A more comprehensive knowledge of how internal communication affects long-term perceptions of fairness, transparency, and organizational identity in addition to the immediate results of restructuring is made possible by this method.

Organizations that engage in frequent or large-scale layoffs risk deteriorating their public image. In his analysis of leadership communication during the tech layoffs of 2022–2023, Watkins (2024) discovered that the impersonal tone and ambiguous explanation of layoff communications caused significant internal and external stakeholder backlash against companies such as Google and Meta (Watkins, 2024). Watkins (2024) asserts that executives' use of distance and passive language not only compromised workers' emotional requirements but also diminished the perceived authenticity of leadership. Layoffs in these situations evolved from organizational occurrences to symbolic events that altered employee narratives about power, identity, and trust (Watkins, 2024).

Additionally, these communication breakdowns have social and cultural repercussions. Layoffs often undermine employees' overall feeling of purpose and belonging, according to Ramlall et al. (2014), particularly when the transition process is devoid of human-centered tactics like career counseling, upskilling, or emotional support networks. According to Ramlall et al. (2014), this is especially important for workers from social categories that are more susceptible, such as senior professionals and workers who have dependent family members. Without proper support systems, layoffs have the potential to exacerbate social exclusion and deepen disparities in access to quality jobs (Oliveira & Silva, 2024).

The psychological, social, and cultural effects of layoffs paint a more nuanced image, even though they are frequently presented as necessary and logical organizational decisions (Huang et al., 2024). According to Davis et al. (2024), these effects are exacerbated when layoffs are carried out without consideration, openness, or a long-term reintegration plan. According to the literature, the way layoffs are handled and communicated can have a big impact on how employees react and whether the company comes out of the change stronger or worse (Watkins, 2024).

These outcomes emphasize how crucial it is to look at how people perceive and react emotionally to layoffs in addition to addressing their structural aspects. According to research, the fulfillment or violation of psychological contracts during organizational transformation has a significant impact on employee reactions (Chaudhry, Wayne, and Schalk, 2009). Moreover, during layoffs, managers' interpersonal practices, such as active listening, can have a big impact on how secure and in control workers feel (Kriz, Jolly, & Shoss, 2021). The increasing academic focus on cognitive and relational processes demonstrates that how change is communicated and managed is just as important as the change itself.

These findings are supported by Chaudhry, Wayne, and Schalk's (2009) sensemaking model, which stresses the use of a psychological contract lens to evaluate organizational events such as layoffs. Chaudhry et al. (2009) state that during disruptive occurrences, employees evaluate if their expectations of fairness, respect, and transparency are met. Employees are more likely to respond with skepticism, lower organizational commitment, or active disengagement when layoffs are viewed as violations of that contract, due to insufficient reason, lack of empathy, or exclusion from the process (Chaudhry et al. 2009). According to Chaudhry et al. (2009), these

interpretations have a significant impact on how the change is internalized because they are both cognitive and emotional.

Kriz, Jolly, and Shoss (2021) provide evidence in support of this, showing that communication style, namely the presence or lack of active listening, is a significant factor in how layoffs are perceived. By improving the perception of control over the issue, their research demonstrates that managers who practice active listening can lessen employees' job insecurity (Kriz et al., 2021). In turn, active listening helps reduce negative emotional reactions by promoting a sense of psychological safety and respect (Kriz et al., 2021). The feeling of betrayal and powerlessness, on the other hand, might worsen when leaders disregard criticism, steer clear of direct discussions, or just make official pronouncements (Kriz et al., 2021). When combined, the two studies indicate that employee responses to layoffs are influenced by the interpersonal and communicative aspects of the layoff process itself rather than only being the result of strategic choices (Chaudhry et al., 2009; Kriz et al., 2021).

3.4 Communicating Layoffs: A Case Study Perspective

In order to influence employee reactions, maintain company culture, and minimize reputational harm, communication efficacy during layoffs is crucial. Current case studies provide both warning stories and best practice examples of how organizations across many industries handle layoff communication. Emotional tone, announcement timing, and message framing can either increase fear and resentment or foster trust and clarity (Watkins, 2024).

Major companies including Google, Microsoft, and Meta carried out large layoffs between 2022 and 2023, making the technology sector one of the most notable examples in recent years. According to Watkins' (2024) analysis of internal memoranda from these organizations, CEOs frequently used distant, passive language, which exacerbated employee alienation. Watkins (2024) asserts that this rhetorical technique damaged leadership authenticity and employee trust, especially in companies that had previously fostered an innovative and open culture.

Although this linguistic distance may have been meant to diffuse the responsibility or lessen the impact, it frequently backfired by giving the impression that there was no accountability or escape. Such generic and emotionally detached messaging stood in sharp contrast to the established cultural narratives of companies such as Google and

Meta, who had previously positioned themselves as transparent, employee-centered innovators. Employees felt more betrayed and confused as a result of this dissonance, especially when official explanations for the layoffs prioritized shareholder interests over the welfare of the staff. According to Watkins (2024), employees saw the language not only as managerial tactics, but also as a symbolic shift in values, from openness and collaboration to opacity and unilateral control. At a time when relational communication and assurance were most needed, this rhetorical gap undermined leadership legitimacy and contributed to a breach in the psychological contract.

Furthermore, according to Watkins (2024), these letters frequently sought to address several stakeholders at once, including the media, investors, and employees, which led to conflicting messages. For example, after emails conveying sympathy and apologies to impacted employees, the company promptly assured shareholders of its ongoing financial stability (Watkins, 2024). Because they were unable to reconcile acts of compassion with corporate self-congratulation, this juxtaposition caused confusion and hampered employee sensemaking (Watkins, 2024). The tone of the leadership discourse in these circumstances frequently took on the characteristics of the "controller," emphasizing operational consistency at the expense of employees' emotional demands (Watkins, 2024).

In contrast, organizations that used compassionate, transparent, and consistent communication during layoffs typically saw improved post-layoff adaption and less internal backlash. Pedroso et al. (2023) conducted a case study on the Brazilian fintech Cora and discovered that the company's leadership took a straightforward and open approach to announcing layoffs, providing employees with advance notice, articulating the reasoning behind the decision in easily understandable terms, and providing tailored assistance like psychological counseling and outplacement services. Even among individuals whose contracts were terminated, Pedroso et al. (2023) stress that this proactive approach helped preserve some level of organizational trust in addition to lowering uncertainty.

Similarly, Hylén and Persson (2024) found a contrary perspective in the Swedish construction sector when they investigated how managers at mid-sized enterprises handled internal communication during worker reductions. According to the study, managers were seen as more credible and trustworthy when they actively engaged with staff members, provided frequent in-person briefings, and were accessible for inquiries (Hylén & Persson, 2024). By fostering mutual respect and a sense of direction, open, two-

way communication in these situations helped mitigate the negative consequences of layoffs (Hylén & Persson, 2024). On the other hand, managers who shied away from communication or assigned it to HR departments without being personally involved were perceived as evasive or distant, which exacerbated employee annoyance and anxiety (Hylén & Persson, 2024).

In Latin America, outplacement communication has arisen as a humanizing method for mitigating the negative effects of layoffs. According to Lamim et al. (2023), when employers frame termination as part of a bigger transition process, and provide resources such as career counseling, job search support, and emotional support, employees are more likely to see the experience as fair and manageable. According to Lamim et al. (2023), shifting the layoff narrative from unexpected loss to organized transition is critical for safeguarding organizational legitimacy and limiting reputational harm, particularly in industries where employer branding is key to competitive positioning.

One common theme unifies all of these instances: communication style, content, and delivery during layoffs are crucial factors that influence employee experience, emotional processing, and the organizational climate following layoffs (Watkins, 2024; Pedroso et al., 2023; Hylén & Persson, 2024). Not only does communication serve as a means of communicating results, but it also creates meaning, assigns responsibility, and transmits values. Even well-structured layoffs can cause corporate distrust, social division, and reputational loss when carried out without empathy or transparency (Watkins, 2024).

The results of this case study highlight the fact that internal communication is more than just an operational process; it is a relational and symbolic one that has a significant impact on workers' emotional reactions, sense of justice, and faith in management. According to Watkins (2024), the absence of compassionate language and explicit accountability in layoff announcements increases employee alienation and undermines leadership confidence. Similar to this, Hylén and Persson (2024) underline that open, honest, two-way communication during downsizing reduces emotional discomfort and enhances the perception of managerial integrity. Even among individuals who are directly impacted, Pedroso et al. (2023) show that proactive and supportive communication tactics, such as prior notification, tailored support, and open messaging, can maintain organizational confidence. According to these examples, the communication style used during layoffs has the potential to either strengthen or weaken

the psychological contract between a company and their workforce. As a result, layoff communication becomes a turning point in which organizational principles are tested and reputations are redefined, a dynamic that this study aims to investigate among Portuguese firms using a dual-perspective lens.

Watkins (2024), for instance, noted that a large number of technology companies in the wave of layoffs that occurred in 2022–2023 used generic, emotionally detached notes, frequently issued over email, with little chance for two-way communication. These communications made extensive use of passive constructs, which helped to obfuscate accountability and distance leadership from the decision's emotional ramifications (Watkins, 2024). Employees struggled to resolve narrative contradictions generated by the lack of direct responsibility and the simultaneous need to reassure investors (Watkins, 2024).

Cora's leadership team, on the other hand, provided direct conversations, individualized support, and emotionally grounded communication, which helped to mitigate the psychological impact of layoffs (Pedroso et al., 2023). Similarly, even in cases where the results included losing their jobs, supervisors in the Swedish construction industry who encouraged in-person conversations and kept lines of communication open were seen more favorably by staff members (Hylén & Persson, 2024). These instances show that when communication is organized with empathy, clarity, and accountability, companies may preserve trust and organizational coherence even in the midst of difficult shifts (Watkins, 2024). According to Pedroso et al. (2023), organizations can significantly reduce emotional distress and maintain a sense of fairness among departing employees by providing transparent justifications for layoffs as well as personalized support measures such as psychological counseling and career transition services. Similarly, Hylén and Persson (2024) discovered that workers reported better levels of trust, feeling appreciated and informed even in difficult situations, when managers told them directly about layoffs and were physically present for conversations. According to Watkins (2024), leadership authenticity is reinforced by avoiding passive or ambiguous corporate language, particularly in organizations that have established a reputation for transparency and creativity. Additionally, Lamim et al. (2023) contend that maintaining internal morale and public confidence can be achieved by implementing a humanizing outplacement strategy, which reframes layoffs as planned transitions rather than abrupt terminations.

Overall, these studies demonstrate that organizations that communicate layoffs with strategic care and emotional intelligence are better able to maintain institutional

legitimacy, employee goodwill, and operational stability (Watkins, 2024; Pedroso et al., 2023; Hylén & Persson, 2024; Lamim et al., 2023). These tactics not only reduce immediate opposition but also help maintain trust, minimize reputational harm, and maintain the engagement of the remaining staff members (Hylén & Persson, 2024; Lamim et al., 2023). Leaders may communicate corporate principles with clarity, empathy, and accountability. According to Watkins (2024) and Pedroso et al. (2023), this can turn a disruptive event into an opportunity to improve credibility and resilience.

4. Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used to investigate how employees view and understand internal communication strategies during layoffs and organizational reorganizations. Because organizational transformation processes are emotionally and socially created, a qualitative study approach was used to give priority to contextual interpretation, depth, and nuance (Godoy, 1995; Fischer et al., 2014). Internal communication during restructuring is both a technical function and a symbolic process that influences employee trust, morale, and sense of belonging (Watkins, 2024; Huang, Cai, Zhao, & Zhou, 2024). As a result, qualitative research provides the best framework for exploring how employees understand, assess, and process communication methods emotionally (Lewis, 2000; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

4.1 Relevance of the Study and Research Question

Internal communication is becoming more widely acknowledged in today's organizational environment as a strategic role that is essential to change management (Cornelissen, 2020). According to Davis, Robertson, and Reynolds (2024), layoffs and restructuring, once thought regarded as crisis management strategies, are now common strategies for adaptability and competitiveness. These procedures, however, run the danger of eroding trust and employee morale, particularly if communication is opaque, uncaring, or inconsistent (Huang, Cai, Zhao, & Zhou, 2024).

This research adopts a bottom-up perspective, investigating not only what was communicated, but how it was received. It builds on the work of Lewis (2000) and Armenakis and Harris (2009), who emphasize employee engagement and meaning-making as essential in change contexts.

Clear research questions are required to maintain congruence between design, methodology, and objectives. According to Creswell (2009), the entire methodological structure is guided by strong research questions, and Coutinho (2014) emphasizes their function in maintaining coherence across tools and phases. Furthermore, Prodanov and Freitas (2013) emphasize that research questions ought to be reflective of the actual phenomenon under investigation.

Research Question

How do employees perceive and experience internal communication during organizational restructuring and layoffs?

4.2 Research Objectives

This study seeks to evaluate how employees perceive and interpret internal communication strategies during organizational reorganization and layoffs. This is consistent with Kotter's (2014) claim that communication is not only a support mechanism during change, but also a driver of transformation.

Rather than testing hypotheses or measuring predetermined variables, the purpose of objectives in qualitative research is to direct a thorough investigation of participants' experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes (Godoy, 1995; Günther, 2006). They contribute to the study's interpretive goals by concentrating on how individuals construct, negotiate, and provide meaning to the phenomenon being studied, in this case, internal communication during organizational change (Fischer et al., 2014).

Specific Objectives

- 1. To understand which characteristics employees, associate with different internal communication strategies during layoffs and restructuring.**
This goal is to determine how employees view and distinguish between different communication strategies, such as transparency, personalization, timing, or tone, and how these aspects influence their experience of the organizational shift. (Fischer et al., 2014; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).
- 2. Investigate how employees perceive communication characteristics, such as clarity, tone, and inclusivity, and how these influence confidence in leadership, morale, and engagement.**
This goal aims to understand how employees see particular aspects of internal communication as either empowering or alienating during times of organizational transition. The subjective experiences that influence organizational dynamics are the main emphasis of this qualitative, participant-centered approach (Godoy, 1995; Fischer et al., 2014).

3. To explore how employees perceive and emotionally respond to internal communication during organizational change.

Analyze interview data to better understand employee meaning-making, emotional effect, and communication gaps. The importance of subjective interpretation in social research is argued by Coutinho (2014) and Prodanov and Freitas (2013), who are supported by this qualitative approach.

4. To provide evidence-based recommendations for improving internal communication strategies during periods of restructuring and layoffs.

Utilize the combined results to provide leadership and HR with useful advice. These recommendations will be based on the employee perspective and informed by models such as Kotter's (2014) Accelerate Framework.

These objectives guide the study's qualitative design, which is explained in the section that follows.

4.3 Research Design

In order to investigate how workers view and understand internal communication tactics during organizational restructuring and layoffs, this study uses a qualitative research design based on an interpretivist paradigm. The goal is to obtain a thorough grasp of how individuals impacted by organizational change experience, develop, and interpret communication rather than to measure variables or test theories (Godoy, 1995; Fischer et al., 2014).

Subjective perception, personal context, and emotional response are key factors in socially rooted and emotionally complicated phenomena like internal communication during layoffs, which are best studied through qualitative research (Günther, 2006). According to Bowen (2005), qualitative research allows the researcher to interact with participants' actual experiences and see how they interpret organizational processes in nuanced and frequently contradicting ways.

The primary approach to collect data in this study was semi-structured interviews. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), this method provides structure and flexibility, enabling the researcher to maintain thematic consistency among participants while also keeping an open mind to fresh perspectives and the distinctive ways that each

participant expresses their experiences. During interviews, participants were able to express how they understood, assessed, and emotionally processed internal communication received during restructuring events.

This study deepens analytical rigor by studying communication experiences across numerous organizational contexts and incorporates varied participant viewpoints. By using several sources or points of view to create a more thorough knowledge of a complicated event, triangulation enhances interpretative validity in qualitative research (Bowen, 2005; Fischer et al., 2014). Triangulation in this context refers to merging various organizational contexts, hierarchical roles, and experiential narratives rather than combining techniques (such as qualitative and quantitative). Because of this variety, the study is able to document both the top-down and bottom-up aspects of internal communication during restructuring, including the creation of messages as well as their reception and interpretation.

In emotionally and symbolically charged situations, such as layoffs and restructuring, when perception is greatly influenced by personal context, professional function, and corporate culture, such triangulation is especially beneficial (Lewis, 2000; Watkins, 2024; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). It allows researchers to investigate variances in meaning-making, find recurring themes across cases, and detect context-specific subtleties that might otherwise go unnoticed. In the end, this method encourages a more nuanced and contextually aware understanding of internal communication, not just as a technical information exchange but as a strategic and relational practice that molds trust, identity, and emotional involvement during times of organizational transition.

All interviews were conducted with informed consent, transcribed, anonymized, and prepared for thematic analysis. This process assures ethical rigor and allows for a thorough interpretive assessment of the content. The emphasis on emotional-symbolic aspects of communication and personal narratives is in line with the methodological suggestions made by Fischer et al. (2014) and DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), who stress the value of listening to both meaning and voice in qualitative studies of organizational phenomena.

4.4 Data Collection Methods

4.4.1 Data collection design and Participant Selection

Semi-structured interviews, which are ideal for qualitative research examining individual experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes, were the only approach utilized to collect data for this study (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This strategy allows the researcher to adhere to a consistent thematic structure while allowing participants to comment on issues in ways that reflect their distinct viewpoints and lived realities (Godoy, 1995).

For this study, 8 interviews were conducted and separated into two balanced groups. The first group was composed of experts who have worked through and led communication efforts during organizational restructuring or layoffs and hold decision-making positions in internal communication, such as managers or HR leaders. The second group consisted of workers who were on the receiving end of internal communications during comparable layoff or reorganization procedures. The construction and reception of communication strategies across various organizational positions were better understood because to this dual perspective.¹³

Interviewee	Date of Interview	Duration
Interviewee A	17/06/2025	11:40 min
Interviewee B	18/06/2025	7:10 min
Interviewee C	03/07/2025	10:46 min
Interviewee D	22/07/2025	14:02 min
Interviewee E	08/07/2025	18:33 min
Interviewee F	08/07/2025	09:58 min
Interviewee G	08/08/2025	13:49 min
Interviewee H	08/08/2025	07:01 min

According to Fischer et al. (2014), a maximum variation sampling technique was used to guarantee diversity and enhance the analytical depth. Participants were chosen

¹³ The full list of interviewees, including the interviewees names and respective organizations, is available in Annex I. All organizations are the same in both interviewee groups.

from a variety of industries, including banking, retail, and technology, with the goal of combining experts and employees from the same fields. A communication manager in the banking industry, for example, was paired with a worker who had gone through restructuring in the same field. Across professional roles and hierarchical levels, this sectoral matching allowed for comparative insights while preserving contextual consistency.

Participants were only sought from Portuguese national organizations, spanning a range of sizes and industries, including national cooperatives, public institutions, and private organizations. Both major corporations and small to medium-sized organizations (SMEs) were represented in the sample, enabling a more thorough investigation of how organizational structure and resource availability influenced internal communication in the Portuguese organizational environment.

4.4.2 Interview design and Focus Areas

Interview themes included:

- Perceptions of internal communication tone, clarity, and transparency
- Emotional and cognitive reactions to communication during change
- Feelings of inclusion or exclusion in organizational messaging
- Reflections on what constituted helpful or harmful communication
- Suggestions for improving communication practices in future change scenarios

In order to better understand how employees view, understand, and react emotionally to internal communication during organizational restructuring and layoffs, these topics were chosen because they closely match the research question and objectives. The significance of message tone and clarity (Lewis, 2000), emotional involvement and trust (Huang et al., 2024), and the relational experience of inclusion or exclusion (Watkins, 2024) are among the important characteristics that they express. These are also highlighted in the literature on change communication. As suggested by exploratory qualitative designs, the last theme, recommendations, enables participants to critically reflect on their experiences and contribute to practice-oriented results (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Fischer et al., 2014).

The interview scripts were developed in accordance with accepted qualitative research principles to guarantee thematic consistency, clarity, and compatibility with the study's objectives (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Godoy, 1995; Fischer et al., 2014).

¹⁴The questions were thoughtfully crafted to address important topics mentioned in the literature research, including opinions on communication tactics, feelings, leadership trust, and thoughts on organizational change procedures. To ensure that the interviews captured the creation and reception of communication practices, distinct scripts were created for professionals involved in internal communication decision-making and for workers who underwent reorganization or layoffs. The study's interpretivist and exploratory goals were supported by the script design process, which gave priority to open-ended, non-leading questions that prompted participants to offer in-depth accounts and subjective interpretations (Bowen, 2005; Günther, 2006).

Depending on the interviewee's availability and preference, the interviews were either performed online or in person. Because Portuguese is the interviewee's mother tongue, the interviews were conducted in that language to make the interview more accessible and to make sure the interviewees were more conformable. A participation agreement was given to each interviewee and signed prior to the interview. Every interview was audio recorded, and the author re-transcribed them after the interview. Free online software (TurboScribe) and the researcher's own self-transcription were used to create the complete transcription of the interviews.

4.5 Data Analysis Techniques

As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis was used in this study to examine the qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen because it allows for the detection, grouping, and interpretation of repeating patterns or "themes" within narrative data, a critical process for understanding how people generate meaning from internal communication during organizational change.

The analytical process involved the following steps:

1. Familiarization with transcripts
2. Initial coding

¹⁴ The full interview scripts used for professionals responsible for internal communication and for employees affected by layoff processes are available in the annexes (see Annex II).

3. Theme development
4. Theme refinement and interpretation

Using the qualitative data analysis program MAXQDA, which enabled transparent traceability of analytical decisions, visual mapping of theme linkages, and systematic coding, thematic analysis was carried out. This guaranteed methodological rigor and consistency throughout the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2009).

In addition to being mostly inductive and letting themes come from the participants' own stories, the analysis was guided by important concepts found in the literature, including timeliness, emotional tone, clarity, and faith in the leadership (Lewis, 2000; Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Watkins, 2024). These topics represent the key characteristics of internal communication discovered in the research objectives and interview methodologies. In keeping with the exploratory and participant-centered design of the study, this method endorsed an interpretive understanding of communication as a relational and emotional activity (Kotter, 2014).

Coding Process and Analytical Framework

A thematic analysis approach was used to examine the qualitative data gathered from the five semi-structured interviews. Two parallel code systems were developed after the data were transcribed, familiarized, and iteratively coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase technique. These systems illustrate the differences between the two participant groups:

- Communication Professionals
- Affected Employees

Because of their differing responsibilities in the communication process, one as initiators and designers of communication strategies, and the other as recipients and interpreters of these messages, one group was chosen to be distinguished from the other. Capturing the intention and the response to communication during organizational reorganization was the aim.

Deductive and inductive coding were combined to create the final code systems. The initial framework was led by predefined categories derived from existing literature on change communication (Clampitt et al., 2000; Lewis, 2000), which was subsequently improved by open coding of the transcripts to capture developing, data-driven themes.

Code System: Communication Professionals' Perspective

This coding structure captures the strategic and operational considerations communicated by the professionals responsible for planning and executing restructuring messages.

1. Communication Professionals' Perspective
 - 1.1. Communication Strategy
 - 1.2. Characteristics of the Message
 - 1.3. Communication Channels
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 - 3.3. Good Practices Identified

These topic patterns served as the foundation for the analysis and interpretation chapters, allowing for a comparison of strategic aims to actual employee experiences. The study gives a full knowledge of the communicative dynamics during organizational reorganization by evaluating both perspectives simultaneously.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

This study followed the ethical requirements of the Faculty of Human Sciences (FCH) of Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP), as well as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles.

Participants were given explicit written descriptions of the study's objectives and procedures. Participants were made aware that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they might stop at any moment (Creswell, 2009).

With the participants' permission, all interviews were audio recorded, and they were subsequently transcribed. The audio files were destroyed following transcription. To safeguard participant identities, pseudonyms were employed throughout the analysis and no personally identifiable information was gathered (Coutinho, 2014).

Participants were told they could leave the interview at any time or skip questions because layoffs are an emotional process. (Creswell (2009).

5. Results presentation and discussion

5.1 Results Presentation

The findings from eight semi-structured interviews with communication specialists and workers who experienced internal communication procedures during organizational change, more especially, during restructuring and layoffs, are presented in this chapter. Three main thematic categories, the viewpoint of communication experts, the viewpoint of employees, and the viewpoint of cross-cutting themes, as well as their corresponding subcategories were determined through thematic analysis.

5.1.1 Communication Professionals' Perspective

5.1.1.1 Communication Objectives

According to communication experts, improving people's perceptions of their job stability was the primary objective. Participants noted that employees' fears were alleviated when it was evident from the start that they wanted to keep their employment.

“The concern was for them to know that as soon as the hotel reopened, they would keep their positions.” (Interviewee E)¹⁵

Clarifying the rationale behind the restructure or layoffs, frequently considering outside influences like the COVID-19 epidemic, was another important objective. Employees were more likely to accept clear answers.

Finally, professionals stated their goal to reduce the emotional impact of the layoff by speaking in a calm tone, being close, and maintaining regular touch throughout the process.

¹⁵ This interview is in appendix H.

5.1.1.2 Characteristics of the Message

The message's four primary characteristics stood out as crucial for effective internal communication. Transparency and Clarity, professionals were aware that there were boundaries to what could be stated because it was unclear how long the measures would persist and or what measures would be implemented in the future, even though the majority of the initial statements were largely explanatory on the specifics of the situation.

People felt that their needs were being satisfied when they received direct, individualized communication, whether it was in person or with particular teams.

“People were called one by one, and it was explained what was happening” (Interviewee A).¹⁶

Empathy was demonstrated by word choice, tone, sensitivity, and in-person delivery. Frequency and Regularity Even if nothing new occurred, people enjoyed receiving brief updates on a regular basis.

“At the first meeting, everyone from the back office, the warehouse, and store managers were present. This was the first communication that was made. At the second meeting, which was shorter, we simply told the back-office team that the director of operations would be joining us, which had already been announced at the first meeting, but that he would actually be joining us and starting work.”
(Interviewee D)¹⁷

5.1.1.3 Communication Channels

Meetings, emails, letters, and direct oral communication were used simultaneously. When it came to formalizing decisions and providing official documentation, written correspondence, typically through email or letters, and direct oral communication as a first means of communication, was often delivered in person or over the phone, were the most popular forms of communication in these circumstances.

¹⁶ This interview is in appendix D.

¹⁷ This interview is in appendix G.

5.1.1.4 Challenges in Communication

Three typical communication issues were noted by experts. The first was ensuring that all employees received the message simultaneously.

“The challenge itself was to get the message across to everyone, wasn't it? To get the message across to everyone.” (Interviewee E)¹⁸

Second, managing anxiety and uncertainty sometimes made it difficult to develop thorough communication plans.

Thirdly, finding a balance between clarity and transparency can sometimes lead to the indirect sharing of personal data.

“The biggest challenge in these situations is always to do it well and try to be clear, but because it is a change for people, I think there are always doubts, questions, or anxieties in people's minds, and therefore there is always a fear associated with this type of restructuring, and therefore I think the biggest challenge is to try to communicate in a way that is as light as possible for people, and I believe, for example, that the moments after the communication, perhaps the first week, second week, first month after the communication, these are perhaps the most critical periods, when people will realize whether or not there has been a real change, and what that change looks like.” (Interviewee D)¹⁹

5.1.1.5 Perceived Impact of Communication

Because the explanations were direct and personal, employees largely accepted the decisions with little resistance, according to the interviews on the perceived impact of communication.

“The vast majority of people understood” (Interviewee A)²⁰

“Yes, I mean, it's always difficult to choose which members stay and which don't, but it's always difficult, anyway, but in any case, my concern was that these were the members I needed to be here in the office and who had companies that were operating, so that's how I made my decision, that is, the employees who had companies that were operating, because there were employees who had companies that were closed, they had more companies that were closed, and we had employees who had companies

¹⁸ This interview is in appendix H.

¹⁹ This interview is in appendix G.

²⁰ This interview is in appendix D.

that continued to operate, so that was my decision, and there was good acceptance because of that, because there was acceptance of reality.” (Interviewee G)²¹

However, there were times when friction arose because of the emotional impact associated with the situations, but it was rapidly resolved.

“It had a higher emotional impact than I expected, far more than I expected, I think, and everyone else too. But, on the other hand, good things also came out of the change, namely that people realized that there were things that weren't decided, because the daughter wasn't taking the action she said she would, so it had a strong emotional impact at first, but after a few days, it was calmer.” (Interviewee D)²²

5.1.2 Employees' Perspective

5.1.2.1 Perception of the Communication Received

Regarding clarity, employees' perceptions of communication were even; those who received direct communication reported a greater comprehension of the circumstances.

“It was clear to me that they explained it would be a temporary situation.” (Interviewee H)²³

“At first, there was a time when I didn't quite understand why I had to be laid off, but we quickly understood it. So, it was peaceful.” (Interviewee F)²⁴

5.1.2.2 Trust in Leadership

It was discovered that while unfair treatment or a lack of justification damaged trust in leadership, and direct, well-reasoned communication strengthened it. A lot of employees directly linked their perceptions of fairness in decision-making to trust; nevertheless, trust was also maintained in great part by their understanding of the issue and faith in the companies.

²¹ This interview is in appendix J.

²² This interview is in appendix G.

²³ This interview is in appendix K.

²⁴ This interview is in appendix I.

“And so, of course, I had confidence or knew that what top management was doing was appropriate. This reinforced my confidence in top management. Because I understood perfectly well that the only way to manage the hotel at the time was to close it and lay off the staff. I had no doubts about that. Especially because that was what was happening in all hotels and in all businesses.” (Interviewee F)²⁵

5.1.2.3 Emotional Impact

Initial communication was found to have a significant emotional impact, often evoking emotions of fear, insecurity and anxiety, especially with relation to income and stability.

“Of course, the news that I was going to be laid off was negative. It had a negative impact on me, but when I say negative, it was relatively simple. I didn't get depressed or anything. It was, look, it's annoying, it's bad, you don't know about your salary, your future, will we come back, will we not come back? But as I said earlier, it didn't last very long because I came back two months later. Right” (Interviewee F)²⁶

Maintaining a sense of security and motivation during the layoff period was facilitated by regular communication.

“That was the concern, was to always keep giving feedback” (Interviewee E)²⁷

5.1.3 Shared Perspectives Across Groups

5.1.3.1 Communication During Uncertainty

Participants highlighted the challenge of managing expectations in rapidly evolving situations. While ensuring that the employees were well informed on the situation, the interviews also explain the importance of being open to answer questions and build and maintaining a sense of trust with the employees. Most avoided contradictory messages, uncertainty about timelines remained a source of stress.

²⁵ This interview is in appendix I.

²⁶ This interview is in appendix I.

²⁷ This interview is in appendix H.

“The concern was that they didn't think, as this was something new, no one knew exactly what was going to happen, how long it would happen, how long it would last. The concern was that they knew their jobs were guaranteed. That was the concern.” (Interviewee E)²⁸

“Yes, exactly, it was about building trust with them, being there for them when they needed it, or when problems arose, and being someone they could talk to, exchange ideas with, and eventually make a decision with if necessary, but yes, being there and letting them see a little bit how I act, the questions I ask, the way I am in the company, so I think so, I think that was it.” (Interviewee D)²⁹

5.1.3.2 Recommendations for Future Situations

The three primary recommendations made for future situations, as viewed by both the employees who received the communication and the communication professionals, were to prioritize early, in-person announcements, provide ongoing feedback even in the absence of new developments, and modify communication styles based on employees' roles, seniority, and personal circumstances.

5.1.3.3 Good Practices Identified

Three important best practices were identified through the application of the suggestions made during the interviews. First, before sending a formal written notification, it is helpful to have a direct conversation with the employee. Second, to guarantee that the message is clear and consistent, managers should be briefed before any announcements are made. Third, giving explicit guarantees on the continuation of work whenever feasible may help foster trust and lessen uncertainty.

5.2 Discussion

With an emphasis on how employees perceive and experience internal communication during organizational restructuring and layoffs, this discussion analyses the study's findings considering the scope of current literature and the research objectives. The discussion connects empirical evidence to theoretical frameworks such as Kotter's

²⁸ This interview is in appendix H.

²⁹ This interview is in appendix G.

(2014) Accelerate Framework, Lewis's (2000) communication framing, and Armenakis and Harris's (2009) message consistency model. The four research objectives serve as the framework for the conversation, which progresses from identifying communication characteristics to discussing their perceived effects, emotional reactions, and evidence-based practice suggestions.

5.2.1 Understanding the Characteristics Employees Associate with Internal Communication Strategies

Effective communication during restructuring was consistently defined by participants as having clarity, transparency, personalization, and empathy.³⁰ This is in line with Fischer et al. (2014) and DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), who emphasize the need for accurate and relationally sensitive communication in organizational change contexts.

Kotter (2014) asserted that open communication during transition enhances leaders' credibility, and transparency and clarity were viewed as means of promoting trust. Personalization through direct one-on-one talks or personalized team messaging is highly valued, demonstrating that in changing times, relationship proximity is more significant than the efficacy of mass communication methods³¹.

Lewis (2000) argued that effective framing influences workers' emotional responses as much as the communications' substance, and tone and sensitivity, which are commonly conveyed through calming, empathetic language, supported this idea.³² By highlighting the importance of even brief, frequent updates, the study adds subtlety and supports Armenakis and Harris's (2009) emphasis on message consistency and reinforcement in sustaining change engagement.

Several interviewees stated that they felt lost when information was withheld or supplied late, and that they liked to have a direct line of communication and to be kept as informed as possible about the situation. Others emphasized that the lack of empathy in

³⁰ "A personal approach, face to face, raising awareness of the difficulties the company is facing, explaining the reality of the situation and, of course, subsequently communicating in writing and keeping employees informed of developments via email." (Interviewee G)

³¹ "I think it's important, in this case, to talk to me personally first, or verbally. For me, it's a positive thing, because a person doesn't receive the letter in writing, doesn't receive it, it's not a surprise." (Interviewee H)

³² "I would say that communication with an attitude, on that day and in the days that follow, must be super clear, calm, and transparent toward everyone involved in the restructuring." (Interviewee D)

message might contribute to a sense of being reduced to "numbers" rather than respected humans, and they emphasized empathy as a critical feature in communication during times of change. These stories demonstrate that employees' assessments extended beyond the factual content of communication to deeper evaluations of fairness, respect, and transparency.

Chaudhry, Wayne, and Schalk (2009) provided support for these findings with their sensemaking model, which examines organizational events like layoffs through the lens of the psychological contract. By evaluating whether their expectations of justice, respect, and transparency are met, employees use this model to understand disruptive events. Employees are more likely to react with skepticism, decreased organizational commitment, or even active disengagement when these expectations are not met, such as when communication lacks adequate rationale, empathy, or inclusiveness. Several study participants reported losing faith in leadership or emotionally disengaging when they felt that communication was evasive or dismissive, which helps to explain why. Such interpretations influence how employees internalize and react to organisational change, as suggested by Chaudhry et al. (2009). They are not just cognitive but also intensely emotional.

5.2.2 Communication Characteristics and Their Impact on Confidence, Morale, and Engagement

Confidence in leadership is strongly correlated with perceived fairness in communication, according to the findings. In line with Prodanov and Freitas (2013), workers felt that fairness included timely and equitable information distribution in addition to message substance. While inconsistent or delayed messaging weakened confidence, straightforward, well-reasoned answers increased it.³³

This confirms Kotter's (2014) claim that successful change communication necessitates and results in trust. When workers knew the issues leading to layoffs and restructuring, such the financial impacts of COVID-19, they were more inclined to

³³ "There is always a difficulty in choosing which members stay and which leave, but it is always difficult, anyway, but in any case, my concern was that these were the members I needed to be here in the office and who had companies that were operating, so that was my decision, that is, the employees who had companies that were operating, because there were employees who had companies that were closed, they had more companies that were closed, and we had employees who had companies that continued to operate, so that was my decision, and there was good acceptance because of that, because there was acceptance of reality." (Interviewee G)

accept decisions and remain involved. Lewis's (2000) claim that contextualization fosters acceptance is supported by this study.

Leaders who kept communication frequency even in the absence of new developments were able to retain engagement and morale, according to Fischer et al. (2014), who highlight regularity as a stabilizing influence in uncertain contexts.³⁴

These findings are in line with past research that emphasizes the costs to an organization of inadequate communication. According to Snyder (2021), inadequate communication not only lowers employee morale but also leads to frustration and disengagement, which in turn reduces productivity and increases turnover. By hindering cooperation and dividing organizational culture, communication silos make these problems even worse (Ruck, 2019). The stability of the company and the employees' sense of security are threatened by poor communication, which intensifies fear and mistrust, particularly during restructurings or layoffs (Kerber & Buono, 2004).

5.2.3 Emotional Responses to Internal Communication During Change

In line with Coutinho (2014) and Godoy (1995), this study confirms that employee responses to communication are embedded in emotional as well as informational processing. Initial announcements often provoked anxiety, insecurity, and fear, particularly concerning job continuity and income stability. However, as Prodanov and Freitas (2013) suggest, emotional reactions evolved as employees engaged in meaning-making processes shaped by ongoing leader communication.

Managers' availability to answer questions, verbal assurances, and regular communication all contributed to the reduction of negative emotions and the encouragement of adaption. This supports the contention of Armenakis and Harris (2009) that communication is not a one-time event but rather an ongoing process of sensemaking. Importantly, the findings suggest that the time and manner of communication affected the emotional impact more than the layoff itself. By emphasizing the moderating impact of communication quality, this research contributes to the corpus of literature.³⁵

³⁴ "Communicating with them without leaving them feeling abandoned, I think it's important to keep in touch, not necessarily every day, but to keep in touch, even if it's just a message asking if everything is okay, through the group." (Interviewee E)

³⁵ "Insecurity generates more anxiety, people become more anxious, which is not good for their health either, and ends up causing other illnesses, panic attacks, anxiety, and if there is assertive communication,

Expanding upon these observations, the study's findings are consistent with a range of literature that highlights the dual function of communication in influencing employees' emotional reactions and sense of inclusion in addition to their comprehension of restructuring.

These points of view are supported by the interviews that were done for this study. The way that information was conveyed consistently mattered more than the content itself, as participants emphasized time and again. Employees reported feeling more understanding of the situation and more willing to adjust to the changes, for instance, when managers provided verbal reassurances, empathic discourse and were available for enquiries. This bolsters the claim made by Davis et al. (2024) that the efficacy of restructuring is contingent upon the degree of support that employees get during the process and the speed at which confidence may be restored. Participants who considered timely updates and compassionate language as crucial to making sense of an uncertain situation also reaffirmed Lagoa's (2021) assertion that communication actively changes emotional reactions.

Several interviewees, on the other hand, claimed that if their emotional need were ignored there were no opportunities for conversation, they felt more insecure and skeptical. Chhinzer (2023) and Davis et al. (2024), who emphasize that ignoring the relational and human elements of communication might increase resistance and disengagement, are in line with these accounts. In this regard, the results of this study demonstrate that transparent, understanding, and emotionally responsive communication is necessary for effective restructuring, which goes beyond the implementation of strategies.

5.2.4 Evidence-Based Recommendations for Improving Communication

Following an analysis of all participants' viewpoints, three evidence-based recommendations emerge, putting into practice Kotter's (2014) Accelerate Framework in the context of layoffs and restructuring.

not necessarily daily, but regularly, so that people don't forget at home, don't say anything, will the hotel open, when will it open, So I think communication, at least with employees, maintaining more direct, more regular communication, in this case, I think is an important step for things to run more smoothly.” (Interviewee E)

First, highlight the necessity of making early, in-person announcements. Fischer et al. (2014) advocate for delivering crucial messages face-to-face whenever possible to express authenticity and empathy, as well as to develop trust and confidence with employees.³⁶

Second, continuous feedback loops are necessary. Keeping employees informed and fostering trust in the company can be achieved by maintaining communication, especially in the absence of updates (Lewis, 2000).

Third, the importance of tailoring the message to the individual's function, seniority, and personal circumstances, so reinforcing inclusivity and relevance and creating a sense of personalization throughout the message. (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Furthermore, the findings also emphasize the importance of pre-announcement briefings for managers in promoting message coherence, synchronizing communication goals, and preparing leaders to successfully address employee concerns.³⁷ According to Armenakis and Harris (2009) and Kotter (2014), these briefings ensure coherence across organizational levels and increase leaders' confidence in communicating sensitive information, reducing the likelihood of contradicting or inadequate signals.

The results also relate to more general debates in the literature on change management, which emphasize the significance of combining formal models with adaptable, human-centered communication techniques, in addition to these particular suggestions.

Transformation projects are most successful when theoretical models, evidence-based approaches, and practical practices are intentionally integrated, according to Kotter (2014) and Palmer et al. (2017). This study substantiates that assertion, as participants consistently reported that prompt, transparent, and emphatic communication made the restructuring process easier to understand and less intimidating. Mukhlis and Tyas (2024) emphasize that ignoring human aspects damages trust and long-term organizational

³⁶ “The communication was direct, verbal. In other words, the first communication was verbal. I think that's good, because the hotel management, the people in charge of the hotel, spoke to me directly and said that due to the current situation, I would be on layoff. And then we also received an email.” (Interviewee F)

³⁷ “At the first moment of communication, everyone from the back office, warehouse, and store managers were present.” (Interviewee D) and “before communicating, we first met with the managers, also to give them a briefing, so that when they received the communication they would not be taken by surprise. (...) And then, during the time they were at home, they always received feedback from their managers.” (Interviewee E)

effectiveness. In contrast, employees explained that if messages were delayed, inconsistent or impersonal they felt increased unease and disengagement.

Silva and Correia (2022) noted that constant transformation requires tackling both technological and human factors, which the interviews further support. Although structural or operational changes are frequently the focus of organizational restructuring, interviewees stressed the need of emotional recognition, communication, and trust-building as crucial components of change adaptation. According to Gomes and Romão (2013), structured methods are more successful when combined with tactics that take into consideration the lived experiences of employees. The necessity of adaptability and multifaceted tactics that combine top-down leadership with bottom-up employee participation is also emphasized by Leitner (2023) and Baptista et al. (2020). The study's experiences show how inclusivity and personalization boost trust during change, as employees felt more involved and at ease when they were given the chance to voice concerns and when communication was customized to their unique situation.

5.2.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how employees perceive and experience internal communication during organizational restructuring and layoffs, focusing on the approaches, characteristics, and emotional effects of such communication. According to the findings, which incorporate opinions from both employees and communication specialists, effective communication during times of change is characterized by clarity, transparency, individuality, and empathy. It has been demonstrated that these components, along with regular and timely updates, improve morale, promote a feeling of justice and inclusivity, and raise trust in leadership.

According to the findings, communication during organizational change is a relational process that affects employee engagement, emotional adaptation, and meaning making rather than merely conveying information. This is in line with the body of existing literature (e.g., Kotter, 2014; Fischer et al., 2014; Armenakis & Harris, 2009). By emphasizing how continued communication and leader accessibility act as stabilizing factors in uncertain situations even in the absence of new developments, the study advances the field even further.

Organizations undergoing restructuring or layoffs can benefit from the evidence-based recommendations that emerged, such as prioritizing early, in-person

announcements, maintaining up-to-date feedback, tailoring messages to specific contexts, and providing managers with pre-announcement briefs. Leaders can move beyond damage control and towards communication strategies that maintain organizational cohesion, minimize resistance, and preserve trust during times of disruption by incorporating these practices.

6. Conclusion

This research investigated how employees perceive and experience internal communication during organizational restructuring and layoffs. Layoffs and restructuring can lead to resistance, uncertainty, and worry, even though they are often necessary for an organization to stay viable. Internal communication has an important effect on how employees understand these developments, analyze their emotions, and respond to them. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information about the cognitive and affective facets of the experiences of workers who had undergone such procedures.

The research sought to understand which characteristics employees associate with different internal communication strategies during layoffs and restructuring; to investigate how employees perceive communication characteristics, such as clarity, tone, and inclusivity, and how these impact confidence in leadership, morale and engagement; to explore how employees perceive and emotionally respond to internal communication during organizational change; and to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving internal communication strategies during periods of restructuring and layoffs.

The findings demonstrate that workers value prompt, transparent, consistent, person-centered, and empathetic communication. Even when the news was negative, participants showed happiness with open communication. Followed by understanding of the staff's emotional responses and concerns, supported by readily available opportunities to ask questions and get clarification. Employees who experienced unclear or delayed communication indicated frustration, and mistrust. Participants also said that delivery style was just as important as content. Face-to-face even if in digital form, was seen as an essential step in the communication process that should be supplemented with emails or memos. Additionally, the communication felt more credible and cohesive when managers were briefed and in line with leadership messages.

This study contributes to the expanding field of research highlighting that communication is not just procedural but deeply interpersonal during organizational transition. It verifies theoretical perspectives from the literature on change management (e.g., Kotter, Armenakis & Harris) by showing that communication that satisfies both factual and emotional requirements maintains trust and participation. From a practical standpoint, the results provide organizations with practical advice, such as communicating early and frequently, even when all the information is not yet available, to guarantee message consistency and preparedness to answer staff enquiries, giving

managers enough time to prepare employee compassionate language that affirms the experiences and sentiments of your staff. It's important to avoid depending too much or only on text-based communication and look to integrate also, oral, face-to-face formats as well.

Several limitations should be noted, even if this study offers insightful information about how employees see internal communication amid organizational restructuring and layoffs. Initially, the study was carried out in a single nation even though the participants were from various businesses. The findings may not be as applicable to organizations in other nations due to the context-specific focus, since cultural, legal, and organizational norms may have a distinct impact on employee attitudes and communication techniques. The ability to generalize is further limited by the relatively small sample size; the experiences and viewpoints recorded in this study might not accurately represent the range of viewpoints seen in bigger or more diverse populations. Secondly, the study depended on participants' memories of previous occurrences, which raises the possibility of memory bias. The accuracy and completeness of reported experiences may be impacted by time, following events, or shifts in personal viewpoint, all of which can have an impact on memories of organizational change and layoffs. Therefore, rather than being an objective account of communication practices, the results should be understood as representing the subjective perceptions of the participants.

Lastly, although the qualitative, interview-based methodology offers comprehensive, in-depth descriptions of unique experiences, quantitative generalization is not possible. In order to better capture patterns over time and across contexts, future research might add to these findings with longitudinal designs or larger-scale surveys. These findings could be expanded upon in future studies by comparing employee perceptions across other industries, different countries, and organizational sizes; Monitoring changes in perception during the remodeling process by conducting longitudinal studies; Investigating the connection between different leadership philosophies and communication strategies during organizational change processes.; And examining the ways that digital communication platforms influence employee experiences during organizational change processes.

Employee safety, trust, and morale are always at-risk during layoffs and organizational restructurings. This study illustrates how these challenges can be mitigated or intensified by internal communication. When communication is open, honest, and caring, employees are better equipped to handle the emotional repercussions of change,

make sense of it, and maintain some degree of trust in the organization. When it is inconsistent, delayed, or dismissive of emotional reality, it reduces trust and creates resistance. Employees' immediate experiences during restructurings or layoffs are ultimately affected by how organizations communicate, as is the organization's culture, reputation, and future ability to adapt to change.

These findings also suggest that communication has a larger role in fostering long-term adaptability and resilience, going beyond the direct impacts on trust, morale, and organizational culture. From a wider angle, long-term organizational success depends on the capacity to incorporate both internal and external sources of change. Organizations are more likely to foster innovation, build resilience, and maintain competitiveness when they integrate strategic realignment with flexible reactions to outside demands (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). In order to create agile systems that can navigate a quickly changing terrain, leaders must bridge the gap between internal communication strategies and external organizational reactions (Palmer et al., 2017).

Modern restructuring is increasingly being described as a proactive solution as opposed to a reactive repair, allowing organizations to reconsider their personnel initiatives and value creation models in anticipation of future issues (Davis et al., 2024). With modern approaches seeking to incorporate flexibility and innovation into the organization's fundamental architecture rather than just reduce expenses, this represents a departure from previous perspectives of restructuring as a crisis response. Long-term organizational success, seen from a wider angle, depends on the capacity to integrate both internal and external sources of change. Organizations are more likely to foster innovation, build resilience, and maintain competitiveness when they integrate strategic realignment with flexible reactions to outside demands (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024). In order to create agile systems that can navigate a quickly changing terrain, leaders may establish a connection between internal communication methods and external organizational responses (Palmer et al., 2017).

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interviewee table

Interviewee	Name	Organization	Sector	Date of Interview	Duration
Interviewee A	Pedro Moraes	Cosntrubuild	Engineering and Civil Construction	17/06/2025	11:40 min
Interviewee B	Isabel	Cosntrubuild	Engineering and Civil Construction	18/06/2025	7:10 min
Interviewee C	Pauline Barreira	Portela Cafés	Food Industry – Coffee Processing and Distribution	03/07/2025	10:46 min
Interviewee D	Bernardo Marçal	Portela Cafés	Food Industry – Coffee Processing and Distribution	22/07/2025	14:02 min
Interviewee E	Maria Rosado	Neya Hotels	Tourism and Hospitality - Accommodation and Hotel Services	08/07/2025	18:33 min
Interviewee F	Pedro Teixeira	Neya Hotels	Tourism and Hospitality - Accommodation and Hotel Services	08/07/2025	09:58 min
Interviewee G	Lurdes Lopes	Gold Pen	Documentation and general accounting agency	08/08/2025	13:49 min
Interviewee H	Sandra Pereira	Gold Pen	Documentation and general accounting agency	08/08/2025	07:01 min

Appendix B - Interview scripts

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Maria Ana Camilo Baranda, and I am conducting research for my master's thesis at Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

My study explores how employees perceive and interpret internal communication strategies during organizational restructuring and layoffs. I am interested in understanding how communication processes are experienced both by those who design and deliver them and by those who receive and live through them.

Your insights will help shed light on how communication affects trust, morale, engagement, and adaptation during periods of organizational change.

This interview will last approximately 30 - 45 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential, and you are free to skip any question or stop the interview at any point.

Before we begin, do you have any questions or concerns?

Interview with Professionals in Internal Communication	
Topic/ Category	Questions
Background and Role	1. Could you briefly describe your current role and your experience with internal communication?
	2. During the period of layoff/restructuring, what was your specific responsibility related to communication?
	3. Could you please describe the situation of layoff/restructuring your organization as been through?
Communication Strategies	4. What were the main communication strategies your organization employed during the restructuring or layoffs?
	5. What were the communication priorities during the layoff/restructuring?
	6. How were decisions made regarding the tone, content, and frequency of messages to employees?
	7. Which communication channels (email, meetings, intranet, etc.) did you prioritize, and why?

Perceptions and Challenges	8. In your view, what were the biggest challenges in communicating change to employees?
	9. How did you aim to balance transparency with organizational sensitivity or confidentiality?
	10. How did you assess whether employees were engaging with or understanding the messages?
Emotional and Relational Aspects	11. Was the emotional impact of communication on employees taken in consideration? If yes how?
	12. How did you personally feel delivering difficult messages during layoffs or restructuring?
Reflections and Improvements	13. Looking back, what do you think worked well in your communication approach, and what could be improved?
	14. What advice would you give to other communication professionals managing similar change processes?

Interview with Employees who have experienced restructuring or layoffs	
Topic/ Category	Questions
Background and Role	1. Could you briefly describe your role at the time of the restructuring or layoffs? And How long have/had you been with the organization?
	2. How did you first learn about the restructuring or layoffs?
Communication Experience	3. How would you describe the internal communication you received during the restructuring process?
	4. Which channels (emails, meetings, personal conversations) were most used to communicate with you?
	5. What aspects of the communication felt clear or unclear to you?
Emotional and Cognitive Reactions	6. How did the communication you received make you feel emotionally?
	7. How did you feel regarding the communication process?
Trust and Morale	8. How did the communication affect your trust in leadership during this time?

	9. Did the communication influence your morale, motivation, or sense of belonging? If yes how?
Reflections and Suggestions	10. Looking back, what do you think was done well in the organization's communication?
	11. What do you wish had been communicated differently?
	12. What advice would you give to leadership about how to better support employees during future change processes?

Appendix C - Interview scripts Portuguese translation

Introdução

Obrigada por aceitar participar nesta entrevista. O meu nome é Maria Ana Camilo Baranda e estou a realizar investigação para a minha dissertação de mestrado na Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

O meu estudo explora como os colaboradores percebem e interpretam as estratégias de comunicação interna durante processos de reestruturação organizacional e despedimentos. Estou interessada em compreender como os processos de comunicação são vividos, tanto por quem os concebe e transmite, como por quem os recebe e experiencia.

As suas respostas ajudarão a esclarecer de que forma a comunicação afeta a confiança, o moral, o envolvimento e a adaptação durante períodos de mudança organizacional.

Esta entrevista terá a duração aproximada de 30 a 45 minutos. As suas respostas serão mantidas confidenciais, e poderá recusar-se a responder a qualquer pergunta ou interromper a entrevista a qualquer momento.

Antes de começarmos, tem alguma pergunta ou preocupação?

Entrevista com profissionais de comunicação interna	
Tema / categoria	Questões
Contexto e função	1. Pode descrever brevemente o seu cargo atual e a sua experiência em comunicação interna?
	2. Durante o período de despedimentos/reestruturação, qual foi a sua responsabilidade específica relacionada com a comunicação?
	3. Poderia descrever a situação de despedimento/reestruturação pela qual a sua organização passou?
Estratégias de Comunicação	4. Quais foram as principais estratégias de comunicação utilizadas pela sua organização durante o processo de despedimentos ou reestruturação?
	5. Quais foram as prioridades de comunicação durante os despedimentos/reestruturação?
	6. Como foram tomadas as decisões sobre o tom, o conteúdo e a frequência das mensagens para os colaboradores?

	7. Quais os canais de comunicação (email, reuniões, intranet, etc.) que priorizaram e porquê?
Percepções e desafios	8. Na sua opinião, quais foram os maiores desafios na comunicação das mudanças aos colaboradores?
	9. Como procuraram equilibrar a transparência com a sensibilidade ou confidencialidade organizacional?
	10. Como avaliavam se os colaboradores estavam a compreender e a envolver-se com as mensagens?
Aspetos Emocionais e relacionais	11. O impacto emocional da comunicação nos colaboradores foi tido em consideração? Se sim, como?
	12. Como se sentiu pessoalmente ao transmitir mensagens difíceis durante os despedimentos ou reestruturação?
Reflexões e melhorias	13. Olhando para trás, o que considera que funcionou bem na sua abordagem de comunicação e o que poderia ter sido melhorado?
	14. Que conselhos daria a outros profissionais de comunicação que estejam a gerir processos de mudança semelhantes?

Entrevista com colaboradores que vivenciarão reestruturação ou layoffs	
Tema / categoria	Questões
Contexto e função	1. Pode descrever brevemente a sua função na altura da reestruturação ou despedimentos? E há quanto tempo trabalhava na organização?
	2. Como foi informado(a) pela primeira vez sobre a reestruturação ou despedimentos?
Experiência de Comunicação	3. Como descreveria a comunicação interna que recebeu durante o processo de reestruturação?
	4. Quais foram os canais (emails, reuniões, conversas pessoais) mais utilizados para comunicar consigo?
	5. Que aspetos da comunicação lhe pareceram claros ou pouco claros?

Reações Emocionais e Cognitivas	6. Como é que a comunicação recebida o(a) fez sentir emocionalmente?
	7. Como se sentiu em relação ao processo de comunicação?
Confiança e moral	8. Como é que a comunicação afetou a sua confiança na liderança durante este período?
	9. A comunicação influenciou o seu moral, motivação ou sentimento de pertença? Se sim, como?
Reflexões e sugestões	10. Olhando para trás, o que acha que foi bem feito na comunicação da organização?
	11. O que gostaria que tivesse sido comunicado de forma diferente?
	12. Que conselhos daria à liderança sobre como melhor apoiar os colaboradores em futuros processos de mudança?

Appendix D - Interview transcription interviewee A

Entrevistador:

Então posso começar pela nossa primeira pergunta que é, pode descrever brevemente o cargo atual que tem na empresa e a sua experiência com comunicação interna?

Entrevistado:

Com a comunicação interna?

Entrevistador:

Com a comunicação interna.

Entrevistado:

Ok, está bem. Sou o diretor geral da ConstruBuild. ConstruBuild existe desde 2011, 2012 mais ou menos.

A comunicação interna tem tido uma evolução. Consoante também, a empresa tem crescido, ok. Tem crescido e neste aspeto a comunicação tem sido um bocadinho mais eficaz, mais elaborada, mais pensada, porque cada vez temos mais pessoas.

Ou seja, a empresa começou com 6 pessoas, 6, 7 pessoas e neste momento são 180. Por isso, a comunicação tem sido tendencialmente mais pensada e organizada, ok.

Como é que a gente tenta fazer a comunicação? Primeiro que nada, nós somos uma empresa que quase desde o início é certificada na qualidade e evoluiu para o sistema integrado da qualidade, higiene e segurança. Ou seja, obriga-nos a ter uma comunicação mais eficaz e mais regrada, ok. E nesse sentido, a comunicação tem evoluído nesse aspeto, ok.

Entrevistador:

Poderia descrever a situação de despedimento/reestruturação pela qual a sua organização passou?

Entrevistado:

Então, entramos em layoff na altura da pandemia, como muitas empresas, ok. Mas dada a natureza de alguns dos nossos serviços não foi um layoff total.

Entrevistador:

Claro que sim. E durante este período de layoffs que enfrentaram, qual foi a sua responsabilidade especificamente?

Entrevistado:

Uma vez que o diretor geral toma a decisão conjuntamente com a gerência e com a administração, em conjunto fizemos a comunicação aos trabalhadores, ok.

A questão é que não houve comunicação na totalidade dos colaboradores, uma vez que nem todos precisaram de ficar em layoff. Porque na realidade, uma das tarefas que executamos são tarefas das entidades públicas e as pessoas precisam de água e é uma das coisas que a gente fornece.

Ou que, no fundo, as empresas para quem a gente trabalha fazem o fornecimento de água e foi isso que obrigou a que muitas das pessoas estivessem a trabalhar na mesma, na pandemia.

Entrevistador:

Portanto, acaba por ser faziado ...

Entrevistado:

Foi pensado na altura quantas pessoas eram necessárias por cada cliente, ok. E dentro daquilo que nós fizemos, gerimos as necessidades do cliente, alguns ficaram de layoff, outros não. Estamos a falar aí de, sei lá, layoff ficaram 40% dos trabalhadores.

Até porque a maior parte dos trabalhadores trabalham na rua. A rede e o saneamento é uma atividade que não tem ligação com outras pessoas, ok.

Entrevistador:

Portanto, era possível manter-se.

Entrevistado:

Era possível manter-se, exatamente.

Entrevistador:

Então, e das pessoas que acabaram por estar em layoff, como é que foi passada esta mensagem? Ou seja, que estratégias de comunicação ou como é que foi feita esta comunicação?

Entrevistado:

Foram chamadas as pessoas uma a uma e explicado o que estava a suceder. As pessoas também têm conhecimento porque a comunicação social, de uma forma geral, comunicava para o exterior, as pessoas sabiam o que poderia acontecer. Depois foram chamadas as pessoas e comunicado. Ok. E por escrito. Também. Também prescrito.

Entrevistador:

Muito bem. Então, e dentro desta comunicação feita pessoa para pessoa e também por escrito, quais é que foram as prioridades que tiveram sempre em mente quando comunicavam? Ou seja, ser honestos, ser transparentes, ou assegurar às pessoas que na eventualidade haveria sempre algum sítio para voltar.

Entrevistado:

Sim, o layoff. Mas o layoff também não diz que a gente vai despedir as pessoas, não é?

Entrevistador:

Exato.

Entrevistado:

O layoff diz que elas ficam naquela situação numa fase, não é. Exatamente. Nós não sabíamos. Ninguém sabia qual era a fase. Se a fase era muito grande, muito pequena, não é?

Entrevistador:

Exatamente.

Entrevistado:

Por isso o que foi dito foi, nesta fase, enquanto não houver trabalho ou as entidades para quem já trabalhava não puserem na rua novamente a quantidade de trabalho suficiente para voltarem todos, as pessoas ficavam no layoff.

Entrevistador:

Ok. E durante este período de layoff houve alguma comunicação constante? Ou foi aquela comunicação do layoff?

Não houve alguma notícia ou informação?

Entrevistado:

Ficou combinado fazermos alguma comunicação depois personalizada, não é? Ou seja, confinarmos a cada um deles quando uma coisa se desse para voltar.

Entrevistador:

Ok. Então, acabou sempre por manter.

Entrevistado:

Sim.

Entrevistador:

Na sua opinião, quais é que foram os maiores desafios nesta fase?

Entrevistado:

O primeiro é financeiro, não é?

Entrevistador:

Pois.

Entrevistado:

Que é ter de dispensar as pessoas, pagar-lhes uma parte do ordenado, porque o layoff não era totalmente pago pelo Estado. Certo. E não produzimos e não faturamos.

As empresas não faturarem e não conseguem pagar ordenados. Então, quando nos surge uma situação destas, financeiramente é muito danificante, né.

Entrevistador:

Exatamente. Então, e agora, eu pergunto, como procuram equilibrar, a transparência e a sensibilidade nesta noção de, ou seja, acaba por ser confidencial dentro dos vários parâmetros de confidencialidade que está a haver o layoff dentro destas medidas, como é que procuram também fazer a transparência? Por exemplo, os cargos superiores percebem que vamos fazer layoff nestas medidas, como é que é acessado para os colaboradores, é total, estamos nesta situação.

Entrevistado:

Mas em relação a quê? Estamos a falar de quê?

Entrevistador:

Por exemplo, também das pessoas que ficaram cá enquanto estava a haver o layoff, se estava a haver uma comunicação bastante transparente e honesta ou se estava a haver uma comunicação mais seletiva, também para perceberem se os serviços que eles mantinham eram serviços essenciais, mas houve sempre, havia sempre uma dúvida de, será que vamos precisar de parar ou não, até por causa do estado financeiro da empresa.

Entrevistado:

Certo, certo. Essa questão financeira normalmente não é uma coisa que, na minha opinião, nem pode ser transparente para os colaboradores. Mas a questão de, vamos lá ver, todos os colaboradores que trabalham nesta empresa, e vamos lá ver, estamos a falar de três atividades em particular, construção civil, rede e saneamento e assistência técnica que têm a ver com os tais contadores de água e fornecimento de água, toda a gente sabe que são atividades, podem ser praticadas no exterior, na grande maioria. Construção civil, eu construo casas na rua. A rede e o saneamento, eu abro uma vala, meto conduta na rua. E a assistência técnica, é a tal situação que se eu não der água às pessoas, as pessoas vão ficar sem água, ou seja, todas as pessoas tinham uma noção que eram serviços básicos e essenciais, ok.

Por isso, sabiam mais ou menos à partida, só se a entidade reduzisse no seu todo a atividade, também teriam que passar para o lay-off, ok? Pronto, isso foi passando mais

ou menos, só que na realidade o lay-off foi muito repentino inicialmente, ou seja, aconteceu e foram todos, tiveram que ir e nunca mais houve uma redução, só houve um momento.

Entrevistador:

Foi naquele momento.

Entrevistado:

Foi naquele momento, ou seja, o que é que houve. Foram as pessoas voltando ao trabalho gradualmente, ok. Sim.

Entrevistador:

Então, e por exemplo, nesse voltar gradual ao trabalho, ou até quando saíram, como é que identificam, como é que acham que os colaboradores receberam a mensagem? Por exemplo, quando chamam um para dizer, vamos ter que entrar no lay-off, vai ser dispensado neste momento, como é que sente que as pessoas reagiram? Ou seja, eu percebo que é uma situação mais complicada, mas como é que elas compreenderam a mensagem?

Entrevistado:

A grande maioria das pessoas compreendeu, percebeu que, realmente, se eu não tenho trabalho, o que é que eu vou fazer? Não tenho nada para fazer, a empresa tem que me arranjar aqui uma solução. Só que as pessoas minimamente, pela comunicação social, foram informadas dos valores que iam receber ou não iam e nós também passámos um bocado essa mensagem, que era, olha, isto é 30%, ou já não me lembro muito bem mais ou menos qual era a percentagem que recebiam, mas era uma coisa mais ou menos parecida, ou seja, recebiam 30%, ou 70% era pago pelo Estado e depois 30% era pela empresa e era mais ou menos uma coisa assim, já não me lembro. Mas pronto, as pessoas estavam bastante elucidadas do que eu queria acontecer, por isso não houve nada transcendente em relação à reação das pessoas, foi normal.

Entrevistador:

Então, agora respondemos a várias perguntas ao mesmo tempo, já estamos quase a acabar. Olhando para trás, acha que esta forma de comunicação funcionou bem ou repensaria? Fazer de outra forma? Ou fazer da mesma forma?

Entrevistado:

Podia fazer da mesma forma ou talvez incidisse, sei lá, incidisse numa reunião global que não fizemos, podíamos fazer individual e depois uma reunião global, ou uma reunião global inicial e depois individualmente falar com cada um deles e explicar mais ou menos algumas dúvidas que pudessem ter, mas sinceramente a reação foi boa e não achei que fosse, vá, tivesse alguma reação negativa e que a gente agora fizesse assim, acho que correu muito a mal e por isso vamos ter que fazer isto uma próxima vez que aconteça, temos que mudar isto tudo. Não foi isso que aconteceu.

Entrevistador:

Não foi essa situação, ou seja, só apenas pequenos pormenores.

Entrevistado:

Podia haver um pormenor ao outro, a gente tem sempre uma tendência para melhorar.

Entrevistador:

Para melhorar, exatamente. Então, concluo perguntando, que conselhos daria a outros profissionais de comunicação que estejam a gerir processos de mudanças semelhantes, se calhar não o lay-off na pandemia, mas o lay-off quando necessidade.

Entrevistado:

Basicamente se calhar isso, fazer uma reunião global com toda a gente, falar genericamente para todos e mais ou menos dar de uma forma clara e concisa, olha, isto é o que vai acontecer, mas nós vamos falar com todos individualmente e vamos passar, perder aqui algum tempo e explicar as dúvidas de cada um e se calhar poderia melhorar um bocadinho isto, a forma de comunicar.

Entrevistador:

Já concluí. Muito obrigada.

Appendix E - Interview transcription interviewee B

Entrevistador:

Então, a primeira pergunta que vou fazer é se pode descrever brevemente a função que tinha na altura dos layoffs e há quanto tempo mais ou menos trabalhava na organização.

Entrevistado:

Aqui na empresa? Sim. Não me lembro bem, talvez 2016.

Estava aqui, a função era mesmo aqui agora, técnica de assistência à EPAL.

Entrevistador:

Ok. Então, entrou em layoffs, certo?

Entrevistado:

Sim.

Entrevistador:

Mais ou menos quanto tempo é que acredita que esteve em layoff?

Entrevistado:

Que foi, portanto, foi no início do Covid. Sim. O Covid foi ali no início de Março, não me recordo agora.

Entrevistador:

Foi uma questão de meses?

Entrevistado:

Sim, depois es
tive de baixa. Ok.

Entrevistador:

Portanto, não terá chegado a um ano, por exemplo?

Entrevistado:

Não, não, não, foi desde Março, talvez Março, Abril, não me recordo as datas, até talvez Agosto. Talvez a fase mais crítica do Covid, havia mais incerteza.

Entrevistador:

Exatamente.

Entrevistado:

Era tudo novidade.

Entrevistador:

Não sabia o que é que haveria de acontecer.

Entrevistado:

Exatamente.

Entrevistador:

Então, e quando é que foi informada, ou melhor, como é que foi informada que ia entrar em layoffs? Recebeu um e-mail? Telefonaram?

Entrevistado:

Não, não penso que telefonaram. Telefonaram?

Entrevistador:

Sim. Ok.

Entrevistado:

Porque também não estava a trabalhar, estive de baixa e havia menos serviço, menos gente.

Entrevistador:

Exatamente.

Ok. E como é que descreve a comunicação interna, ou seja, como lhe foi comunicado?

Por exemplo, ligaram-lhe?

Foi muito informal? Foi formal?

Entrevistado:

Não, não.

Entrevistador:

Foram próximos?

Entrevistado:

Sim, sim. Sim.

Entrevistador:

Então tudo normal? Sim. Pronto, já os canais que foram usados para comunicar consigo foi primariamente o telefone?

Entrevistado:

Sim, sim. Sim.

Entrevistador:

Ok. E achou que a comunicação foi clara? Na altura claro era um termo subjetivo porque também não sabiam quanto tempo é que haveriam de estar assim.

Entrevistado:

Sim, sim.

Entrevistador:

Mas dentro do possível achou que foi claro, não claro?

Entrevistado:

Sim, sim, foi claro, sim.

Entrevistador:

Foi sempre claro?

Entrevistado:

Sim, sim.

Entrevistador:

Ok. E agora, mais do seu lado, como é que foi recebida a informação? Porque já havia muita informação mediática sobre o que poderia acontecer em certas empresas, mas a pessoa depois também nunca sabe. Como é que recebeu essa informação de, vamos entrar em Layoff.

Entrevistado:

Com naturalidade.

Entrevistador:

Ok. E como é que se sentiu em relação a este processo de comunicação? Ou seja, preferia que lhe tivesse informado por e-mail, pessoalmente. Achou que se calhar um telefonema não bastou?

Entrevistado:

Não, foi... .Eu acho que bastou até porque, parece que na altura também não estava a trabalhar, portanto...

Entrevistador:

Bastou, foi claro? Ok.

A comunicação, ou seja, esta comunicação de, vamos entrar em layoff, afetou a sua confiança na liderança da empresa?

Entrevistado:

Não. Nada.

Entrevistador:

Ok. E afetou a sua moral, ou a motivação, ou a vontade de trabalhar, ou assim, por exemplo, o sentimento de presença?

Houve alguns colaboradores que ficaram na empresa e outros que infelizmente tiveram que entrar em layoff por falta de serviço. Afetou o seu sentimento de presença dentro da empresa, ou a sua moral, depois quando voltou para o trabalho?

Entrevistado:

Não. Porque isto também foi uma altura crítica, muito incerteza. Saber o que ia acontecer foi... Também era tudo novidade. Exato. Foi uma altura em que se calhar sentíamos-nos com mais confiança em casa que estar na rua.

Entrevistador:

Exato. Olhando-nos agora para trás, se fosse no dia de hoje, achou que a comunicação foi, até dentro da organização, não só consigo, mas dentro da organização, sobre o que estava a acontecer ou como iriam proceder, foi bem feita? Ou podia ter sido melhor, porque há sempre melhorias.

Entrevistado:

Acho que foi bem feita. Também não se sabia o que ia acontecer.

Entrevistador:

Claro. Gostaria que alguma coisa tivesse sido comunicada de forma diferente, ou receber alguma informação mais regular, ou com uma reunião.

Entrevistado:

Não, porque também acho que, de parte a parte, ninguém sabia o que ia acontecer. Certo.

Entrevistador:

Então, a minha última pergunta é, Que conselhos daria à liderança para, no futuro, apoiar mais os colaboradores em futuros processos de mudança que se deem na empresa? Alguma sugestão?

Acho que deviam mandar e-mails regularmente, fazer uma reunião geral para informar, se possível.

Entrevistado:

Quer dizer, neste caso..., neste caso se tornasse difícil. Pois, é diferente, era uma altura em que também não se podia... não podia haver juntamentos, tinha que estar mais sozinhas.

Entrevistador:

Exatamente.

Mas, retirando agora essa parte da proibição de contacto, haveria algum... Por exemplo, agora vamos mudar o nome da empresa, vamos fazer uma reestruturação, vamos mudar qualquer coisa cá dentro que vai levar a que certas pessoas mudem de area ...

Entrevistado:

Se fosse esse caso, se calhar seria melhor presencial, uma reunião. Exatamente.

Entrevistador:

Mas, por exemplo, o Covid acredita que se houvesse, por exemplo, uma videoconferência com todos teria sido positivo. Ou, se calhar, não teria acrescentado nada. Não.

Entrevistado:

Não . Como não era uma prática que se usava. Se fosse uma coisa que era costume fazer, se calhar tínhamos sentido mais essa falta.

Mas, como não era comum fazer as videoconferências.

Então, acho que, assim, foi o suficiente.

Entrevistador:

Então, em futuros processos de mudança acredita que a comunicação foi bem feita, por exemplo?. E podem manter a mesma linha de pensamento.

Entrevistado:

Eu penso que sim.

Entrevistador:

Ok. Eu já terminei.

Bom. Muito Obrigada.

Appendix F - Interview transcription interviewee C

Entrevistador:

Então, eu estou a fazer a minha tese sobre reestruturações e layoffs e é sobre a perspetiva do trabalhador, ou seja, do colaborador, em relação à comunicação da empresa nestes momentos. No caso específico da Portela Cafés, seria em relação à reestruturação, que está a acontecer mais ou menos, e é em relativamente, da parte dos recursos humanos, é como é que a comunicação foi feita. A minha primeira pergunta é se pode descrever brevemente o cargo que teve ou que tem neste momento durante a reestruturação.

Entrevistado:

Sou responsável pelos recursos humanos.

Entrevistador:

Ok. como é que foi informada a primeira vez desta reestruturação?

Entrevistado:

foi uma reunião que foram chamadas .Foi para todas as pessoas do escritório e, em termos de lojas, foi só as responsáveis de loja.

Entrevistador:

Ok.

Entrevistado:

Portanto, basicamente, eu soube um pouco antes, ou seja, 5 minutos antes da reunião, foi marcada uma reunião para uma hora e, uns momentos antes, chamaram-nos, a mim e ao meu colega supervisor de lojas, individualmente, para fazerem a comunicação e, assim, pronto, fomos comunicados todos, mas foi, basicamente, à mesma altura. Ok.

Entrevistador:

Então, como é que descreveria a comunicação, ou seja, que recebeu durante esse, neste caso, se foi a comunicação, se foi feita numa reunião, como é que foi feita mesmo a comunicação durante a reunião? Foi transparente? Foi aberta?

Entrevistado:

Sim, foi transparente e aberta, sim.

Entrevistador:

Ok. Pronto, agora já sabemos que foi uma reunião. Não houve qualquer tipo de mais de informação, ou seja, e-mails ou alguma coisa, foi só a mesma reunião.

Entrevistado:

Sim.

Entrevistador:

E que aspetos da comunicação é que lhe pareceram mais claros e os outros, e os menos claros?

Entrevistado:

Bem, a comunicação foi clara, simplesmente, se calhar, o que faltou ali um bocadinho foi porque, nesse mesmo dia, também foram introduzidos novos elementos na empresa e que, pronto, não foram, se calhar, apresentados da melhor maneira, falou-se, ou seja, no meio de toda a mudança e de haver uma pessoa que estava de saída e que outras pessoas iam sair, também houve outra pessoa que entrou, neste caso, até foi para o marketing. E também apareceu lá nesse dia e, basicamente, disseram que ela iria entrar para o marketing, mas não apresentaram, ou seja, pronto, isso foi o que eu disse, que achei que seria um ponto.

E tinha sido apresentada também formalmente, deviam ter pedido ela apresentar e se apresentar também. Mais, o que se calhar falhou, poderia não ter sido bem, também é parte da explicação, se essas pessoas iam trabalhar connosco diariamente ou não.

Porque há pessoas que entraram na empresa, mas que estão mais como consultoria e que

vêm só alguns dias, outros que não, que ficaram a trabalhar mesmo mais a tempo inteiro, portanto, se calhar houve aqui também essa parte.

Nós percebemos no dia a seguir, porque vieram, e percebemos que seriam para estar, mas não foi, é claro, essa parte da comunicação.

Entrevistador:

Ok. Agora, em relação a esta comunicação, como é que se sentiu, ou seja, neste caso, a sua perspectiva de, se já trabalhava na empresa há algum tempo, como é que se sentiu de receber a informação desta forma?

Entrevistado:

É a assim, acho que tendo o cargo que tenho de responsável pelos recursos humanos, acho que se calhar deveria ter sido advertida, ou deveria ter se calhar sido integrada no processo há mais tempo. Mas, pronto, acredito também, era um tema sensível, porque foi aqui uma reestruturação e também a nível familiar, portanto, sei que envolveu aqui também outras coisas, portanto, compreendi, mas, pronto, tendo o cargo que tenho, acho que teriam beneficiado, se calhar também, até se tivessem se calhar envolvidos os recursos humanos em todo o processo.

Entrevistador:

Exato. E a comunicação, ou seja, a forma como foi feita, afetou a sua confiança na liderança durante este período que está a ser a reestruturação?

Entrevistado:

É assim, não. Pronto, eu estou a falar tudo muito transparente, porque o Bernardo disse também que eu poderia fala-lo e tudo mais, mas não, porque assim, no fundo, pronto, nós trabalhando, não é? Eu tenho formação em Psicologia, portanto, houve sinais que eu fui interpretando e percebendo, portanto, estaria a esperar que ia dar algumas coisas, outras não tanto, mas, ou seja, já sabia que ia haver uma mudança.

Não sabia bem a que nível, ou basicamente, quem é que iria assumir, porque isto são dois irmãos, que um iria ficar, outro não. Bom, se calhar aqui não sabia era qual deles iria ficar, mas sabia que mais cedo ou mais tarde isso iria acontecer. Eu sabia que ia haver reestruturação e que estavam a fazer, então, esta negociação, mas não sabia através das pessoas diretamente dos administradores, ia sabendo, não é? ia a percebendo.

Portanto, por outras pessoas, como eu costumo dizer, por parte das travessas, eu acho que isso também, se calhar, não senti tão envolvida e se calhar não foi também tão, acho que mesmo para eles também não foi tão benéfico, porque eu estou há muitos anos na empresa, estou há seis anos, estou no Recursos Humanos, portanto, conheço as pessoas se calhar melhor do que as pessoas que entraram na empresa, que não os conhecem de todo e poderia ter ajudado em todo este processo e não me fizeram envolver. Mas, pronto, basicamente, fui apanhada de surpresa a qb.

Entrevistador:

Exato.

Entrevistado:

Mas, portanto, quando fui convocada para a reunião não me disseram, aliás, disseram que o tema era outro, entre as coisas, não emitiram o tema da reunião, também não. Eu percebi que não seria aquele tema, porque não fez sentido e eu percebi que seria uma comunicação, mas, de todas as maneiras, o facto de terem marcado uma reunião e também terem dito que o tema era outro também não me pareceu muito correto e pronto.

Entrevistador:

Pronto, então era o que eu ia perguntar. Agora, olhando para trás, se acha, agora também já respondeu, gostaria que tivesse sido comunicado de forma diferente, portanto.

Entrevistado:

Acho que sendo no Esforço Humanos deveriam ter comunicado antes, se calhar tinham de ter pedido ajuda para comunicar ao resto da empresa como é que poderiam fazer de melhor maneira e quiseram ou não quiseram envolver. Acho que são uma parte do meu papel e função do RH também, portanto, o facto de não terem querido envolver não me fez muito sentido, mas eles são os donos, são os administradores, eles sabem o que é que querem fazer, mas sim, enquanto RH, a minha função, acho que sim, deveria ter beneficiado mais.

Entrevistador:

Então, agora a minha pergunta é, enquanto RH, que conselhos daria à liderança sobre como melhor gerir processos de futuro?

Entrevistado:

Estou a falar, eu fui transparente e falei. Depois perguntaram e eu disse que sim, que deveriam ter feito de outra maneira, que deveriam ter preparado melhor, que deveriam ter apresentado as pessoas mais formalmente, terem dado as pessoas à frente e se apresentado e explicado o que é que vinham fazer, o que é que não vinham, o que queriam ficar, portanto, não foi nada que não tenha ficado por dizer, porque depois foi-me perguntado e eu disse.

Entrevistador:

Então, algum conselho agora, por exemplo, algum conselho nestas situações sobre a ideia de como acha que seria a melhor forma de comunicar?

Entrevistado:

Então, acho que é muito importante envolver os recusos humanos, porque eu não o tinha envolvido logo no início, mas pelo menos quando já estavam ali quase, quase, e a coisa já estava fechada, eles iam ter envolvido, porque sim, claramente, eu de certeza que teria *inputs* para dar, e pronto, também falei isso, acho que a reunião, eles deviam ter feito uma apresentação mais, deviam ter comunicado e se não quisessem misturar temas, porque era muita informação, podiam ter convocado duas reuniões, se calhar até diferentes, mas um dia comunicavam entrada e saída da administração e no outro dia entrada de novos elementos, querendo ser no mesmo dia, tudo bem, mas sim, deviam ter separado, deviam ter comunicado, então, realmente a entrada e saída dos novos administradores da empresa e a seguir deviam ter chamado as pessoas novas também irem entrar e assumir os cargos e que iriam estar presentes, para se poderem apresentar a toda a equipa, falarem um pouco também deles, para as pessoas também se familiarizarem mais, para também a pessoa não entrar ali um bocadinho de paraquedas. Exatamente. E pronto, explicar como estar connosco agora, ou os que não iam estar, explicar também será só alguns dias, e pronto, quais são os papéis, uma coisa muito resumida, mas sim, pelo menos fazer aqui um resumo mínimo do que é que é a função de cada um e o que é que esperar de cada um.

Entrevistador:

Exatamente.

Entrevistado:

Pronto. Se não quiser perder aqui a conexão.

Entrevistador:

Perdemos um bocadinho aqui. A conexão

Entrevistado:

Estou a perder ela. Não sei se sou eu a se é você que está aqui com problemas, se calhar sou eu. Está me a ouvir, está?

Entrevistador:

Estou a ouvir. Pronto, eu não tenho mais perguntas, não sei se gostaria de acrescentar alguma informação que eu possa ter escapado, caso pertinente, e eu agradeço desde já a colaboração.

Muito obrigada.

Entrevistado:

Muito obrigada. Boa sorte do trabalho.

Appendix G - Interview transcription interviewee D

Entrevistador:

Ok, a minha primeira pergunta é se podes descrever brevemente o cargo atual na empresa e a experiência com a comunicação interna.

Entrevistado:

Experiência com a comunicação interna em número de anos ou...?

Entrevistador:

Não, não, ou seja, uma vez que foste tu que tomaste as decisões, tu e mais alguém tomaram as decisões na altura da reestruturação, qual é que é o cargo atual e qual foi, pronto, a experiência que tiveste nesse momento?

Entrevistado:

Ok, então o meu cargo atual é de administrador e a minha experiência com a comunicação, lá está, no momento pareceu-me que foi, claro, foi algo que foi preparado, foi, maioritariamente, a comunicação foi lida e, portanto, a meu ver, tinha sido algo claro. No entanto, é óbvio que eu estava relativamente *biased*, pelo facto de ter sido eu a fazer e de saber tudo o que ia acontecer, para as pessoas, após conversas, ou conversas após o momento da comunicação, percebi que havia coisas que não tinham sido claras. Talvez, também, pelo facto de não ter havido nada apresentado, ou seja, ser tudo apenas falado.

Do modo geral, eu diria que estes foram os *highlights*.

Entrevistador:

Ok, então, neste caso, podes descrever, brevemente, só a situação de reestruturação que houve?

Entrevistado:

Sim, ou seja, aquilo que aconteceu foi, vai haver também uma alteração acionista, mas essa é irrelevante até para todas as pessoas da empresa, porque elas nem sequer sabem o

que vai acontecer, ok, mas aquilo que aconteceu foi, atualmente, hoje, na empresa, temos o fundador da empresa e os dois filhos, ok, e a comunicação que foi feita e a reestruturação que vai existir é que um dos filhos vai sair da empresa e o outro passará a assumir toda a gestão da empresa, ok. Esta, do modo geral, foi a grande mudança.

Eu também, foi anunciado que eu também me iria juntar à empresa e que, inclusive, outro diretor de operações iria entrar também. E, de modo geral, foram estas as alterações, não houve mais, não alterámos, alterámos, desculpa, alterámos também, de uma forma muito leve, a estrutura hierárquica da empresa, ou seja, foi uma questão de uma pequena reorganização, mas passar as áreas todas da minha tia para outra pessoa, com exceção de uma, que era a área financeira, que passaria a reportar diretamente ao Conselho de Administração.

Entrevistador:

Ok, então, neste sentido, as estratégias que usaram para comunicar, já disseste que foi, pronto, uma reunião e foi tudo verbal, certo. Então, e quais foram as prioridades de comunicação durante este momento?

Entrevistado:

No momento em que comunicamos?

Entrevistador:

Sim.

Entrevistado:

A grande prioridade foi mostrar às pessoas que nada alteraria no dia-a-dia delas, ou quase nada, foi mostrar-lhes que a nossa intenção é, simplesmente, dar continuidade àquilo que a empresa tem feito, como é óbvio, tentando ir melhorar coisas que sejam possíveis, mas uma linha muito contínua daquilo que tinha vindo a ser feito e mostrar que contávamos com, literalmente, toda a gente, não iria haver despedimentos, nada derivado a esta reestruturação.

Entrevistador:

Ok, e a comunicação foi feita só naquele momento, não houve mais nenhuma comunicação, ou seja, regular de alguma mudança?

Entrevistado:

Ainda não, ainda não, ah, desculpa, depois houve um, num segundo momento, mas com um quórum mais pequeno, ou seja, no primeiro momento da comunicação tiveram todas as pessoas do *back-office*, do armazém e os responsáveis de loja. Isto na primeira comunicação que foi feita, na segunda, houve uma segunda reunião que foi mais curta, e que foi só nós dissemos à equipa de *back-office* que o diretor de operações iria entrar, que já tinha sido anunciado também na primeira reunião, mas que, simplesmente, ele iria mesmo entrar e ia começar a trabalhar.

Entrevistador:

Ok, então...

Entrevistado:

Porque houve ali, agora só para te dar um contexto, desde o primeiro momento onde eu comuniquei que iria entrar o novo diretor de operações, eu disse, vai entrar o novo diretor de operações em junho, foi relativamente vago, e nós fizemos esta comunicação dia 28 de maio, e, portanto, houve ali um momento onde o fundador da empresa teve com dúvidas sobre aquela pessoa, e, portanto, demos o entregue de duas, três semanas a ver se conseguimos encontrar outra pessoa, acabou por não ser possível, e, portanto, foi a mesma pessoa, mas foi comunicada, a entrada dele foi comunicada um dia antes, só a dizer, olha, o novo diretor de operações, o António, vai entrar.

Entrevistador:

Ok. Certo. Então, na tua opinião, quais foram os maiores desafios na comunicação?

Porque uma vez que foste tu que comunicaste.

Entrevistado:

Sim. Não sei, eu acho que o maior desafio nestas coisas é sempre fazê-lo bem, e tentar que seja sempre de uma forma clara, mas que, por força de ser uma mudança para as

peessoas, eu acho que ficam sempre dúvidas ou perguntas ou ansiedades na cabeça das pessoas, e, portanto, há sempre um medo associado a este tipo de reestruturações, e, portanto, acho que o maior desafio é tentar fazer a comunicação de uma forma que seja o mais leve possível para as pessoas, sendo que eu acredito que, por exemplo, acredito sempre que os momentos posteriores são, se calhar, aquela primeira, segunda semana, primeiro mês após a comunicação, são talvez os períodos mais críticos, onde as pessoas vão perceber há ou não há uma mudança de facto, como é que é esta mudança, e, por exemplo, no nosso caso, não sei se isto é relevante para a tua análise, mas no nosso caso aquilo que passou a acontecer é, eu apesar de não estar, eu atualmente tenho um cargo de administrador não executivo, formalmente, ok.

Porque eu não trabalho ainda a 100% na empresa, e ainda tenho outro emprego. Ok, mas no meu caso o que foi super, eu acho super relevante foi começar-me a envolver mais nos temas das pessoas, tomar decisões rápidas e ouvi-los, e também estar lá presencialmente quase todos os dias no escritório, apesar de não estar a trabalhar executivamente na empresa.

Entrevistador:

Certo. Ok, então procuraste, ou seja, criar esta sensibilidade/confiança entre os colaboradores e a tua empresa.

Entrevistado:

Sim, exatamente, foi construir confiança neles, estar lá com eles para os determinados, ou os problemas que lhes surgissem, e que eu pudesse ser uma pessoa em que eles iam debater, trocar ideias, tomar uma decisão eventualmente se fosse necessário, mas sim, estar lá e eles também verem um bocadinho a forma como eu ajo, as perguntas que eu faço, a forma de estar na empresa, portanto, acho que sim, acho que foi isso.

Entrevistador:

Então, e nesse sentido, como é que avaliam que os colaboradores estavam a compreender a mensagem e como é que foram impactados emocionalmente, digamos assim?

Entrevistado:

Ah, eu acho que emocionalmente foi, num primeiro momento, ou seja, na primeira comunicação, foi relativamente forte emocionalmente, porque uma empresa familiar, as pessoas estavam habituadas a lidar com a filha há 30 anos, mas se calhar com uma maior proximidade até nos últimos 5 a 10 anos, que foi quando a empresa cresceu mais, e portanto, por ser uma empresa familiar, por ser uma das filhas, teve uma carga emocional, eu diria, mais alta do que eu estava a esperar, de longe, acho que eu e toda a gente. Mas, por outro lado, também vieram coisas boas da mudança, ou seja, que as pessoas aperceberam-se que havia coisas que não eram decididas, porque a filha não tomava a ação como dizia que tomava, portanto, teve uma primeira carga emocional forte, passados uns dias, foi mais tranquilo.

Entrevistador:

E essa carga emocional foi tida em consideração, ou seja, não estavas à espera que fosse tão forte, mas foi tida em consideração no depois, ou no esclarecimento das questões e tudo mais?

Entrevistado:

Já não me... eu acho que houve poucas questões no dia da comunicação. Aquilo que fizemos foi, após a comunicação, fizemos um pequeno lanche, tipo o volante.

Portanto, após esse lanche, podem ter surgido questões aí, mas já foi algo fora da reunião, e portanto, nem sei todas as questões. Mas não me recordo de ter havido assim grandes questões, e a carga emocional ter sido tida em consideração. Foi, mas lá está, eu acho que surpreende a toda a gente, porque pessoas a chorar, etc.

Ou seja, mais agressivo do que... ,agressivo entre aspas, do que o normal.

Entrevistador:

Certo. Então, e nesse sentido, como é que te sentiste pessoalmente ao transmitir esta mensagem?

Entrevistado:

Eu senti-me super tranquilo, porque achei que a mensagem foi clara, lá está, na minha opinião, etc. Mas senti que não haveria grande margem para dúvidas, e porque acima de tudo, nós, e eu em particular, sabia que não iam haver grandes alterações de fundo. Portanto, sabia que ia haver uma inquietação habitual de qualquer mensagem de reestruturação, mas eu sabia que mais tarde ou mais cedo, com o tempo, com as pessoas conhecerem, com o estar lá, etc, as coisas iam voltar ao normal.

Entrevistador:

Certo. Ok, duas últimas perguntas, que é, olhando para trás, consideras que funcionou bem, ou o que poderia ter sido melhorado?

Entrevistado:

Podia ter sido melhorado. Podia ter sido mais claro, podíamos ter feito, na minha opinião, também uma apresentação, e podia ter sido, se calhar, ainda... Podia ter sido um bocado mais detalhada a comunicação do que foi, e acima de tudo, acho que faltou um e-mail que saísse para toda a gente que esteve presente no final dessa semana.

Apenas para as pessoas ficarem com as coisas mais claras do que ficaram naquela altura. E nós pensámos em fazer esse e-mail, mas ao ouvir as pessoas percebemos que, de facto, não estava muito claro, e até o nosso *setup*, como nós achávamos que estava claro, não estava assim tão claro. Então, aquilo que nós procuramos fazer foi... Ainda não enviámos mais nada, desde o dia 28 de maio, e provavelmente só vamos enviar ali a meio de agosto, final de agosto, passados dois, três meses, onde vamos enviar um e-mail super claro, desenhar um organograma, e talvez até fazer, primeiro, uma comunicação só no *back-office*, e depois ir loja a loja, falar com os responsáveis de loja, mas enviar também este e-mail. Ok.

Entrevistador:

Então, agora, depois de repensado e de tudo, pronto, assentar um bocadinho mais, que conselho lhes darias a outros profissionais que estejam a gerir um processo semelhante?

Entrevistado:

Diria que a comunicação com uma atitude, no dia e nos dias a seguir, tem de ser super clara, calma e transparente, para com toda a gente envolvida na reestruturação. Acho que é o meu conselho, mas fazer tudo com o maior detalhe possível, pensando em todas e quaisquer questões que possam surgir. Tentar pensar em situações que afetem cada uma das pessoas envolvidas e pensar em cenários onde possa haver lugar a clarificações e tentar ter logo as respostas rápidas para dar às pessoas.

Entrevistador:

Perfeito. Já está. Obrigada.

Appendix H - Interview transcription interviewee E

Entrevistador:

A minha primeira pergunta é se pode descrever brevemente o cargo atual que tem na empresa e o cargo que tinha no momento, neste caso, de lay-off, certo?

Entrevistado:

Neste momento tenho como coordenador a profissional dos dois hotéis, do Porto e Lisboa. Na altura do lay-off estava como técnica de recursos humanos.

Entrevistador:

E durante o período, neste caso, dos lay-offs, não é? Qual foi a responsabilidade específica relacionada com o lay-off?

Entrevistado:

Acabou por ser o processamento salarial, não é? Acabou por ser o processamento salarial. Todas aquelas especificidades que houve em termos dos apoios que tivemos por parte do Estado, não é?

Nós processávamos o vencimento, neste caso era o vencimento mínimo, certo.

Processávamos o vencimento mínimo e depois éramos, ou seja, tínhamos o apoio por parte que foi só recebido no final, não era mensalmente. No final foi submetido o apoio e foi-nos dado o apoio na globalidade de todos os colaboradores.

Entrevistador:

Certo. Então. Quais foram as principais estratégias de comunicação?

Na altura as pessoas também já estavam um bocadinho cientes por causa da pandemia, mas como é que foi comunicado aos colaboradores aquilo que iria acontecer?

Entrevistado:

Pronto, foi comunicado, basicamente foi comunicado, nós fazemos muitos briefings e reuniões de chefias. Certo. Em parte do hotel, era operacional, funciona muito, por diariamente fazemos esses briefings, tanto com as chefias e depois é passado aos colaboradores, porque é muito difícil ter todos os colaboradores presentes.

Acabou por ser um pouco isso, o hotel fechou, é totalmente diferente, não é? O hotel fechou e teve que se tomar uma decisão de mandar os colaboradores para casa como lay-off. Certo.

Ficaram algumas exposições, porque tiveram sempre operacionalmente algumas exposições, a direção-geral, houve uma assistente-direção que cá estava também, o ecônomo, havia sempre algumas exposições que ficaram a trabalhar. Portanto, acabaram por usufruir na mesma do lay-off, mas ficaram operacionalmente, iam-se revezando, estavam uns hoje e estavam outros à manhã. Porque o hotel estava fechado, mas havia coisas que tinham que ser tratadas na mesma.

Entrevistador:

Exatamente.

Então, quais foram as prioridades da comunicação durante este momento? Até enquanto os colaboradores estavam em casa, se iam recebendo informações sobre a situação em que estávamos?

Entrevistado:

A preocupação era eles não pensarem, como isto foi uma novidade, ninguém sabia bem o que ia acontecer, quanto tempo ia acontecer, quanto tempo ia durar. A preocupação foi eles saberem que estavam garantidos os postos de trabalho.

Isso foi a preocupação. E ficaram todos garantidos, não dispensámos de ninguém por causa do Covid. Portanto, houve dispensas, mas dispensas normais de pessoas que já estariam identificadas e que iriam.

A preocupação foi sempre essa, foi eles saberem que assim que o hotel reabrisse, iriam manter as suas exposições. Tanto que mesmo durante, enquanto esteve fechado, houve sempre limpeza, houve sempre alguém que vinha a vir trabalhar também das limpezas, para manter a limpeza do hotel, a limpeza da cozinha. Depois também era preciso cozinhar pós que já estavam, também da cozinha também, manteve-se cá um.

A preocupação era essa e esse andando de feedback, eles têm sempre, temos sempre grupos de Whatsapp, de chefias e a comunicação é mais uma comunicação interna.

Ainda hoje funcionamos assim. Há alguma alteração, algo que falta, todos temos um grupo em qualquer departamento, temos um grupo e é através desse grupo que a gente comunica.

Entrevistador:

Certo. Então, neste sentido, quais os canais de comunicação, portanto foram as reuniões, o Whatsapp, Os briefings que faziam. Sim. Então, na sua opinião quais foram os maiores desafios de comunicação nesta altura com os colaboradores com os colaboradores.

Entrevistado:

Com os colaboradores. É assim, o desafio em si, era que a mensagem chegasse a todos, não é? Que a mensagem chegasse a todos. Eu acho que, por um lado, houve muita gente que não ficou muito preocupada com o Covid, porque ia para casa, recebia o salário na mesma.

Principalmente aqueles cargos que recebem o ordenado mínimo. Exato. Empregados de andar, roupeiros. Ficavam e recebiam o salário. Era igual, ficavam em casa, puderam estar com os filhos, porque as escolas também estavam fechadas. Estavam a ter escolas a partir de casa, portanto, acabaram por, até ficaram contentes, acho eu. Acho que muita gente ficou contente, muitos colaboradores ficaram contentes por isso.

A preocupação foi essa mesmo, foi eles não pensarem que iriam perder o seu trabalho e foi fazer chegar a mensagem a todos. E foi fazer chegar a mensagem a todos.

Entrevistador:

Certo, então, nesse sentido, como é que procuraram equilibrar, por exemplo, a transparência e a confidencialidade organizacional? Ou seja, havia coisas que não eram para ser ditas e havia também necessidade de transparência. Sim.

Entrevistado:

Como fazemos hoje em dia na mesma também, sem ser pelo Covid, pronto. Há coisas que não podem ser ditas, acabamos por as comunicar de uma outra maneira, não tão diretamente, mas mais indiretamente, tentando chegar, e às vezes usamos outro argumento em si para comunicar coisas que são mais confidenciais..

Acabamos por dar outro argumento, contornamos ali o problema e acabamos por dar outro nome à comunicação. Para que fique aqui a transparência, mas neste caso, eu acho que no Covid, como foi global todo, não fomos só nós os afetados, foi a generalidade do país inteiro, neste caso, do mundo inteiro, acabámos por ser transparentes, porque a comunicação social também, havia muita comunicação social sobre isso.

Entrevistador:

Exatamente .

Então, e agora já me disse, por exemplo, a parte que estava a receber os vencimentos mínimos, até quase que transpareceram, ficaram infelizes, mas os outros colaboradores, como é que pareceram.

Entrevistado:

Sim, os outros não tanto, não é? Porque afetou muita gente..

Afetou muita gente, afetou-me a mim também. Pessoas que tinham cargos com os ordenados superiores, acabaram por estar a receber o lay-off. Só que, por outro lado, também não estavam a trabalhar, não estavam a deslocar-se, a comprar o passe, não estavam a levantar-se de manhã, a gastar no almoço, no pequeno almoço.

Acabou por uma das... Acabou, eu acho que acabou por conciliar nelas duas coisas e acho que toda a gente acabou por ficar... A preocupação maior era talvez a doença em si, a preocupação das pessoas, o foco maior era não apanharem o Covid.

Exatamente. Porque naquela altura, agora o Covid, apesar de haver, já ninguém está preocupado com isso.

Entrevistador:

Mas era. Exatamente.

Entrevistado:

Naquela altura nós tínhamos a preocupação com as crianças, com os nossos pais, tivemos muitos... Eu não via os meus pais, não é? Não via as pessoas de idade, não íamos ver com medo de pegar, de que eles ficassem infetados.

Eu acho que o foco maior era mesmo na saúde. Estavam mais focados na saúde e não tão no monetário e em tudo o resto. Até porque também não tinham um sítio onde gastar o dinheiro, a maior parte.

Estavam mais focados com isso. Eu acho que era mais manter ali o posto de trabalho, garantir que tinham o posto de trabalho quando aquilo terminasse. Era a maior preocupação e era não infetar, alguns que apanharam, porque tivemos bastante gente no hotel, não infetar as crianças e os seus pais, as pessoas que estavam mais debilitadas e que podiam ter consequências maiores.

Entrevistador:

Então, nem neste sentido, ou seja, o impacto emocional da comunicação e do que estava acontecendo nos colaboradores foi tido em consideração e se sim, como? Eu acredito que tenha sido tido em consideração.

Entrevistado:

Sim.

Entrevistador:

Mas houve alguma estratégia?

Entrevistado:

O que é que fizemos aqui um bocadinho. Acabámos por... Também nós, como entidade empregadora, arranjamós solução para os testes, para fazer os testes.

Tinham os testes gratuitos, já numa farmácia que nós indicávamos. Nós indicávamos uma parceria que tínhamos e eles faziam os testes aí. Máscaras, todos os secretários, todos os colaboradores tiveram acesso a máscaras, a desinfetante, estava a fugir o nome agora.

O gel de... Sim, aquele gel que a gente usava para desinfetar as mãos e de tudo isso.

Portanto, acho que tivemos essa preocupação.

Tivemos a preocupação também daqueles cargos que depois, aos poucos e poucos, fomos abrindo, porque não tivemos também muito tempo fechado. Fomos reabrindo, não é? Tivemos a preocupação sempre daqui no local de trabalho de manter as condições que eles podiam.

Separámos, por exemplo, no refeitório, nós temos no refeitório, estamos todos juntos, separámos, só havia um limite de mesas. Fizemos horários também para o almoço.

Portanto, não ia comer tudo a qualquer hora.

E este departamento ia comer agora, cinco, seis pessoas que não tivessem... Estávamos com a distância mínima, acho que era um metro ou dois metros, que havia aquela distância mínima. Tínhamos as cadeiras a garantir esse distanciamento.

Certo. Fizemos horários também, para não comerem todos juntos. Uns comiam às onze, outros às onze e meia, outros ao meio-dia.

Também para não estarem ou não virem aglomerados.

Entrevistador:

Tudo ao mesmo tempo.

Entrevistado:

Para que eles estivessem descansados, para que depois não o levassem para casa. Não garantíamos que não houvesse quem estivesse na hora. Estávamos abertos ao público, recebíamos clientes.

Andávamos nos transportes públicos, que eram grandes problemas, porque os transportes públicos estavam cheios. Também houve muita disponibilidade de dar, nessa altura, o teletrabalho. Lá está, que demos o teletrabalho para as pessoas ficarem.

E só vinham semanalmente, quando era necessário mesmo. Certo. Não os operacionais, que é sempre mais complicado.

Os operacionais. Porque as empregadas de andares, por exemplo, não podem estar a limpar os quartos em casa. Mas tentámos aqui arranjar várias possibilidades, tudo o que era possível ao nosso alcance, para garantir que eles estivessem protegidos e protegessem os seus em casa.

Entrevistador:

Houve um momento em que fechou mesmo, em que foi tomada a decisão, e nesse momento teve de ter havido uma comunicação direta a dizer, a partir de hoje... como foi feita essa comunicação.

Entrevistado:

Sim, Essa comunicação foi feita, tanto por comunicação geral, que temos uma plataforma que fazemos os comunicados para que toda a gente receba.

Portanto, foi feita essa comunicação e depois foi feito também, antes de comunicarmos, reunirmos primeiro com as chefias, também para darem um briefing, para que quando eles recebessem a comunicação não fossem apanhados de surpresa. Certo. Foi uma decisão tomada, aliás, fomos obrigadas a fechar.

Exato. E se eles tiveram noção disso, e depois fizemos a comunicação. E depois, durante o tempo que eles estiveram em casa, iam tendo sempre feedback por parte das chefias.

Ainda não era para abrir, quando fosse para abrir que vinham, portanto, acabamos sempre por manter a comunicação. A comunicação foi sempre mantida com os colaboradores, não foram para casa e depois telefonámos e passaram 15 dias para vir. Houve sempre comunicação com as chefias, com eles.

Certo. E também para tentar saber como é que estava também em termos de saúde. Eles se apanhavam, se davam com o Covid, tinham família com o Covid, acabamos por ter assim, essa comunicação manteve-se sempre.

Entrevistador:

Boa. E então, as minhas duas últimas perguntas é um bocadinho mais a sua opinião, que é, o que é que considera que funcionou bem e o que funcionou menos bem e o que funcionou bem ou poderia ter sido melhorado?

Entrevistado:

É assim, ou se funciona tudo bem? Eu acho que funcionou bem, primeiro porque fechámos.

Tivemos que fechar mesmo, não é? E depois optámos por reunir e ver quais eram as pessoas essenciais que cá tinham que estar. Os cursos humanos não puderam parar, não é?

Claro. As pessoas, apesar de estarem em casa ou lay-off, nós tínhamos que processar os salários.

Tínhamos que processar os salários, havia coisas, sempre que estavam doentes tinha que nos reencaminhar a declaração para n'ós processarmos. haver sempre aquele eco, é algo, por isso é que também havia comunicação sempre, porque cada vez que alguém apanhava tínhamos aquele documento de baixa, que dava aquela baixa, no início estavam 15 dias, acho que era 15, mas passou já para 3 dias, mas pronto, essas comunicações tinham que ser encaminhadas internamente para a Segurança Social, tinha que ser dada essa informação, portanto, eu acho que, no meio de tudo o que aconteceu, acho que as coisas correram bem. Acho que, o que é que mudaria? Nada, não mudaria nada, tivemos o hotel fechado, com as pessoas cá certas que era necessário cá estarem, quando foi para reabrir, também tivemos por parte da equipa todo o apoio, porque tivemos que vir limpar tudo, não é?

Acabamos por ter que vir limpar tudo, porque principalmente a cozinha, houve muita coisa, tínhamos as arcas cheias, foi dado, em vez de se estragar as comidas demos a

instituições. Então, com a Ronald McDonald, e então nós apanhamos as pessoas carenciadas que vêm, que são internadas aqui no Hospital Dona Estefânia, o nosso hotel, enquanto tinha fechado, os pais das crianças que estavam hospitalizadas, tiveram a dormir no hotel, tinham uma chave e ficaram a dormir aqui no hotel, portanto, faziam como se estivessem em casa, estava cá o segurança à noite, e estavam com eles a dormir. Tratavam da comida, tratavam de tudo, por isso que o hotel esteve sempre fechado. Estavam com essas pessoas que ainda hoje temos, sempre que é identificada alguém na Segurança Social que tem necessidades e que não consegue pagar um hotel e que está deslocado, veio da Madeira, veio do Alentejo, e que não tem aqui família, tem aqui os filhos internados, eles ficam aqui no hotel.

Portanto, mantivemos isso, mesmo durante o Covid, ela manteve-se, portanto, eu acho que em si, correu tudo bem. Fizemos a parte de, quando regressarmos, começámos a fazer uma vez por semana o despiste, que era para depois não voltarmos a ter outra vez o Covid, então sempre que alguém vinha para os escritórios ou para aqui, tinha que fazer o teste do Covid primeiro, e só com o teste é que vinha trabalhar, que era para não voltarmos a ter a pandemia novamente, portanto, eu acho que correu tudo bem, eu acho que na minha parte, correu tudo bem.

Entrevistador:

Então, a minha última pergunta é que conselhos daria a profissionais de comunicação, neste caso mais para a área de comunicação, que estejam a gerir estes processos de mudança ou de ter que gerir este tipo de situações semelhantes, que conselhos é que daria?

Entrevistado:

É assim, primeiro, eu primeiro acho que o mais importante nestas situações foi é por menos tentar manter a calma nos colaboradores, nós que estamos aqui diariamente e que sabemos e como é que as coisas funcionam, levamos o bate muito mais, levamos as coisas muito mais facilmente, não é? Porque sabemos o que é que está a acontecer, temos notícias da Segurança Social, porque eu falo com a Segurança Social, eles acabam de por estar um bocadinho mais à parte, portanto, eles só sabem aquilo que a gente lhes transmite, portanto, eu acho que aqui a comunicação com eles sem deixar abandonados, acho que é importante, ir mantendo o contacto, não digo diário, mas ir mantendo o contacto, nem que seja por uma mensagem, se está tudo bem, pelo grupo, se

está tudo bem, a família também, porque neste caso também a preocupação era a família e os filhos, não era só nós, porque na altura a gente pensava havia muita gente, mas a ausência de comunicação às vezes gera mais Insegurança.

Insegurança, gera mais ansiedade, andam mais ansiosos, isso não é bom para a saúde também, acaba por gerar outras doenças, ataques de pânico, ansiedade, e se houver ali uma comunicação assertiva e que seja feita, não digo diariamente, mas que seja feita regularmente, para que as pessoas não tenham o esquecimento em casa, não dizem nada, será que o hotel vai abrir, quando é que abre, então acho que a comunicação, por menos com os colaboradores, manter uma comunicação mais direta, mais regular, neste caso, acho que é um passo importante para que as coisas corram melhor.

Entrevistador:

Esqueci de me perguntar, mais ou menos quantos colaboradores é que tem?

Entrevistado:

Neste momento, temos 150. Na altura do Covid, tínhamos à volta de 90, porquê? Porque o nosso hotel do Porto, que é onde temos à volta de 70, abriu, e ao fim de 15 dias, fechou com o Covid, portanto, acabamos por dispensar algumas pessoas, porque tínhamos acabado de fazer contratos, e por isso é que tínhamos menos, depois com o retomar do Covid, foi sempre subindo, cada mês subia mais, o turismo teve que parar, e depois foi aí que ela retomou novamente o turismo. Não tínhamos quartos vendidos, depois começámos a vender 1, 2, 3, 10, 20, e depois tínhamos de começar a colocar as pessoas.

Mas em Lisboa, mantivemos sempre os mesmos, não dispensámos ninguém.

Entrevistador:

Então, já está.

Muito Obrigada.

Appendix I - Interview transcription interviewee F

Entrevistador:

Ok, então a minha primeira pergunta é se pode descrever brevemente a sua função na altura dos layoffs e agora, e há quanto tempo também trabalhava na organização?

Entrevistado:

Então o meu nome é Pedro Teixeira, sou o Diretor de Sustentabilidade da Neya Hotels e era a função que eu já desempenhava na altura do Covid em 2020 e que ainda desempenho hoje, ou seja, sou responsável por toda a área da sustentabilidade do grupo hoteleiro dos hotéis, certificações ambientais de qualidade, segurança, gestão ambiental do hotel, responsabilidade social, todas essas áreas.

Entrevistador:

Ok, e há quanto tempo é que trabalhava na organização?

Entrevistado:

Estou há 11 anos na organização, sempre com estas funções.

Entrevistador:

Ok, e como é que foi informado pela primeira vez sobre, neste caso, os layoffs?

Entrevistado:

Foi na altura, bem, este 2020, foi há 5 anos.

Entrevistador:

Já foi um bocadinho atrás.

Entrevistado:

Não, foi normal, não foi nada muito chocante, nós já sabíamos que os hotéis fecharam, por isso eu desempenho funções quase 100% aqui para os hotéis, porque temos outras organizações e, por isso, foi de algum modo natural que nos comunicaram que quem

estava afeto à atividade dos hotéis que teria que ficar em layoff. Se bem que, no meu caso, eu só fiquei 2 meses, os hotéis estiveram fechados cerca de 9 meses, mas eu fiquei 2 meses em layoff porque, pois, a minha função era imprescindível para manter o hotel mesmo fechado. Tínhamos os edifícios, a parte da manutenção, das águas, energias, etc. E, por isso, nós, na altura, fomos cerca de 3 ou 4 pessoas que voltámos a trabalhar no hotel, mesmo vazio, porque tínhamos que assegurar o funcionamento do edifício do hotel. Por isso, foi com alguma naturalidade que nos explicaram que íamos ficar em layoff, que eu ia ficar em layoff. Claro que, ao início, como havia um desconhecimento de quanto tempo é que seria, isso tudo foi um bocado choque. Tínhamos sempre a sensação que fazíamos falta ao edifício e até houve uma altura, ao início, que não percebia bem porque tinha que ficar em layoff, mas rapidamente entendemos isso. Por isso, foi pacífico.

Entrevistador:

E quais os canais de comunicação, neste caso, emails, reuniões, mensagens, é que foram mais utilizados na altura?

Entrevistado:

A comunicação foi direta, oral. Ou seja, a primeira comunicação foi oral. Acho bem, porque a gestão do hotel, as pessoas responsáveis pelo hotel, falaram comigo diretamente e disseram que devido ao que estava a passar, eu iria estar em layoff. E, depois, recebemos também por e-mail. Por isso, foi mais e-mail, foi diretamente, oralmente e e-mail.

Entrevistador:

Os diferentes aspetos da comunicação, foi claro na altura ou podia ser mais claro?

Entrevistado:

As coisas podem ser sempre mais claras, mas também na altura, como já disse e como todos sabemos, vivíamos um tempo de desconhecimento. Não era fácil para quem comunicou. Bem, o modelo de comunicação foi normal. Por isso, falarem comigo e enviarem-me um e-mail a seguir, não há nada a dizer. Acho que não há mais canais necessários. Nós, na altura, nem havia plataformas de RH, nem nada.

E, por isso, comunicarem oralmente e fazerem um e-mail formalizando o layoff, acho que foi adequado. Depois, as razões. Não eram tão fáceis porque não entendíamos bem se isto ia durar umas semanas, um mês ou anos.

Não sabia bem. E, por isso, as explicações e a forma de justificar o layoff, pode não ter sido a melhor, mas não era possível de outra forma. Porque não havia certezas de quanto tempo é que isto ia durar.

Acho que foi normal.

Entrevistador:

Certo. E como é que a comunicação recebida o fez sentir emocionalmente? Na altura, tínhamos o Covid, era mais complicado.

Mas em relação à segurança do trabalho, à segurança nas chefias.

Entrevistado:

Sim, teve impacto, claro que teve impacto. Porque nós já estávamos um bocado a viver psicologicamente afetados por causa da situação em si, do Covid. E ninguém sabia o que fazer, tudo a fechar, etc.

É claro que a comunicação que eu iria estar em layoff foi negativa. Em mim, teve impactos negativos, mas quando digo negativos, foram relativamente simples. Não entrei em depressões, nem nada.

Foi, olha, é chato, é mau, não se sabe, do salário, do futuro, será que isto voltamos, não voltamos? Mas como eu há pouco disse, também não foi muito longo no tempo porque eu voltei dois meses depois. Certo.

Por isso não tive longos meses que me causasse aqui algum tipo de medo. Porque eu sei bem que a função que eu tenho no hotel é fundamental para o funcionamento dos nossos hotéis. E por isso, só se a coisa se arrastasse muitos meses ou muitos anos, é que eu sentiria em risco o meu lugar.

Daí que foi tudo um bocado no desconhecido, mas também muito rápido. Foi negativo, mas não foi nada de especial.

Entrevistador:

E neste caso, a comunicação afetou a sua confiança na liderança, ou se sim, como? Se teve algum impacto.

Entrevistado:

Sim, teve, porque ao me comunicarem diretamente... Bem, eu tenho um cargo que também estava envolvido nas decisões do hotel. Ou seja, estas decisões do fechar, do não fechar, o que é que vamos fazer, o que fazer com o hotel fechado.

Eu, como estou envolvido em todas essas decisões, estas comunicações da gestão do topo não vieram do nada. Não era que eu estivesse fora do processo e de repente vieram-me dizer que o hotel fecha e ficas em lay-off. Não, porque eu sei bem as razões porque o hotel ia fechar.

Eu sabia mais ou menos o que é que iríamos fazer. E por isso é claro que eu tinha confiança ou tinha conhecimento que o que a gestão do topo estava a fazer era adequado. Isso evidenciou, reforçou a minha confiança na gestão do topo.

Porque eu entendia perfeitamente que a única forma de gerir o hotel na altura era fechar o hotel e colocar as pessoas em lay-off. Não tive dúvidas sobre isso. Até porque era isso que estava a passar nos hotéis todos e nas atividades todas.

Entrevistador:

Pois, exatamente. Então, nesse caso, a comunicação influenciou a sua moral, a motivação para trabalhar, o sentimento até de pertença na empresa.

Entrevistado:

Acho que influenciou. É claro que ao início deitou um pouco abaixo porque ficámos sem fazer nada e era o desconhecido. Mas, como eu disse há pouco, foi relativamente rápido e eu retomei rapidamente as minhas funções.

Não erm mais as minhas funções, eram outras, porque era mais tomar conta do edifício e assegurar que, mesmo com o hotel fechado, as minhas funções no hotel garantiam o que seguiam. Certificações, os contactos com as entidades certificadoras, etc. Isso por isso não fechou.

Entrevistador:

Olhando para trás, o que é que acha que foi bem feito ou que poderia ter sido melhor? Ou comunicado de forma diferente ou dito de forma diferente?

Entrevistado:

Não sei. Cinco anos depois já não é fácil perceber o que é que deveria ter sido melhor.

Entrevistador:

Por exemplo, disse-me que foi comunicado primeiro a uma pessoa e depois o email. E depois alguma comunicação durante, mas também nada excessivo durante os momentos em que estava em lay-off.

Entrevistado:

Eu, como disse, tive dois meses e houve uma atualização a meio. É claro que uma atualização a meio, que é mais um mês, causou novamente um pouco mais de impacto. Até porque, na altura, eu tinha perfeita noção que a maior parte das pessoas estava em lay-off, mas havia umas que não estavam.

Os recursos humanos, há algumas áreas que são importantes para a organização e causa sempre aquela dúvida, mas porquê é que algumas estão e eu não? Porquê é que eu estou e outras não estão? Mas, como eu disse, no meu caso não foi muito tempo e eu entendi as razões dos lay-offs e também, no meu caso, não foi muito tempo e isso foi relativamente fácil.

Não se arrastou.

Entrevistador:

Não se arrastou. Então, na última pergunta...

Entrevistado:

Posso não ser o melhor exemplo, porque há aí pessoas que tiveram nove meses.

Entrevistador:

Exatamente. Que conselhos daria à liderança sobre como melhor apoiar os colaboradores nestas situações? Em futuros processos que se processos.

Entrevistado:

Sim, eu acho que a comunicação, e é o que está aqui em causa no seu estudo, a comunicação é sempre importante. Porque é claro que, eu já referi, eu posso ter estado numa posição em que tinha algum conhecimento ou muito conhecimento das razões dos

lay-offs, do hotel fechar, das pessoas ficarem dispensadas, etc. Agora, havia outras pessoas que não.

Pessoas que não têm uma ligação direta à gestão de topo, ou sequer às suas fias na altura, com certeza receberam comunicação de forma em que elas acharam mal. Não sabiam o porquê, mas acharam mas porque é porque é que o hotel fecha.

E eu sei que aqui em Lisboa não, mas há hotéis que a mão-de-obra não é a mão-de-obra efetiva do hotel e quando tiveram... Não houve lay-off, houve despedimentos de pessoas que saíram, não renovaram. E por isso é tudo muito...

Nesses casos pode ser mais complicado a falta de comunicação e a falta de justificação para os despedimentos, a não renovação, os lay-offs. Mas como eu digo, no meu caso eu fiz tanto a par das razões e por isso não tenho grandes mudanças ao que foi feito. Mas a comunicação é o mais importante, porque as pessoas se queixam muito da falta de comunicação e as pessoas nunca entendem bem os fundamentos e as razões dos acontecimentos.

E então comunicar melhor, de todas as formas transparentes, é o melhor. É importante.

Entrevistador:

E já está. Era só isto. Muito obrigada.

Appendix J - Interview transcription interviewee G

Entrevistador:

Neste caso, vamos falar do layoff e a minha primeira pergunta é se pode descrever brevemente o seu cargo atual e a sua experiência com a comunicação interna da empresa?

Entrevistado:

Portanto, o meu cargo é gerente, sou sócia-gerente. E a minha experiência atual e também do passado. A minha experiência na comunicação, é assim, a nossa empresa em termos de comunicação é sempre tudo verbalmente, porque nós temos um bom ambiente de trabalho, temos uma boa equipa e sempre que há problemas são resolvidos a falar, pronto, não temos, felizmente não temos esses problemas, pronto, existem de facto algumas empresas que têm vários problemas em termos de comunicação com as pessoas, mas não é o nosso caso, pronto, nós temos uma boa equipa, as pessoas interagem entre si e eu também não tenho razões de queixa.

Entrevistador:

Então, e relativamente ao período de layoffs, qual foi a sua responsabilidade específica em termos de comunicação?

Entrevistado:

A responsabilidade foi tomar a decisão de efetivamente colocar algumas pessoas em layoff, porque nós tivemos empresas que estavam efetivamente também em layoff, nós fazemos a contabilidade e automaticamente, portanto tivemos uma redução abrupta do nosso trabalho e durante dois meses e efetivamente foram só dois meses, em 2020, portanto foi o mês de maio e o mês de junho, nós então decidimos colocar algumas funcionárias em layoff, portanto não foram todas as funcionárias porque nós continuámos a elaborar aqui no escritório, portanto nós ficámos aqui três pessoas e ficaram em layoff cinco pessoas, cinco trabalhadores. Em termos de decisão, a decisão passou sempre por mim, porque eu é que era a contabilista principal e foi uma decisão difícil, mas também foram só dois meses e felizmente conseguimos depois recuperar o trabalho.

Entrevistador:

Então, neste sentido, quais foram as principais estratégias de comunicação utilizadas durante o processo, ou seja, na primeira fase de comunicar, durante os dois meses se foi mantida algum tipo de comunicação e quando foi para terminar o layoff também como é que foi comunicado?

Entrevistado:

Portanto, da nossa parte só houve mesmo uma comunicação, só houve a primeira comunicação em que foi logo, na comunicação que nós fizemos, nós comunicámos logo que o layoff, portanto no dia 1 de maio comunicámos, já tínhamos falado verbalmente, sim, e depois fizemos a comunicação por escrito e comunicámos logo que seria durante o mês de maio, pronto. Depois no início de junho comunicámos novamente, da mesma forma, que queria ser o mês de junho, portanto o mês de junho, 1 a 30 de junho.

Entrevistador:

Isto tudo por email?

Entrevistado:

Não, não, nós fizemos mesmo por escrito, por carta. foi verbalmente e por escrito.

Entrevistador:

Depois, quais foram as prioridades durante a comunicação?

Entrevistado:

Ahhhh....

Entrevistador:

Ou seja, Qual era a prioridade? Era transmitir a segurança, era passar a informação, era ser transparente, era assegurar que iriam voltar?

Entrevistado:

Sim, nós não tínhamos dúvidas, nós, durante a comunicação apenas foi um entendimento no sentido que iria ser uma questão temporária, porque eu sempre tive a esperança que a saúde resolvesse o problema do Covid, portanto nunca pensei, nem

acreditei que fosse uma coisa muito prolongada. Até porque nós depois, a partir do mês de julho, começámos a ter muito trabalho, por causa exatamente das empresas estarem fechadas, também houve muitos apoios que tínhamos de fazer para as empresas a nível de apoio económico, portanto acabámos por depois acrescentar um bocadinho o nosso trabalho, portanto as coisas depois, houve ali uma dilatação de prazos para a entrega de declarações fiscais e etc, devido à empresa estar fechada, mas a nossa, portanto eu não tive receio, nem transmiti que isto iria ser uma coisa muito prolongada, porque tinha a certeza que isso não ia acontecer.

Entrevistador:

Então, e neste sentido, as decisões relativamente ao tom, ao conteúdo e à frequência das mensagens foram tomadas neste sentido de que ia ser uma coisa rápida, certo?

Entrevistado:

Sim, sim, sim.

Entrevistador:

Então, o canal de comunicação foi verbal e por escrito, e na sua opinião quais foram os maiores desafios na comunicação deste, ou se houve algum desafio na comunicação desta situação?

Entrevistado:

Não, para nós foi uma coisa simples, porque nós, portanto, sendo um gabinete de contabilidade e tendo 30 empresas a passar pela mesma situação, na mesma altura, portanto foi uma coisa natural, portanto não houve, não houve essa dificuldade.

Entrevistador:

Então, neste sentido, como foi uma coisa natural, também foi fácil equilibrar a transparência com a sensibilidade para a situação?

Entrevistado:

Sim, sim, sim, exatamente.

Entrevistador:

Então, como é que avalia que os colaboradores estavam a compreender, a receber a mensagem, aqueles que estiveram em lay-off, como é que receberam essa mensagem?

Entrevistado:

Eles receberam bem, porque, na realidade, perante a situação que estava acontecendo no nosso país, eu acho que no fundo foi uma paragem que eles fizeram, também foi bom para eles, porque acabaram por ter dois meses de descanso, digamos assim, e de resguardo, não é; Porque as pessoas estavam com receio de ficar doentes, portanto, eu acho que até foi bom esse interregno.

Entrevistador:

Portanto, o impacto emocional que eles tiveram até foi positivo, porque lhes trouxe quase uma paz. Estou a dizer na sua opinião.

Entrevistado:

Sim, nesse sentido, o trabalho, não é? Porque no sentido da saúde, claro, as pessoas estavam com medo, não é? Claro.

Mas no sentido de ficarem em casa porque não estavam a trabalhar, eu penso que não houve esse, na minha opinião, acho que não houve esse impacto, essa preocupação, até porque depois, quando acabou o nosso lay-off, essas pessoas ficaram em teletrabalho, portanto. Nós tivemos um ano, se calhar não foi um ano, mas ainda foi muitos meses, e depois arranjámos a estratégia do teletrabalho, ou seja, para combater esta, portanto, para resolver a questão de podermos voltar a inserir os membros no trabalho, os colaboradores, acabámos por criar as condições que eram necessárias em termos informáticos para que as pessoas pudessem trabalhar em teletrabalho e manter os seus postos de trabalho, pronto, e foi essa a nossa preocupação maior, era de facto conseguir voltar a laborar, não é?

Entrevistador:

Exato. Então, neste sentido, como é que se sentiu pessoalmente a ter que transmitir esta mensagem de que vão estas pessoas para teletrabalho, por causa desta situação, houve algum impacto emocional na tomada da decisão da transmissão?

Entrevistado:

Sim, quer dizer, há sempre uma dificuldade em escolher os membros que ficam e os que não ficam, mas é sempre difícil, pronto, mas de qualquer das maneiras a minha preocupação foi que eram os membros que eu precisava para estar aqui no escritório e que tinham as empresas que estavam a laborar, portanto, a minha decisão passou por aí, ou seja, pelos funcionários que tinham as empresas a laborar, porque havia funcionários que tinham empresas que estavam fechadas, tinham mais empresas que estavam fechadas e tínhamos empregados que tinham as empresas que continuavam a laborar, portanto, e a minha decisão passou por aí, portanto, houve uma aceitação boa por causa disso, porque houve uma aceitação da realidade.

Entrevistador:

Então, neste sentido, olhando para trás, o que considera que funcionou bem na sua abordagem de comunicação e o que poderia ser melhorado, ou se funcionou tudo bem?

Entrevistado:

Eu acho que funcionou tudo bem, não senti qualquer ressentimento da parte de ninguém, acho que devido à situação que o país estava a atravessar, como eu disse anteriormente, eu acho que houve uma aceitação imediata das pessoas para a situação, porque era uma situação que estava a acontecer com muitas empresas, portanto, se fosse uma situação fora do Covid, acho que o impacto era diferente, mas na situação da saúde em que nós estávamos a passar, eu acho que foi uma aceitação melhor, porque primeiro foi o choque, porque no dia 13 de março ou 16 de março tivemos que fechar as portas e arranjar estratégias para poder trabalhar em Covid, e depois, quando foi em junho, foi de facto quando as empresas começaram a se a ressentir, porque tiveram que fechar portas, tiveram que, porque arranjam algumas soluções, mas não foram as suficientes, porque os restaurantes depois não podiam estar abertos e aí é que foi o problema maior, principalmente os restaurantes, as lojas, quase todas tiveram que fechar, mas acho que não houve grandes problemas em termos de aceitação.

Entrevistador:

Então, a última pergunta é que conselhos daria a outros profissionais de comunicação que estejam a gerir processos semelhantes?

Entrevistado:

O conselho é sempre que haja uma abordagem pessoal, pessoalmente, sensibilizando as pessoas para as dificuldades que a empresa apresenta, expondo a realidade da empresa e, claro, posteriormente fazer a comunicação por escrito e indo comunicando aos colaboradores a evolução da situação, por e-mail, penso que também é importante para não criar estados de ansiedade, para as pessoas acreditarem que a situação é temporária, para não perderem também os colaboradores, porque as empresas também correm o risco de as pessoas poderem se despedir e tentar procurar outras soluções. Que lhes caibam, não é. Portanto, a situação também é tentar manter os colaboradores respeitando as necessidades deles, não é.

Entrevistador:

Pronto, é isso. Já está. Obrigada.

Appendix K - Interview transcription interviewee H

Entrevistador:

Ok, então, primeiro a minha primeira pergunta é, se pode escrever brevemente a sua função neste momento e na altura dos layoffs? E Mais ou menos há quanto tempo trabalhava e trabalha na organização?

Entrevistado:

Eu trabalho cá desde 2004 e a minha função é técnica de contabilidade, na altura e agora também. Ok. E pronto, é isso.

Entrevistador:

Qual é que foi a informada pela primeira vez sobre os layoffs que iriam acontecer?

Entrevistado:

Então, foi verbalmente, não é? E depois então recebi comunicação escrita, uma carta, mas falaram comigo primeiro verbalmente explicar a situação. Era uma situação, era muito incerto, não se sabia o que é que ia acontecer.

Aliás, quando nós fomos para casa, nós tivemos que fechar isto no dia 16 de Março, foi uma coisa assim. Eu lembro-me de estar a falar com uma amiga minha a dizer, agora daqui a três semanas nós vamos voltar todos. Para mim aquilo era uma coisa temporária.

Em relação, estou a falar em relação à quando eles saíram para as pessoas. Quando foi para fechar as portas.... Para mim era uma coisa, agora vamos todos já ficarem, como é que eles diziam, vamos ficar...

Nós não podíamos sair de casa, não podíamos sair...

Entrevistador:

Na quarentena.

Entrevistado:

Pronto, é uma coisa assim. Para mim eu achava que como as pessoas iam recolher, que aquilo ia resolver tudo, que a transmissão ia parar um bocado e para mim era isso. Mas depois não foi isso que se verificou.

Entrevistador:

Terceira pergunta, como é que descreve a comunicação interna que recebeu durante o processo?

Entrevistado:

Então... É assim, isso aqui é uma empresa mais familiar, nós sempre comunicamos as coisas verbalmente. Não há assim... Não há assim formalidades, nós somos como uma família e... E pronto, eles explicaram a situação e eu para mim achei que foi uma situação complicada que se estava a viver e para mim é até também uma forma de ajudar ao ficar em Layoff.

Entrevistador:

Exato. Então, pronto, os canais de comunicação foi verbal e escrito.

Que aspetos da comunicação lhe pareceram mais claros e outros menos claros? Em relação à empresa, não em relação mais às fontes mediáticas?

Entrevistado:

Foi claro, para mim eles explicaram que seria uma situação temporária, uma forma de, sei lá, ganhar tempo para poder perceber o que é que ia acontecer no futuro e reestruturar os serviços porque os clientes também deixavam várias avanças e estava tudo muito incerto. Para mim não foi... Pronto, eu achava que seria mesmo uma situação temporária.

Entrevistador:

Como é que a comunicação que recebeu a fez sentir do ponto emocional?

Entrevistado:

Do ponto emocional? Porque o emocional já estava muito mexido entre aspas porque aquela situação toda de surreal né que eu disse. Em relação a essa comunicação não me fez sentir mal, eu para mim, eu entendi que seria uma coisa necessária.

Entrevistador:

Ok. E como é que se sentiu em relação ao processo de comunicação em si? Do ser verbal e depois por escrito.

Entrevistado:

Tudo ok. Tudo ok. Para mim tudo ok.

Entrevistador:

Ok. A comunicação afetou a sua confiança na liderança neste período? Se sim, de que forma?

Entrevistado:

Não percebi.

Entrevistador:

Se a comunicação afetou a confiança na liderança da empresa?

Entrevistado:

Se a atividade poderia ter de fechar?

Entrevistador:

Sim, ou seja, se duvidou que isto poderia levar a alguma volta?

Entrevistado:

É assim, eu acho que... Era tudo muito incerto, não era bem um lay-off total, era mais parcial. Não era bem um layoff em que a empresa estava mesmo em dificuldades, só ela própria. E era uma situação que abrangia todo o país, todo o mundo e não...

Entrevistador:

Então, podemos dizer que a comunicação não afetou a confiança na empresa? Até como foi transparente.

Entrevistado:

Sim, sim, sim.

Entrevistador:

Manteve-se sempre seguro. Afetou a sua moral ou a motivação para trabalhar?

Entrevistado:

Não.

Entrevistador:

Sentido, presença?

Entrevistado:

Não. Não.

Entrevistador:

Olhando para trás, acha que foi bem feita a comunicação por parte da organização?

Entrevistado:

Sim.

Entrevistador:

Gostaria que alguma coisa tivesse sido comunicada de forma diferente? Se sim, o quê?

Entrevistado:

Não. Ta tudo bem.

Entrevistador:

Que conselhos daria a uma liderança sobre como melhor apoiar os colaboradores em situações deste género?

Entrevistado:

Mas em relação a mim ou no geral?

Entrevistador:

Ou seja, se agora tivesse de dar conselhos a uma pessoa que estivesse num cargo de liderança, que estivesse a passar esta situação, que conselhos é que daria?

Entrevistado:

Eu acho importante, neste caso, falarem comigo pessoalmente primeiro, ou verbalmente, para mim é uma coisa positiva, porque uma pessoa não recebe por escrito a carta, não recebe aquilo, não é uma surpresa. Primeiro falar com a pessoa, acho que devem primeiro falar com as pessoas para explicar a situação, porque é complicado para todos, não é?

Então, acho que ter atenção a pessoas e comunicar. Para mim é importante comunicar pessoalmente ou verbalmente, não só simplesmente mandar uma carta.

Entrevistador:

E a comunicação deve ser feita mais ou menos de que forma? Transparente? Sensível?

Entrevistado:

É preciso ter sensibilidade para comunicar certas coisas às pessoas, não é? Porque é uma coisa que a pessoa pode ficar na dúvida, será que o posto de trabalho vai manter ou não.

Entrevistador:

Pronto, há alguma coisa que queira acrescentar?

Entrevistado:

Não, acho que está tudo. Então é tudo. É?

Entrevistador:

Sim, muito obrigada.