

# "Effective Interpersonal Communication: the Key to Improving Employee Retention in Multinational Companies"

<sup>1</sup>Wibawa Prasetya, <sup>2</sup>Yovi Bathesta, <sup>3</sup>Alfilonia Harwinda, <sup>4</sup>Nabila Alda Yuniar

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author, Industrial Engineering, Atma Jaya Catholic University Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2,3,4</sup>LSPR Communication and Business Institute Jakarta, Indonesia

**ABSTRACT:** In multinational corporations, effective interpersonal communication is highly crucial to enhance employee retention. Amidst fierce global competition, multinational companies face challenges in retaining their employees. Factors such as cultural differences, language, and communication styles among employees can influence employee retention rates. This research aims to explore the role of interpersonal communication in improving employee retention in multinational corporations. To achieve this, a descriptive analysis with a qualitative approach is necessary to gain a deep understanding of the importance of effective interpersonal communication. The research method involves a literature review of academic articles, credible research journals, and relevant sources obtained through Google Scholar. The research findings indicate that effective interpersonal communication plays a vital role in enhancing employee retention in multinational corporations. Good communication between management and employees can create a positive work environment, increase employee engagement, and strengthen the sense of ownership towards the company. Furthermore, effective interpersonal communication also helps overcome cultural differences, language barriers, and communication styles that may hinder collaboration within multinational teams. Effective interpersonal communication is indeed the key to improving employee retention. Based on these findings, several recommendations are provided for multinational corporations to enhance employee retention through effective interpersonal communication. Firstly, companies should provide cross-cultural communication training for their employees, focusing on cultural understanding, business ethics, and communication skills that are sensitive to differences. This training will assist employees in interacting with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds. Secondly, multinational corporations should ensure the existence of open and transparent communication channels throughout the organization. This can be achieved through the use of technology that facilitates fast and efficient information exchange, as well as policies and procedures that support open communication between management and employees. Thirdly, management needs to create an inclusive work environment where every employee feels heard, valued, and respected. This can be accomplished by promoting team collaboration, facilitating open discussions, and providing constructive feedback to employees.

**KeyWords:** Interpersonal Communication, employees retention, multinational companies

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the evolving era of globalization, multinational companies face complex challenges in maintaining sustainability and competitive advantage. One critical focus is employee retention. Multinational companies, with a diverse workforce representing various cultures, languages, and social backgrounds, encounter unique challenges in creating a harmonious work environment to retain talented and experienced employees. In this context, effective interpersonal communication has become a prominent theme in research and discussions on human resource management.

Effective interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in shaping organizational dynamics and relationships

between management and employees. In multinational companies, communication serves as the backbone to address cultural, linguistic, and expectation differences among employees. When communication fails, companies may face issues such as lack of collaboration, conflicts, confusion, and employee dissatisfaction, negatively impacting retention rates.

However, despite the acknowledged importance of effective interpersonal communication, multinational companies often face challenges in managing it. Cultural, linguistic, and communication norm differences can create difficulties in understanding messages and expressions from others. Additionally, advancing technology has transformed the communication landscape. Employees often interact through digital and virtual media, which can blur meaningful interpersonal communication.

To address these challenges, leaders and managers in multinational companies must understand that effective interpersonal communication is not just about delivering messages but also about actively listening, creating an open communication climate, and understanding the cultural context influencing interactions. Recognizing the importance of effective interpersonal communication, they should take concrete steps to improve it, providing significant benefits to the company, including increased employee retention, enhanced productivity, and the creation of an inclusive work culture.

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A multinational company is a business entity that operates in more than one country. Typically, these companies have their headquarters in their home country and subsidiaries in various other countries. Multinational companies engage in global business activities such as production, distribution, and the sale of goods or services. These companies often face challenges such as managing the complexity of cross-border operations, navigating diverse regulations, and addressing issues related to corporate image and social responsibility in different business environments. Additionally, employees of multinational companies may come from various countries around the world, each with different cultural and language backgrounds. This presents a unique challenge for managers in managing employees to improve employee retention.

In previous research, employee retention has consistently been associated with Company Policies and Culture, Career Development Opportunities, Compensation and Benefits, Work-Life Balance, Recognition and Appreciation, Positive Work Environment, Involvement in Decision-Making, Relationships with Management and Supervisors, Opportunities for Work-Life Balance, and Contribution Opportunities, Remuneration, Recognition, Engagement, Employee Management, Employee Participation, Perceived Organizational Politics, Extrinsic Rewards (Tirta and Erika, 2020; Ullah et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2012; Masood, 2013; Shah and Asad, 2018; Nasir et al., 2019; Khalid and Nawab, 2018; Imam et al., 2018; Sarmad et al., 2016; Warraich et al., 2019; Alhmoud and Rjoub, 2020).

Considering the diverse origins of employees working in multinational companies and the findings of previous research, it is interesting to explore the role and impact of effective interpersonal communication in enhancing employee retention in these companies. This represents a novelty in research

## **III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This research aims to:

- i. Investigate the role and impact of effective interpersonal communication in enhancing employee retention in multinational companies.
- ii. Analyze various factors influencing interpersonal communication, such as cultural differences, language, technology, and leadership styles.

## **IV. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication is an interactive process that occurs between two or more individuals exchanging messages and creating meaning collaboratively and interdependently through verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Munasov, 2020). According to Ezeah et al. (2020), interpersonal communication is the process of sharing ideas that takes place face-to-face, typically involving two individuals.

Interpersonal communication involves the exchange of information between two connected individuals, such as

between employees and leaders (Devito, 2018). Manning (2020) emphasizes that interpersonal communication entails interaction between two or more people, usually with direct connection and some assumed relationship.

### **Interpersonal Communication Skill**

Interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in building and maintaining healthy social relationships. The ability to communicate effectively on a personal level allows an individual to express feelings, needs, and ideas clearly while also understanding messages received from others accurately.

According to Ansari (2021), interpersonal communication skills have become a necessity in organizations. Individuals who can convey messages or information without offending or hurting anyone are highly sought after. Organizations need to identify individuals with both technical and interpersonal communication skills, especially those related to the job.

Improving the interpersonal communication skills of employees within a company is essential because those involved can take pride in affiliating with the company (Yoel et al., 2022). Meanwhile, according to Khan et al. (2017), communication skills refer to a person's ability to convey messages clearly and concisely. Successful communication occurs when the transmitted message is clearly and unambiguously understood within the context and by the intended audience.

Dean and East (2019) state that in the 21st century job market, general thinking abilities and analytical-technical skills are no longer sufficient. Instead, there is a greater need for interpersonal communication skills to address more complex challenges. Employees are required to think creatively to generate new ideas to solve problems and respond to future challenges (Sahin et al., 2015).

### **The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Multinational Companies**

In the context of companies, good interpersonal communication can enhance collaboration, build strong team relationships, increase productivity, and help prevent unnecessary conflicts. Therefore, the ability to communicate effectively on an interpersonal level is a highly valuable skill in various aspects of life. Interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in Multinational Companies. In this context, interpersonal communication involves the exchange of information, ideas, and perspectives among individuals from different cultures, languages, and backgrounds. Effective interpersonal communication can facilitate cross-cultural collaboration, improve operational efficiency, and foster innovation in the context of Multinational Companies.

Effective communication is a crucial aspect of organizational development. If interpersonal communication within a company is effective, it can contribute to the achievement of corporate goals and motivate employees to perform well. Thus, effective communication strategies become a critical factor in organizations (Batra and Suneja, 2020).

In a company, a leader is required to communicate interpersonally effectively to establish emotional closeness between the leader and subordinates, as well as among the subordinates themselves. This facilitates smoother and more relaxed information delivery, making it easier for the information to be accepted and implemented (Suntani et al., 2021).

Interpersonal communication is a critical aspect within a company, as an individual's productivity and work motivation depend on these activities and on the relationships with management and the team in which they work (Parakhina and Bannicov, 2022).

Language, as the primary means of communication, plays a significant role in social interaction. Proficiency in using foreign languages influences teamwork in multicultural settings that focus on individual knowledge and attitudes (Fleishmann, 2017). In Multinational Companies (MNCs), language diversity can give rise to hybrid languages. These languages can be used for interpersonal communication but may also hinder organizational processes (Shen et al., 2023). A study conducted by Elsafty and Oraby (2022) suggests that one of the impacts of effective communication is an increase in employee retention.

### **Barriers to Interpersonal Communication in Multinational Companies**

Interpersonal communication aims to convey everything about one's thoughts and feelings to the communicator. Expressing thoughts and feelings correctly with proper ethics can prevent and avoid conflicts between individuals, groups, and even ethnicities. According to Susanto et al. (2023), the barriers to interpersonal communication found in multinational companies include language, physical distance, and contextual (disagreement in work systems). The causes of these barriers are stereotypes, perceptions, and educational and experiential backgrounds.

Stereotypes are common views or beliefs that simplify and generalize a group, category, or individual based on certain characteristics, such as gender, age, race, religion, or cultural background. Stereotypes are often inaccurate or overly simplistic and can affect how one thinks, interacts, and responds to people or groups considered different. Stereotypes have significant negative impacts and can lead to discrimination, prejudice, inequality, and even intergroup conflicts. Therefore, efforts to overcome stereotypes and promote a deeper understanding of human diversity are crucial.

Additionally, differences in education and life experiences can result in different understandings of specific contexts or situations. People may perceive something as common or logical based on their own experiences, but this may not apply to individuals with different backgrounds, hindering the process of interpersonal communication.

Communication barriers can also be caused by differences in communication styles, cultural values, and language, especially in the interaction between expatriates and local employees in foreign subsidiaries (Peltokorpi, 2007). In multinational companies, interpersonal communication becomes a unique challenge for employees due to cultural differences such as individualism and ethnocentrism, which can hinder communication processes within the company (Alaka, 2020). Ethnocentrism, the tendency to judge the culture and behavior of others based on one's own cultural standards or perspectives, can hinder communication processes as well (Storgaard et al., 2015).

Language differences are also a factor that hampers communication, disrupting the information exchange process and ultimately affecting company performance (Harzing & Feely, 2008). However, it is undeniable that the low competence of communication in multinational companies impacts social interactions and employee performance (Riyanto et al., 2023).

According to Tenzer et al. (2017), language diversity affects almost all management decisions in multinational companies. Language differences can create barriers in communication among company employees. Effective communication is a crucial factor in daily life, including workplace communication, interpersonal relationships within the company, and all types of human interaction. In multinational companies, the organizational environment influences effective communication, especially related to local language and culture.

In multinational companies, language diversity is an essential element of an individual's social identity. Individuals tend to identify with their mother tongue, providing social connections to groups with shared values, traditions, norms, and goals. Language diversity can be a problem in multinational teams, and not all multilingual managers succeed in reducing tension, division, and conflicts resulting from language errors (Kalra and Szymanski, 2023).

According to Tenzer et al. (2021), language diversity in multinational teams affects communication, which, in turn, affects the knowledge transfer process. Language barriers reduce individual participation in team communication, thus hindering the basic knowledge transfer process among workers. Hidden language barriers (pragmatic transfer between the mother tongue and the working language) disrupt understanding in team collaboration, ultimately negatively impacting company performance.

Susanto et al. (2023) state that common communication barriers in multinational companies, aside from language, are caused by physical distance between subsidiaries and their parent companies and mismatches in work systems. Contributing factors to these barriers include stereotypes, perceptions, educational backgrounds, and experiences. In multinational companies, the physical distance between subsidiaries results in online communication. Digitization has changed life and the workplace, with individuals increasingly connecting through virtual means and communicating in English, usually not their native language (Karhunen et al., 2023). Additionally, the effectiveness of communication between formal units and informal connectivity in multinational companies in knowledge transfer is influenced by different cross-country dimensions (Saez et al., 2021).

### **Employee Retention**

Employee retention is a term used in human resources (HR) to describe a company or organization's efforts to keep existing employees to stay and work for the company for a longer period. According to Al Kurdi et al. (2020), employee retention is the employer's effort, in this case, the company, to retain desired employees who possess the quality to fulfill its business objectives.

Another opinion states that employee retention is a combination of specific policies and procedures where an organization can keep its talented employees for a longer duration (Ullah et al., 2020). Employee retention is crucial in an organization because it provides many benefits to the company. Many companies nowadays pay

attention to employee retention policies by considering their employees' needs to enhance job satisfaction, keeping them in the organization for a maximum period (Mahadi et al., 2020).

Employee retention depends on employee satisfaction, influenced by positive and sustainable work environment factors; sustainable growth opportunities; effective and sustainable communication; and effective and sustainable recruitment and selection practices. Satisfied employees are less likely to leave their jobs, while dissatisfied employees are more likely to seek better opportunities elsewhere (Ghani et al., 2022).

According to Kurdi et al. (2020), economic, psychological, affiliation, and self-actualization factors can affect employee retention. Self-actualization can be expressed in various aspects of life and how individuals can achieve their full potential through continuous effort and dedication.

The main goal of employee retention is to reduce turnover or employee turnover so that the company can retain high-potential employees, reduce the costs of recruiting and training new employees, and retain the knowledge and skills already possessed by existing employees.

### **Effective Interpersonal Communication**

Effective interpersonal communication can be said to occur when every message and meaning conveyed by the source is the same as the message and meaning received by the receiver (Henry and Putri, 2022). Effective interpersonal communication is highly needed in various aspects of life, including personal, professional, and social relationships. It allows individuals to build more meaningful relationships, solve problems, and create a more positive environment. Some characteristics and principles related to effective interpersonal communication include:

1. **Openness:** Sharing information, feelings, and views openly. Individuals engaged in communication should feel comfortable speaking and listening without fear of being judged wrong.
2. **Message Accuracy:** Clear, concrete, and relevant messages. Avoid using ambiguous terms.
3. **Active Listening:** The ability to listen attentively, including understanding what others say, asking questions for clarification, and providing appropriate responses.
4. **Empathy:** The ability to understand and feel others' feelings and views, helping build deeper connections and responding to messages more sensitively.
5. **Body Language and Facial Expressions:** In addition to words, body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice contribute to effective interpersonal communication, conveying deeper feelings and messages.
6. **Feedback:** Constructive feedback can be given to enhance understanding and address misunderstandings, with the aim of building rather than undermining.
7. **Context Appropriateness:** It is essential to understand the communication context, meaning how one talks to close friends should differ from how one talks to superiors at the workplace.
8. **Conflict Resolution:** Effective interpersonal communication should be able to handle conflicts healthily, meaning individuals have the ability to express disagreement respectfully and seek solutions together.
9. **Cultural Awareness:** Understanding and respecting cultural differences in communication are crucial.
10. **Consistency:** Consistent communication helps build trust. Varying attitudes and messages should be avoided to maintain strong relationships.
11. **Clear Conclusions:** After communication, ensure that the conveyed message is correctly understood, which can be achieved through summarizing or asking for a summary from the listener.
12. **Appreciation:** Others' opinions and contributions in a conversation should be valued, aiding in creating better bonds and enhancing collaboration.

According to Susanto et al. (2023), effective communication is required in the workplace, especially when involving different cultures, to avoid cultural conflicts. Effective communication is crucial in multinational companies and has become a significant factor in daily life, including workplaces, relationships, and all kinds of human interactions.

As a workplace or even a learning center, multinational companies must practice good and effective

communication, both internally and externally, to achieve shared goals. The organizational environment influences effective communication, especially the language and culture of the company (Mahmud et al., 2020). Interpersonal conflict, job stress, and work-life balance will affect employees' intentions to switch to another company (Ahmad, 2022).

Poor communication impact in organizations will result in interpersonal conflicts, becoming a source of stress that leads to unwanted organizational behaviors, namely a high intention among employees to move to another company (Akhlaghimofrad&Farmanesh, 2021).

According to Ghani et al. (2022), efforts to improve employee retention depend on employee satisfaction, consisting of four factors: sustained positive work environment, sustained growth opportunities, and sustained and effective communication.

Overall employee satisfaction with internal communication in the company is significantly positively related to the attractiveness they give to employers (Vokic, 2022).

### **V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this paper, a literature review research method is employed to determine that employee retention is a key factor in efforts to enhance employee retention. To strengthen the argument, the literature review plays a crucial role in explaining the theories and concepts used (Nakano and Muniz, 2018). The journals used as references are obtained from credible and relevant sources related to the research topic. Throughout the research process, various literature and journals are analyzed and synthesized, including summarizing and developing new ideas and theories, validating, investigating research quality, and identifying weaknesses and contradictions (Xiao and Watson, 2019).

The literature review research method can help clarify the concept of interpersonal communication as a key factor in improving employee retention in multinational companies. According to Marzali (2017), a literature review can be used for research studies as it can enrich insights into the topic being investigated. The literature review should be conducted selectively, critically, following a logical sequence, and comprehensively. To achieve this, data filtering processes are necessary, using Google Scholar and reputable journal publisher websites. The filtering process is carried out by typing keywords such as effective interpersonal communication, employee retention, communication barriers in multinational companies. The selected journals should be at least 80 percent published in the last 10 years to align with current developments (Putra and Irwansyah, 2020).

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach that connects the subject and object of the study descriptively, allowing for empirical, non-empirical, and theoretical analysis. According to Moleong (2017), a descriptive qualitative approach aims to build, explain, and describe existing data categories. This step is taken to observe findings about the role of interpersonal communication in improving employee retention in the previously studied companies.

### **VI. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

A multinational corporation (MNC), also known as a transnational corporation, is a business organization that operates in more than one country or has affiliates, subsidiaries, or business units located in various countries. MNCs are a type of company that engages in significant economic activities in multiple countries, and they typically have a globally integrated organizational structure.

Multinational corporations can operate in various sectors, including manufacturing, financial services, information technology, energy, food and beverage, and many other sectors. Their primary goal is to leverage advantages such as economies of scale, broader markets, and competitive advantages across different countries.

Multinational corporations often face complex and unique challenges in interpersonal communication due to the diversity of cultural values, languages, communication styles, and work contexts in different countries (Peltokorpi, 2007).

Language diversity can have a negative impact on the company, as not all managers are capable of mitigating tension and conflicts resulting from language errors (Kalra and Szymanski, 2023). Different languages can be a significant barrier to effective communication and may lead to misunderstandings, disrupting the flow of information and ultimately affecting company performance (Tenzer et al., 2017; Harzing& Feely, 2008; Susanto et al., 2023).

Language barriers can also lead to decreased individual communication participation within teams, hindering

knowledge transfer among employees (Tenzer et al., 2021). Cultural differences such as individualism and ethnocentrism can also influence how employees interact and collaborate (Alaka, 2020). This can impede the communication process because ethnocentrism, often present in multinational corporations, is the tendency of employees to judge others based on their own cultural standards (Storgaard et al., 2015). Employees from different cultural backgrounds may interpret the same message differently, leading to difficulties in understanding tasks, goals, or instructions, ultimately affecting employee performance and retention.

The goal of employee retention is to keep existing employees within the organization for a longer period (Ullah et al., 2020). Employee retention has a positive impact on productivity, continuity, and company stability. The primary objectives of employee retention include: 1). **Reducing Turnover Costs:** By retaining current employees, the company can avoid recruitment, training, and adjustment costs. 2). **Maintaining Knowledge and Experience:** Experienced employees can help the company address challenges and leverage their existing knowledge. 3). **Increasing Productivity:** Long-term employees tend to be more productive than new hires, helping maintain productivity levels. 4). **Enhancing Innovation and Continuity:** Long-term employees contribute to innovation and ongoing improvement efforts. 5). **Creating a Stable Work Environment:** Valued and appreciated employees create a conducive atmosphere for collaboration and productivity. 6). **Improving Company Image:** High employee retention rates reflect positively on the company's reputation. 7). **Enhancing Employee Satisfaction:** Satisfied employees are more likely to stay in the company by providing opportunities for development, work-life balance, compensation, and job satisfaction (Mahadi et al., 2020).

Effective interpersonal communication is crucial in multinational corporations because they operate in diverse cultural and linguistic environments, making good communication even more critical (Susanto et al., 2023).

Effective communication helps bridge cultural differences among employees from various countries, preventing misinterpretations, conflicts, and misunderstandings arising from differences in norms and communication styles. Poor communication in multinational corporations can lead to interpersonal conflicts, which can result in workplace stress and undesirable behaviors, such as employees seeking opportunities elsewhere (Akhlaghimofrad&Farmanesh, 2021).

Effective communication makes employees feel valued and noticed, especially in an environment that may feel unfamiliar. This helps in retaining employee engagement and reducing turnover risk. This aligns with the idea presented by Ghani et al. (2022) that a sustained positive work environment, continuous growth opportunities, and effective communication can enhance employee retention.

Employees with strong interpersonal communication skills in a company tend to take pride in their affiliation with the organization because they are continually engaged in company activities (Yoel et al., 2022). Pride in affiliation can influence employee turnover rates. When employees feel proud of working for a company and identify with its values and goals, they are more likely to remain loyal and work for the company for an extended period. Conversely, if employees do not feel proud or connected to the company, employee turnover may be higher as they seek more satisfying opportunities elsewhere.

Effective interpersonal communication can help create a positive work environment, which, in turn, reduces employees' desire to leave the company, especially in multinational corporations. This is due to: 1). **Better Understanding:** Clear and effective communication allows employees to understand the company's goals, tasks, and expectations, reducing uncertainty and frustration that could lead to job searches elsewhere. 2). **Building Strong Relationships:** Good communication fosters positive relationships between employees and management or colleagues, creating a sense of attachment to the company and encouraging loyalty. 3). **Support and Recognition:** Through effective communication, the company can provide support, positive feedback, and recognition for employee achievements, enhancing job satisfaction and making employees feel valued. 4). **Conflict Resolution:** Good communication also helps in resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding prolonged conflicts that make employees uncomfortable. Therefore, effective interpersonal communication enhances employee retention (Elsafty and Oraby, 2022).

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Effective interpersonal communication plays a crucial role in enhancing employee retention in multinational companies.
2. Effective interpersonal communication also helps overcome cultural, linguistic, and communication style differences that can hinder collaboration in multinational teams.
3. Effective interpersonal communication is also key to improving employee retention.

**Suggestions:**

1. Companies should provide cross-cultural communication training for their employees, focusing on cultural understanding, business ethics, and communication skills that are sensitive to differences. This training will assist employees in interacting with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds.
2. Multinational companies should ensure the presence of open and transparent communication channels throughout the organization.
3. Management needs to create an inclusive work environment where every employee feels heard, valued, and respected. This can be achieved by encouraging team collaboration, facilitating open discussions, and providing constructive feedback to employees

**VIII. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Multinational corporations need to focus on the development of effective interpersonal communication because it can help them retain employees for a longer duration, reduce turnover costs, and enhance both productivity and employee satisfaction.

In addition, effective interpersonal communication greatly assists the company in:

1. **Better Conflict Management:** Employees understanding the perspectives and feelings of colleagues tend to find better solutions to potential conflicts that may arise.
2. **Alignment of Understanding:** This helps prevent misunderstandings that may arise due to cultural differences, language, or message interpretation.
3. **Facilitating Innovation:** Good communication makes employees comfortable sharing ideas, providing a competitive advantage for multinational companies. By understanding and implementing effective interpersonal communication, multinational companies can create a harmonious work environment, enhance employee performance, and achieve long-term success.

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