

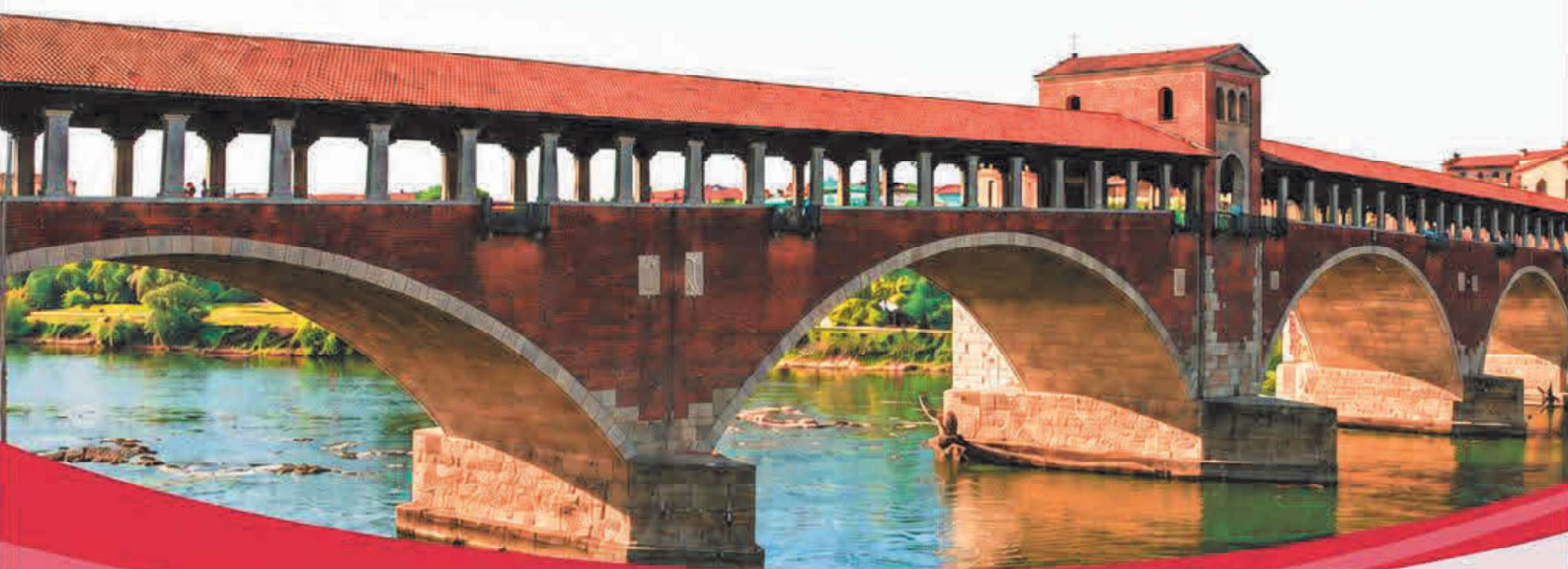
Transforming management in the era of post-globalization and agentic economy

UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA – 28-29 MAY 2026



Sinergie SIMA
Management Conference

PROCEEDINGS



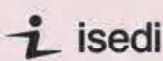
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Foreword

The annual Sinergie-SIMA Management Conference is more than an opportunity to present and discuss research findings. It is a moment in which our scientific community comes together to reflect on the transformations affecting firms and organizations and, at the same time, on the evolution of management as a discipline.

The 2026 Conference, hosted by the University of Pavia and entitled Transforming Management in the Era of Post-Globalization and Agentic Economy, invited us to consider this double transformation. We are experiencing profound changes whose direction, scope, and consequences are often difficult to anticipate. Understanding them is already a demanding task. Management must then translate them into organizational choices, processes, and practices that work in concrete contexts.

A significant part of managerial work has traditionally consisted of collecting information, synthesizing it, and transforming it into reports, scenarios, forecasts, and decisions. Artificial intelligence does not “know everything”, but it greatly increases the capacity to process information. As a result, managerial value no longer resides primarily in access to information or in routine analysis, but in the ability to steer how knowledge is generated, filtered, integrated, and critically interpreted. Managers are therefore called upon to become even more critical interpreters. They must recognize ambiguities, balance conflicting objectives, and assess organizational constraints, as well as the reputational, social, political, and institutional implications of different courses of action. Information may be increasingly abundant and accessible, but judgment and responsibility cannot be delegated to a technological system.

The nature of coordination is also changing. Management has always involved coordinating people, organizational units, and processes. Today, alongside people, there are data, algorithms, platforms, and artificial agents. Human teams are increasingly becoming hybrid systems. The challenge is to design work architecture in which human and artificial intelligence can cooperate effectively, without people losing control, competence, or responsibility. Technology should strengthen human capabilities. It should not reduce the human contribution to the passive execution of technologically generated instructions or subject individuals and organizations to an unsustainable acceleration of productivity expectations.

The limits of these technologies are not yet fully understood, nor is their medium- and long-term impact on organizations and society. What is already clear, however, is that the way artificial intelligence enters organizations changes decision-making processes and redistributes responsibilities, competencies, and power. Management, therefore, does not disappear. It changes its nature. If the nature of management changes, the responsibility of our scientific community must also evolve. We must examine whether the concepts and theories we use to interpret organizations remain adequate. We must investigate how technologies transform work, coordination, authority, and accountability. We must also reflect on the contributions that management studies can make to firms, institutions, and society in a period of rapid, sometimes contradictory change. The “SIMA Manifesto degli studi di management” was developed in this spirit: not as a definitive answer, but as a platform for discussion. It invites us to question what matters today for our discipline, whether the categories we use to interpret emerging phenomena are still appropriate, and what relationship management scholars intend to build with firms, institutions, and society.

The papers collected in these Proceedings provide tangible evidence of the vitality and diversity of our community. They represent different theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and fields of inquiry. Together, they demonstrate the ability of management research to address complex questions with rigor, openness, and responsibility. They also reflect a community capable of bringing together research and teaching, senior and younger scholars, international engagement, and dialogue with firms and institutions. This ability to connect different dimensions of academic life is one of the distinctive strengths of the Sinergie-SIMA Conference. A scientific conference truly fulfills its purpose when it is not merely a program of scheduled sessions, but becomes a space inhabited by its community: a space in which papers are presented and discussed, questions are raised, different perspectives are compared, relationships are developed, and new collaborations begin. Attention must be devoted to younger scholars. Their ideas, questions, and research trajectories are essential to the future of our discipline. Creating opportunities for their development, supporting their participation in the scientific community, and encouraging research that combines academic quality with practical relevance are central responsibilities for SIMA.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Sinergie Italian Journal of Management, the University of Pavia, the Conference Chairs, the scientific and organizing committees, the Chairs of the tracks and SIMA thematic groups, the reviewers, and all those who contributed to the organization of the Conference and to the preparation of this volume. Above all, I thank the authors and participants who presented their work, discussed papers, raised questions and animated the many opportunities for exchange. Their engagement made the Conference the expression of a living scientific community.

A conference ends well when it does not close a discussion but leaves participants eager to continue it. I hope that these Proceedings will carry forward the ideas, questions, relationships, and new possibilities for joint work that emerged in Pavia and will strengthen the capacity of management research to understand and responsibly shape the transformations of our time.

Beatrice Luceri, President of Italian Society of Management (SIMA)

Editorial Note

To the reader,

This volume contains the short papers presented at the Sinergie-SIMA 2026 Management Conference, hosted by the University of Pavia on 28 and 29 May 2026. The Conference, entitled *Transforming Management in the Era of Post-Globalization and Agentic Economy*, provided an opportunity to discuss the transformations affecting organizations, managerial practices, and management research.

The conference program included contributions related to:

- the main Conference theme;
- the research areas represented by the SIMA thematic groups;
- management case studies.

The diversity of the subjects addressed, theoretical perspectives adopted, and the methodological approaches employed reflected the breadth and vitality of the Sinergie-SIMA scientific community.

The Conference call invited the submission of both short and long papers. Overall, the editorial team received 315 submissions, consisting of 249 short papers and 66 long papers.

All submissions underwent the peer-review process established for the Conference. Short and long papers were evaluated by 245 reviewers, selected from the Sinergie and SIMA scientific communities on the basis of their expertise in the subjects addressed.

The submissions were assessed according to the following criteria:

- clarity of the research aims;
- appropriateness and rigor of the methodological approach;
- originality and innovativeness of the contribution;
- theoretical and practical relevance;
- clarity of communication;
- quality and significance of the bibliographical foundations.

For the short and long papers, the evaluation followed the peer review process, with a double-blind review performed by, respectively, one and two referees - university lecturers and experts about the topic - selected from among members of the SIMA community. At the end of the evaluation process, the authors received the reviewers' reports and incorporated their observations into the presentation and discussion of their work at the Conference.

The evaluation process resulted in the acceptance of 296 papers. The present volume contains 216 short papers whose authors authorized their publication.

All the contributions included in the volume were presented and discussed during the Conference and are made available online through the Sinergie-SIMA Management Conference portal (<https://www.sijmsima.it/>). The papers collected here should be understood not only as individual research contributions, but also as evidence of the questions, perspectives, and developing research trajectories that characterized the scientific debate in Pavia.

We wish to thank the authors for entrusting their work to the Conference; the reviewers for the quality and care of their assessments; the track and thematic group Chairs for coordinating the evaluation and discussion processes; and all participants for contributing to an open and constructive scientific exchange.

We hope that this volume will support the further development of the research presented during the Conference and contribute to the wider debate on the transformation of management and organizations.

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Long papers

**Track:
Strategic Communication**



Measuring Internal Communication Satisfaction: Validation of the Internal Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (ICSQ) in Italian

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Abstract

Frame of the research. *Despite the development of internal communication in Italy, historically studies focused primarily on organizational structures and managerial processes, and no psychometrically validated instrument currently exists to measure internal communication satisfaction among Italian-speaking employees.*

Purpose of the paper. *This paper aims to validate the Italian version of the internal communication satisfaction questionnaire (ICSQ).*

Methodology. *The validation has been conducted leveraging the data collected in a broad three-wave, cross-national survey study, using only the data from the Italian sub-sample (348 employees). Internal consistency reliability, structural validity and model fit were assessed.*

Results. *All eight dimensions of the ICSQ showed satisfactory internal consistency. The original eight-factor structure of the ICSQ demonstrated slightly better fit than the higher-order model.*

Research limitations. *Results highlight the tension inherent in cross-cultural measurement between structural invariance and contextual adaptation.*

Managerial implications. *The Italian ICSQ offers organizations a diagnostic and developmental tool to systematically assess communication effectiveness from the employee perspective.*

Originality of the paper. *Methodologically, the paper confirms the transferability of a multidimensional measure while illustrating the importance of contextual interpretation in cross-cultural scale adaptation. Practically, it equips Italian organizations with a structured tool for diagnosing and improving their communicative environments.*

Keywords: *internal communication; internal communication satisfaction; scale validation; internal communication satisfaction questionnaire; measurement instrument*

1. Introduction

Internal communication has a growing relevance as part of the communication discipline both at the academic and professional level (Mazzei, 2010; Men and Bowen, 2017; Tkalac Verčič *et al.*, 2012; Welch, 2012) globally and in Italy.

The development of the internal communication field requires understanding its relationships with other related constructs, such as employee engagement, employee commitment, job satisfaction, employee retention, and should be based on a reliable and valid measure of communication satisfaction (Tkalac Verčič, 2021; Tkalac Verčič *et al.*, 2021). To this end Tkalac Verčič and colleagues (2009) developed and validated the Internal Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (ICSQ), a measurement instrument originally developed in Croatian. To expand the use of the ICSQ for studies involving employees who use English as their second language, Tkalac Verčič and colleagues (2021) translated and validated the scale in English.

One of the major implications of the validation in English is the possibility to replicate the study in other countries to generalize its results (Tkalac Verčič *et al.*, 2021). The aim of the present study is to translate and validate the ICSQ in Italian. Despite the institutional development of internal communication in Italy, no psychometrically validated instrument currently exists to measure internal communication satisfaction among Italian-speaking employees.

In Italian companies, the institutionalization of internal communication in the form of a dedicated

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function is continuously growing, as it has been documented by studies since the end of the '90s (Invernizzi 1996, 2000) and up to the current scenario (Mazzei and Quarantino, 2019, 2020; Mazzei *et al.*, 2026 in press). Institutionalization brings the growth of staff, dedicated financial resources and above all a rising strategic attention.

The field of internal communication has developed over the last 20 years with the publications of scientific studies in Italian and in English by Italian authors (e.g., Biraghi, 2015; Mazzei, 2009; Mazzei *et al.*, 2022), the presence of Italian scholars in the academic international community and the institutionalization of university courses and stable university research groups in Italy including the CERC (entre for Employee Relations and Communication), and the existence of a professional association of internal communication professionals and managers (ASCAI – Associazione per lo sviluppo della comunicazione aziendale in Italia). The increasing interest in internal communication calls for rigorous studies looking at new aspects of the internal communication phenomenon. Therefore, the availability of a measurement instrument such as the ICSQ in Italian would be essential.

This paper recalls first the development of internal communication in Italy, to give a framework useful for understanding the need for the validation of a new measurement instrument. Then it presents the methodology, the results and the discussion of a study conducted using an Italian-speaking sample of employees to validate the ICSQ. It concludes by discussing limitations, avenues for future studies, and managerial implications.

2. Literature review

2.1 Measurement instruments in Italian internal communication studies

Italy has experienced an intense process of development of the debate on internal communication since the late '80s to the mid '90s. A review of the most important research studies (Mazzei, 1994) highlighted four topics: the activities managed by the internal communication professionals, the organizational architecture dedicated to the function, the managerial methods adopted, and the level of involvement of the top management in the definition of the communication strategy. Overall these studies confirmed the “hypotheses of the organizational communication” formulated by Invernizzi, being organizational communication considered as a synonym for internal communication (Invernizzi, 1993). However, these studies focused primarily on organizational structures and managerial processes, rather than on employees' subjective evaluations of internal communication.

The field developed thanks to a series of academic publications in the '90s (e.g., Amigoni, 1991; Baccarani and Golinelli, 1992; Butera, 1990; Del Mare *et al.*, 1990; Ferri, 1993; Gabrielli and Invernizzi, 1994; Iacci and Coletti, 1991; Nelli, 1994; Quaglino, 1992; Romano and Felicioli, 1991).

The most influential framework that impacted the development of internal communication in Italian academia was framed under the *lens of organizational communication, linking the development of the communication of organizations to the evolution of the organizational theories and models*, meant as a single phenomenon intertwining internal and external environment (Invernizzi, 1996, 2000; Invernizzi and Mazzei, 1993, 1997).

Beside this conceptual development, a group of Italian scholars based at Università IULM devoted high attention to the measurement of the evolution of organizational/internal communication in Italian companies. The prevalent conceptual framework was based on the hypotheses of the “generalized diffusion of internal communication” and of the “emergence of the paradigm of organizational communication” (Invernizzi, 1996, 2000).

With the new Millennium, a new wave of studies emerged (e.g., Ancarani and Baietti, 2000; Artuso and Mason, 2008; Baglieri, 2000; Barone and Fontana, 2005; Biraghi, 2015; Fiocca, 2002; Galardi, 2024; Invernizzi *et al.*, 2020; Invernizzi and Mazzei, 2006; Marchiori, 2001; Mazzei and Butera, 2024; Minghetti and Cutrano, 2004). Among these studies, a conceptual framework has been proposed based on a multidisciplinary approach: management and its resource-based theory of the

company, public relations and its theory of publics, and organizational communication with its communicative constitution of organizations principle (Mazzei, 2004, 2009, 2010, 2025). This perspective puts at the center of internal communication the role of all organizational members as communicators, strategic or adversarial, and the role of the internal communication function as the creator of an enabling work context (Mazzei, 2014). The role of employees as procompany or anticompany communicators has been investigated as an output of the level of engagement and related to the work context conditions in terms of employee relationship management, organizational justice and human resources practices (Mazzei *et al.*, 2019; Mazzei *et al.*, 2025).

In this flourishing of studies, some topics attracted particular attention in the Italian internal communication community, leading to studies again involving managers and practitioners in the field: internal crisis communication (e.g. Mazzei and Butera, 2021; Mazzei and Ravazzani, 2011) and diversity management (Mazzei and Ravazzani, 2012; Ravazzani, 2016). Again, on these topics the qualitative and quantitative instruments were focused on the managerial perspective, mapping and analyzing practices of communication related to specific issues at the organizational level.

From the operational point of view researchers developed measurement instruments to map the evolution of internal communication in Italy. In 2011 and 2017 ASCAI investigated the presence and the staffing of a dedicated function, channels and tools, budget, team, planning, aims and strategies, measurement (Nelli, 2017). While these instruments provide valuable benchmarking data, they do not constitute psychometrically validated measures of internal communication satisfaction at the employee level.

In 2019 and 2025-2026, two studies conducted at the research center CERC (Centre for Employee Relations and Communication) of Università IULM depicted the state of the art of internal communication in Italian companies (Mazzei and Quaratino, 2019, 2020; Mazzei *et al.*, 2026 in press). Some of the themes covered by this questionnaire are the *existence of a formal function* dedicated to internal communication, the *involvement of top management* into the definition of aims, *staffing*, *aims* of internal communication, the *role of employees as communicators* across the organizational borders, and the *managerial methods* to plan and evaluate internal communication. In the hypotheses of these studies internal communication impacts the level of employee engagement and it has the role to enable employees to perform procompany communication behavior.

All in all, considering the studies about internal communication in Italy according to the classification by Downs (1994 in Tkalac Verčič *et al.* 2021), the Italian tradition confirms the use of comprehensive instruments that “analyze communication practice on a macro level” (Tkalac Verčič *et al.* 2021: 592). These instruments are useful to map the state of the art of a profession or of an organizational area to diagnose the phase of development and maturity as for example the CCI Study (Goodman and Hirsh, 2010) or the European Communication Monitor (Tench *et al.*, 2025).

To evaluate the effects of internal communication on employees, there are some psychometric scales validated in Italian that can be used to assess a series of constructs that can be influenced by internal communication. For instance, there are scales available that have been validated in Italian in order to measure employee engagement in specific industries (Pisanti *et al.*, 2008), or to measure perceived organizational support (Battistelli and Mariani, 2011). Similarly, scales are available in Italian to assess job satisfaction, which also include some items specifically referred to the satisfaction of employees with communication issues (Platania *et al.*, 2021).

The need to study internal communication thoroughly is strictly related to the fast pace of its development in Italian companies. In 2019, the study conducted by CERC of Università IULM to assess the state of the art of internal communication in Italy showed that 56% of the companies surveyed had a formal function dedicated to internal communication, 30% had had this function in place for 11 to 20 years and 5% for more than 20 years (Mazzei and Quaratino, 2019, 2020). In the second edition of this study, 79% of the companies surveyed have a formal function dedicated to internal communication, 30% have had this function in place for 11 to 20 years and 10% for more than 20 years (Mazzei *et al.*, 2026 in press).

As emerged from the above, Italian studies on internal communication focused on applied

research, the development of validated managerial practices, and guidelines. This is coherent with a normative approach typical of corporate communication (Christensen and Cornelissen, 2011), the background of most Italian communication scholars. This kind of research led to the development of benchmarking tools such as the “Enabling Model of Internal Communication” (Mazzei and Quarantino, 2019). Therefore in Italy there is no tradition of academic studies conducted with Italian psychometric instruments and in particular related to internal communication satisfaction.

The need to expand the number and the quality of psychometrically validated employee-level measurement instruments is strictly related to the institutionalization of the professional field and the academic discipline of employee communication.

Measuring employee communication contributes to identify and validate methods, tactics, tools and messages that are effective or not (Men and Bowen, 2017). Efforts in employee communication are tied to important employee outcomes such as job attitudes, behavioral changes, productivity, organizational performance and these should be measured (Mazzei, 2025; Men and Bowen, 2017) to sustain the relevance of these efforts, the investments, and the legitimization of the function. There are a lot of obstacles and resistance in measuring employee communication (Men and Bowen, 2017) and companies signal that they have no formal assessment tool to evaluate the success of employee communication campaigns (Men and Berger, 2012). Therefore, having measures for constructs such as employee engagement, employee communication satisfaction, and the like, is crucial to overcome these difficulties and ease the process.

The quest arriving from the professional field is clear and strong, considering the organizational need to measure the results of internal communication activities (Mazzei and Quarantino, 2019; Mazzei *et al.*, 2026 in press; Men and Bowen, 2017). Therefore, academia and universities have an opportunity and the duty to develop scales that can measure psychometric constructs, as it is common in other fields such as psychology of organizations. The translation into local languages is essential to develop instruments that are easy to adopt for professionals.

Also, from the academic point of view, having psychometrically validated employee-level measurement instruments is an opportunity to carry out studies that can explore quantitative hypotheses with a culturally-based approach.

The aim of this study is therefore to start to fill this gap by examining the psychometric properties of the Italian version of the internal communication satisfaction questionnaire (ICSQ), as already done for the Croatian and English versions of the same instrument (Tkalac Verčič *et al.*, 2009; Tkalac Verčič *et al.*, 2021).

2.2 Internal communication and internal communication satisfaction

Internal communication is widely recognized as a strategic management function that shapes organizational cohesion, alignment, and performance. Contemporary scholarship in public relations and organizational communication moves beyond the traditional “sender–receiver” model and conceptualizes internal communication as a relational and participatory process through which meaning is co-created among employees and management.

Within this broader framework, Internal Communication Satisfaction (ICS) represents the evaluative outcome of internal communication processes. ICS refers to employees’ subjective evaluation of the quality, clarity, adequacy, and usefulness of communication within their organization (Tkalac Verčič *et al.*, 2025). Unlike structural indicators such as channel frequency, communication flows, or message design, ICS captures how employees psychologically experience and interpret the communicative environment in which they work. It is therefore an attitudinal construct that reflects employees’ perceptions rather than managerial intent or technical communication quality.

Conceptually, ICS is grounded in broader theories of satisfaction as an evaluative response to environmental conditions (Hecht, 1978; Spector, 1997). In organizational settings, it represents an affective–cognitive judgment about whether communication is timely, transparent, responsive, and meaningful. Employees form such judgments through daily interactions with supervisors and

colleagues, exposure to leadership messages, participation in meetings, feedback processes, informal exchanges, and increasingly through digital communication tools. ICS thus reflects employees' holistic appraisal of the communicative climate.

Historically, research on communication satisfaction emerged from studies of communication climate and message directionality (Downs and Hazen, 1977). Contemporary approaches conceptualize ICS as a multidimensional construct encompassing satisfaction with feedback, communication climate, supervisory communication, horizontal communication, corporate information, communication media, informal communication, and communication during meetings. This multidimensionality acknowledges that communication operates across hierarchical levels and functional contexts.

Theoretically, ICS is frequently explained through Social Exchange Theory (SET). From this perspective, internal communication functions as a relational signal. Clear, respectful, and informative communication communicates organizational investment in employees and strengthens perceptions of reciprocity and fairness. Empirical research demonstrates that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Psychological Contract Fulfillment (PCF) predict ICS, suggesting that employees who feel valued and believe organizational promises are honored evaluate internal communication more positively. ICS therefore reflects the perceived quality of the employee–organization relationship as enacted through communication.

In digitally mediated workplaces, ICS is also shaped by employees' perceptions of communication technologies. Drawing on the Media Affordances Perspective, research shows that employees' adaptability to and acceptance of digital communication tools significantly contribute to ICS. When communication platforms are perceived as usable, flexible, and aligned with task requirements, employees report higher communication satisfaction. Importantly, ICS does not merely reflect exposure to digital tools, but rather employees' evaluations of how well those tools support meaningful and relational interaction. Previous research has linked internal communication satisfaction to employee engagement and broader well-being outcomes (Tkalac Verčič *et al.*, 2025). In sum, internal communication satisfaction represents employees' integrated evaluation of their communicative work environment. It bridges relational, structural, and technological dimensions of communication and serves as a key explanatory construct in understanding how internal communication influences engagement, well-being, and broader organizational outcomes. The ICSQ operationalizes this multidimensional conceptualization and provides a structured measure of employees' evaluations of internal communication (Tkalac Verčič and Verčič, 2026).

2.3 Theoretical framework and construct positioning of internal communication satisfaction

The present validation effort is grounded in a multilevel theoretical framework integrating organizational communication theory, relational perspectives in public relations, and attitudinal theories of satisfaction. This framework clarifies both the nature of internal communication satisfaction (ICS) as a construct and the rationale for its psychometric validation.

First, from the perspective of organizational communication theory, internal communication is conceptualized as a constitutive process through which organizations are enacted and maintained (Mazzei, 2010). Communication is not merely a transmission mechanism but a system of interactions that shapes meaning, coordination, and organizational reality. Within this paradigm, employees are not passive recipients but active participants in communicative processes. Consequently, any assessment of internal communication must account for how communication is *experienced* by organizational members. ICS emerges as a key construct capturing this experiential dimension.

Second, the study draws on relational and public relations perspectives, particularly the view that communication reflects and sustains the quality of relationships between organizations and their members. In this sense, ICS functions as an indicator of the employee–organization relationship, as it reflects employees' evaluations of transparency, reciprocity, responsiveness, and inclusion in communication processes. This positioning aligns ICS with constructs such as trust, perceived organizational support, and relationship quality, while maintaining its distinct focus on

communication-specific evaluations.

Third, ICS is theoretically grounded in attitudinal theories of satisfaction, which conceptualize satisfaction as an evaluative judgment resulting from the comparison between expectations and perceived experiences (Hecht, 1978; Spector, 1997). Within organizational settings, ICS represents a domain-specific satisfaction construct, analogous to job satisfaction but focused exclusively on communication processes. It integrates both cognitive evaluations (e.g., clarity, adequacy of information) and affective responses (e.g., feeling informed, included, respected).

Building on these perspectives, ICS can be defined as a multidimensional latent construct representing employees' overall evaluative appraisal of the organizational communicative environment. Its multidimensionality reflects the complexity of communication processes, which operate across hierarchical levels (e.g., top management, supervisors), functional domains (e.g., feedback, coordination), and communication channels (e.g., formal, informal, digital).

Importantly, this theoretical positioning provides the foundation for the validation of the ICSQ. From a measurement perspective, ICS is treated as a reflective latent construct, where observed variables (items) represent manifestations of an underlying evaluative perception. The validation process therefore tests whether the empirical structure of the instrument corresponds to the theoretically defined dimensions of communication satisfaction. In this sense, confirmatory factor analysis is not merely a statistical procedure but a theory-testing approach, assessing the extent to which the proposed multidimensional model aligns with observed employee perceptions.

Finally, ICS occupies a central position within organizational communication research as a mediating and explanatory construct. It links communication processes to key organizational outcomes such as employee engagement, well-being, and behavioral alignment. By capturing how communication is interpreted and evaluated by employees, ICS provides a critical mechanism through which internal communication influences organizational effectiveness. The validation of the ICSQ in Italian therefore contributes not only to measurement development but also to the theoretical advancement of internal communication research by enabling systematic empirical testing of these relationships.

3. Methodology

The Italian subsample formed part of a broader three-wave, cross-national survey study designed to test a theoretically grounded process model of ICS and its organizational, technological, and psychological antecedents and outcomes (Tkalac Verčič *et al.*, 2025). For the purposes of this study, only the Italian data were used to assess the psychometric properties of the Italian version of the ICSQ. Data were collected between July and September 2025 using a structured online questionnaire administered through a professional polling agency. The validation focuses primarily on the wave in which internal communication satisfaction was measured, while additional variables from the broader project were used to examine theoretically expected associations.

3.1 Sampling and participants

Participants were recruited using stratified quota sampling to ensure representation across key demographic and organizational characteristics, including age, gender, industry sector, and organizational size. Eligibility required respondents to be employed (full-time or part-time) at the time of data collection. The Italian validation sample consisted of 348 employees. Of these, 181 (52.0%) were male and 167 (48.0%) were female. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 65 years, with a mean age of 45.62 years ($SD = 10.39$), indicating a professionally experienced workforce. In terms of education, the majority of respondents reported higher education qualifications. Specifically, 188 participants (54.0%) held a university degree, 83 (23.9%) reported post-secondary education below the university level, 52 (14.9%) held postgraduate qualifications, and 25 (7.2%) reported other forms of education. Participants were employed across a range of organizational contexts, positions, and industries, contributing to the heterogeneity of the sample and enhancing the relevance of the

findings for diverse organizational settings within Italy. The sample size exceeds commonly recommended thresholds for confirmatory factor analysis and psychometric validation, supporting the adequacy of the dataset for testing the structural and reliability properties of the Italian ICSQ.

3.2 Measure

ICS was measured using the ICSQ, a 32-item multidimensional instrument originally developed and validated in Croatian and subsequently validated in English. The ICSQ operationalizes ICS as employees' evaluative perception of internal communication within their organization and comprises eight dimensions: communication climate, relationship to supervisor, organizational integration, media quality, horizontal communication, organizational perspective, personal feedback, and communication with top management. Items are assessed on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied). A sample item is: "Information about changes in the organization." Higher scores indicate higher levels of ICS. The full 32-item structure was retained for validation in the Italian sample in order to examine the stability of the original dimensional configuration.

Perceived organizational support, psychological contract fulfillment, digital communication adaptability, employee engagement, and life satisfaction were measured using established multi-item scales. All instruments were translated into Italian using a back-translation procedure to ensure linguistic and conceptual equivalence between the original and Italian versions.

3.3 Data analysis

Data analysis proceeded in several stages to evaluate the psychometric properties of the Italian version of the ICSQ. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated for each of the eight dimensions and for the overall ICS score. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each dimension and for the overall index, with values above .70 considered acceptable. Structural validity was examined through confirmatory factor analysis testing the original eight-factor model and a higher-order model specifying ICS as a second-order construct. Model fit was evaluated using chi-square, comparative fit index, Tucker-Lewis index, root mean square error of approximation, and standardized root mean square residual. In addition, associations between ICS and theoretically related constructs, including perceived organizational support, psychological contract fulfillment, digital communication adaptability, employee engagement, and life satisfaction, were examined using regression analyses in order to evaluate whether ICS behaved in accordance with theoretical expectations. All analyses were conducted on the Italian sample ($N = 348$).

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics and reliability

Descriptive statistics and internal consistency coefficients for the eight dimensions of the ICSQ and for the overall ICS index are presented in Table 1. Mean scores across dimensions ranged from 4.34 (organizational integration) to 4.80 (communication climate), indicating moderate to relatively high levels of internal communication satisfaction in the Italian sample. The overall ICS mean was 4.58 ($SD = 1.14$), suggesting that respondents evaluated internal communication in their organizations positively, though not at the highest end of the scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .74 (organizational integration) to .89 (media quality). All eight dimensions exceeded the recommended threshold of .70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The overall ICS index demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .97$), reflecting a high degree of internal coherence among the 32 items.

Tab. 1: Descriptive statistics and reliability of the Italian ICSQ dimensions and overall internal communication satisfaction

Dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Communication climate	4.80	1.11	0.76
Relationship to supervisor	4.49	1.33	0.85
Organizational integration	4.34	1.18	0.74
Media quality	4.49	1.41	0.89
Horizontal communication	4.74	1.30	0.83
Organizational perspective	4.52	1.15	0.80
Personal feedback	4.66	1.31	0.83
Communication with top management	4.62	1.18	0.79
Overall ICS	4.58	1.14	0.97

Source: our elaboration

All reliability coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold of .70, confirming satisfactory internal consistency for each dimension and excellent reliability for the overall ICS index.

4.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the original eight-factor structure of the ICSQ in the Italian sample. In addition, a higher-order model specifying ICS as a second-order construct was examined. Fit indices for both models are presented in Table 2. For the eight-factor model, results were as follows: $\chi^2(436) = 1353.13$, CFI = .893, TLI = .878, RMSEA = .078, and SRMR = .160. The higher-order model yielded $\chi^2(456) = 1436.21$, CFI = .885, TLI = .875, RMSEA = .079, and SRMR = .161. The RMSEA values for both models fall within the acceptable range, though close to conventional upper thresholds. The CFI and TLI values are slightly below the commonly recommended cutoff of .90, indicating that model fit is marginal rather than optimal. The SRMR values exceed typical acceptable levels, suggesting suboptimal absolute fit. Overall, the eight-factor model demonstrates slightly better fit than the higher-order model, though both models show only moderate adequacy.

Tab. 2: Confirmatory factor analysis fit indices

Model	chi-square (chi2)	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Eight-factor model	1353.13	436	0.893	0.878	0.078	0.160
Higher-order model	1436.21	456	0.885	0.875	0.079	0.161

Source: our elaboration

Interpretation: RMSEA is in the acceptable range (borderline). CFI and TLI are slightly below common cutoffs (.90). SRMR is not acceptable. The eight-factor model fits slightly better than the higher-order model.

4.3 Standardized factor loadings

Standardized factor loadings for the eight-factor model are presented in Table 3. Most items loaded satisfactorily on their intended dimensions, with standardized loadings ranging from .579 to .867. Two items fell below the conventional .50 threshold: QICS.11 (organizational integration; $\lambda = .407$) and QICS.21 (organizational perspective; $\lambda = .489$). All remaining items exceeded .58, indicating acceptable to strong relationships with their respective latent factors. The strongest loadings were observed within the media quality, horizontal communication, and personal feedback dimensions. Taken together, the pattern of loadings suggests that the original dimensional structure of the ICSQ is largely replicated in the Italian sample, although certain items demonstrate weaker contributions and may warrant further examination in future research.

Tab. 3: Standardized loadings for the eight-factor ICSQ model

Item	Factor	Std. loading
QICS.1	CC	0.764
QICS.2	CC	0.614
QICS.3	CC	0.679
QICS.4	CC	0.648
QICS.5	RS	0.778
QICS.6	RS	0.849
QICS.7	RS	0.751
QICS.8	RS	0.609
QICS.9	OI	0.694
QICS.10	OI	0.688
QICS.11	OI	0.407
QICS.12	OI	0.808
QICS.13	MQ	0.752
QICS.14	MQ	0.800
QICS.15	MQ	0.844
QICS.16	MQ	0.796
QICS.17	HC	0.658
QICS.18	HC	0.867
QICS.19	HC	0.796
QICS.20	HC	0.621
QICS.21	OP	0.489
QICS.22	OP	0.639
QICS.23	OP	0.736
QICS.24	OP	0.700
QICS.25	PF	0.804
QICS.26	PF	0.819
QICS.27	PF	0.860
QICS.28	PF	0.707
QICS.29	TM	0.738
QICS.30	TM	0.801
QICS.31	TM	0.716
QICS.32	TM	0.579

Source: our elaboration

Key point: the claim “all loadings exceed .50” is not supported in the Italian data. Two items fall below .50 (QICS.11 = 0.407; QICS.21 = 0.489). Everything else is ≥ 0.58 .

Overall, the Italian data provide general support for the original eight-factor structure of the ICSQ. Internal consistency was satisfactory across all dimensions, and the majority of items demonstrated adequate factor loadings. However, global model fit indices indicate marginal fit, and two items exhibited loadings below .50. The Italian version therefore broadly replicates the original structure, though not without minor psychometric limitations that should be acknowledged.

5. Discussion

The present study examined the psychometric properties of the Italian version of the Internal Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (ICSQ) and aimed to assess whether the original multidimensional structure could be replicated in an Italian-speaking organizational context. Overall, the findings provide substantial support for the structural integrity and reliability of the instrument while simultaneously revealing several nuances that are typical of cross-cultural scale adaptation.

Rather than indicating structural failure, the results suggest partial adaptation effects that merit closer interpretation.

5.1 Interpretation of the CFA results and meaning of “marginal fit”

Confirmatory factor analysis largely supported the original eight-dimensional configuration of the ICSQ, with most items loading satisfactorily on their intended constructs and internal consistency indices exceeding recommended thresholds. However, global fit indices indicate what can be described as marginal model fit, a result that requires careful interpretation.

In psychometric validation studies, marginal fit does not imply that the theoretical structure is incorrect; rather, it indicates that the empirical covariance structure reproduces the data adequately but not optimally according to conventional statistical benchmarks. In the Italian sample, RMSEA values fall within the acceptable range, suggesting that model approximation error remains within tolerable limits. In contrast, CFI and TLI values fall slightly below the commonly referenced .90 cutoff, while SRMR values exceed preferred thresholds. Taken together, these indices suggest that the factorial structure is broadly supported but that certain item relationships or residual correlations differ from those expected under the original specification.

Importantly, marginal fit should be interpreted comparatively rather than absolutely. The original Croatian validation demonstrated strong structural coherence, while the English validation also reported acceptable but not perfect fit indices, reflecting the complexity inherent in measuring communication satisfaction across organizational and linguistic contexts. The Italian results therefore align with an emerging pattern in which the ICSQ structure remains stable across adaptations, yet minor deviations appear as the instrument enters new cultural environments. Such outcomes are common in multidimensional organizational scales, where contextual interpretations of communication practices inevitably influence response patterns.

From a substantive perspective, the marginal fit may also reflect the inherently contextual nature of internal communication satisfaction. Unlike personality traits or cognitive abilities, communication satisfaction is shaped by organizational norms, managerial styles, and culturally embedded expectations regarding hierarchy, feedback, and information sharing. Consequently, slight departures from ideal model fit can be interpreted as evidence of contextual sensitivity rather than psychometric weakness.

5.2 Interpretation of weaker items in the Italian context

Two items exhibited standardized loadings below the conventional .50 threshold (QICS.11 and QICS.21), indicating weaker associations with their respective latent constructs. While statistically notable, these results should not be interpreted as simple measurement deficiencies; instead, they invite reflection on linguistic and contextual explanations specific to the Italian organizational environment.

The weaker loading of QICS.11 within the organizational integration dimension may reflect differences in how Italian employees interpret organizational information and role clarity. Italian organizational culture has historically emphasized relational coordination and informal communication networks alongside formal structures. Employees may therefore evaluate integration less through explicit informational clarity and more through interpersonal interaction or managerial mediation. If the translated wording emphasizes formal organizational alignment, respondents may interpret the item differently from its intended conceptual meaning.

Similarly, the lower loading of QICS.21 within organizational perspective may indicate cultural variation in perceptions of strategic communication from the organization. Italian employees may experience organizational vision and long-term perspective as mediated through leadership credibility or local managerial interpretation rather than through centralized communication messages. As a result, satisfaction with organizational perspective may overlap conceptually with other relational dimensions, slightly weakening its statistical distinctiveness.

Linguistic factors may also contribute. Even with rigorous back-translation procedures, subtle

semantic shifts can occur when translating evaluative constructs such as satisfaction, clarity, or organizational outlook. Italian language usage often allows broader interpretive nuance, which may increase variability in responses and reduce item–factor alignment without altering the underlying construct itself.

Importantly, the presence of only two weaker items within a 32-item instrument suggests localized rather than systemic measurement issues. The overall loading pattern remains strong, supporting retention of the full scale while encouraging future research to monitor these items across additional Italian samples.

5.3 Comparison with Croatian and English validations

When positioned within the broader validation trajectory of the ICSQ, the Italian findings reinforce the cross-cultural robustness of the instrument. The Croatian validation established the original factorial structure and demonstrated strong psychometric performance within the cultural context in which the scale was developed. The English validation extended the instrument’s applicability to an international research environment and confirmed structural stability despite linguistic adaptation.

The Italian validation represents a further step in this trajectory. Consistent with earlier studies, reliability coefficients remain high and the multidimensional structure is preserved. At the same time, the slightly weaker global fit and isolated item deviations illustrate a predictable pattern of incremental variation as the instrument moves across linguistic and institutional contexts. Rather than weakening the scale, this progression strengthens its empirical credibility by demonstrating that the ICSQ retains conceptual coherence while remaining sensitive to contextual differences.

In this sense, the Italian results contribute to cumulative validation evidence: the instrument appears structurally stable across Southern European and Anglo-language contexts while allowing culturally specific response dynamics. Such findings support the use of the ICSQ as a comparative research tool capable of capturing both universal and context-dependent aspects of internal communication satisfaction.

5.4 Analytical reflection on limitations

The limitations of the present study should be interpreted analytically rather than as isolated methodological constraints. First, marginal model fit highlights the tension inherent in cross-cultural measurement between structural invariance and contextual adaptation. While the original structure is retained, the Italian data suggest that communication satisfaction may manifest through slightly different relational emphases, pointing to the need for continued validation rather than structural revision.

Second, the presence of two weaker items underscores the importance of examining semantic equivalence beyond literal translation. Measurement instruments assessing organizational perceptions are particularly sensitive to culturally embedded communication expectations. Future studies should therefore explore whether the observed item behavior reflects linguistic nuance, organizational norms, or sample-specific variance.

Third, reliance on self-reported survey data introduces common-method considerations, yet this limitation is intrinsic to research on satisfaction constructs, which are inherently subjective evaluations. Rather than a methodological flaw, self-reporting represents the appropriate epistemological approach for measuring perceived communication quality.

Finally, although embedded within a broader cross-national research project, the present analysis focuses exclusively on the Italian subsample. Consequently, conclusions concern validation within Italy rather than cross-cultural equivalence testing. Future comparative analyses may further clarify measurement invariance across national contexts.

5.5 Managerial implications and diagnostic use in Italian organizations

Beyond its methodological contribution, the Italian ICSQ offers concrete practical value for organizations. The instrument enables Italian companies to move from descriptive assessments of

communication activities toward systematic diagnosis of employees' communicative experiences.

Specifically, organizations can use the ICSQ diagnostically in several ways. First, the multidimensional structure allows managers to identify strengths and weaknesses across distinct communication domains, such as supervisory communication, feedback processes, media quality, or communication with top management. Rather than relying on general employee climate surveys, organizations can pinpoint which communication processes require intervention.

Second, repeated administration of the instrument enables longitudinal monitoring of communication initiatives. Italian organizations undergoing digital transformation, hybrid work implementation, or organizational change can track whether communication improvements translate into increased satisfaction across specific dimensions.

Third, the ICSQ provides a structured basis for dialogue between communication professionals, HR departments, and leadership. Results can inform targeted managerial training, redesign of feedback mechanisms, or refinement of leadership communication practices. In this sense, the instrument functions not merely as a measurement tool but as a decision-support mechanism.

Finally, the availability of a validated Italian version facilitates benchmarking across organizations and industries. As internal communication continues to institutionalize within Italian companies, standardized measurement can contribute to professionalization of the field by linking communication practices to measurable employee outcomes.

6. Limitations and future research

Future avenues based on the validation of the ICS in Italian include the possibility to explore in the Italian context connections and interrelations among a series of constructs.

Just to mention some that are urgent in the Italian context: the link between the perceived quality of internal communication (ICS) and organizational citizenship / prosocial and proactive safety (communication) behavior; or the link between ICS and the level of employee engagement or DEI communication behavior.

Furthermore, the study on the state of the art of employee communication conducted by CERC at Università IULM in 2025 indicates the priorities of employee communication for Italian companies that deserve more investigation: the digitalization of internal communication, the integration of artificial intelligence, the adoption of the digital workplace in the framework of hybrid work contexts, leadership and informal communication in the context of hybrid workplaces, the change processes. All these topics affect, and their successful implementation is affected, by internal communication satisfaction. Therefore there are avenues for studies considering these correlations that will be relevant both for theory advancement and from a managerial point of view.

From the methodological point of view, in Italy it is desirable to extend the study on internal communication with the typical explorative approach of the organizational communication discipline, mainly by qualitative methods. And at the same time, to improve the number and the value of quantitative studies, expected (although not exclusively) by the disciplines of corporate and strategic communication. The development of validated scales represents the first step and an incentive to proceed in this direction.

7. Conclusions and managerial implications

This study set out to translate and validate the Internal Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (ICSQ) in the Italian context, addressing a long-standing gap in Italian internal communication research: the absence of a psychometrically validated instrument capable of measuring employees' evaluations of internal communication. The results indicate that the Italian version of the ICSQ largely preserves the original multidimensional structure and demonstrates satisfactory reliability across all eight dimensions. Despite marginal global model fit and minor item-level deviations, the

overall findings support the conceptual coherence and empirical applicability of the instrument within Italian organizations.

From a scholarly perspective, the validation contributes to the cumulative international development of internal communication research by extending the ICSQ validation trajectory beyond its Croatian origin and English adaptation. The Italian findings reinforce the proposition that internal communication satisfaction constitutes a stable multidimensional construct that can be meaningfully assessed across linguistic and institutional environments. At the same time, the observed variations highlight the contextual sensitivity of communication perceptions, confirming that measurement instruments in organizational communication must balance structural stability with cultural adaptability.

The study also contributes to the evolution of Italian internal communication scholarship. Historically, Italian research has focused primarily on organizational structures, managerial practices, and professional benchmarking. While these approaches have significantly advanced the institutionalization of internal communication, they have provided limited insight into employees' subjective experiences of communication processes. The availability of a validated Italian ICSQ enables a shift toward employee-centered empirical research, allowing scholars to examine internal communication not only as a managerial function but also as a perceived organizational environment.

Beyond its academic contribution, the Italian ICSQ offers practical value as a diagnostic and developmental tool for organizations. Internal communication in Italy has increasingly acquired strategic relevance, yet evaluation practices often remain limited to descriptive indicators such as channel usage, communication outputs, or managerial perceptions. The validated instrument allows organizations to systematically assess communication effectiveness from the employee perspective, thereby strengthening evidence-based communication management.

First, the multidimensional structure enables diagnostic analysis of internal communication systems. Organizations can identify which specific communication domains function effectively and which require improvement. For example, relatively lower scores in organizational integration or feedback dimensions may signal insufficient clarity regarding roles, expectations, or performance communication. Such differentiated insights allow targeted interventions rather than generalized communication initiatives.

Second, the ICSQ can support organizational change management. Italian organizations increasingly face transformations linked to digitalization, hybrid work arrangements, and evolving leadership practices. Communication satisfaction serves as an early indicator of how employees interpret and accept organizational change. Periodic measurement can therefore help managers detect emerging communication gaps before they translate into disengagement or resistance.

Third, the instrument facilitates managerial learning and leadership development. Several dimensions of the ICSQ directly relate to supervisory and top-management communication. Results can inform leadership training programs by highlighting areas where communication behaviors influence employees' perceptions of transparency, accessibility, and support. In this way, communication measurement becomes integrated into broader organizational development processes.

Fourth, the ICSQ provides a foundation for strategic benchmarking. As more Italian organizations adopt standardized measurement approaches, comparisons across departments, organizational units, or industries become possible. Benchmarking enables communication professionals to demonstrate the organizational value of internal communication using comparable data rather than anecdotal evidence.

Finally, the instrument encourages a shift from reactive to evidence-informed communication governance. By linking communication satisfaction to broader organizational outcomes such as engagement, trust, or well-being, managers can position internal communication as a measurable organizational capability rather than a purely operational activity.

In sum, the Italian validation of the ICSQ represents both a methodological and practical advancement. Methodologically, it confirms the transferability of a multidimensional measure of internal communication satisfaction while illustrating the importance of contextual interpretation in

cross-cultural scale adaptation. Practically, it equips Italian organizations with a structured tool for diagnosing and improving their communicative environments.

As internal communication continues to evolve in response to technological change and organizational complexity, the ability to measure employees' communicative experiences becomes increasingly central. The Italian ICSQ provides a foundation for this development, enabling future research and practice to move toward more systematic, comparative, and evidence-based approaches to internal communication.

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