

The effect of psychosocial working conditions on work engagement and burnout in European communication industry

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Abstract

Purpose – Responding to the lack of research on work engagement and burnout of professionals in the communication industries, this work's main objective is to evaluate the effect of psychosocial working conditions (meaningful work, trust and recognition) on work engagement and burnout. Additionally, the mediating role of employee voice is tested.

Design/methodology/approach – The study takes a quantitative approach. A sample of 3,386 European workers in the communication industries was taken from the 2021 European Working Conditions Survey. The measurement of the main concepts is based on the variables available in the database above. The hypotheses were tested using the partial least squares method.

Findings – The results reveal that all psychosocial working conditions (meaningful work, trust and recognition) contribute to promoting work engagement and reducing burnout. Furthermore, employee voice is a mediator of the relationship between psychosocial working conditions, work engagement and burnout, although the presence of employee voice reduces the robustness of those relationships.

Practical implications – These results present relevant practical implications for managing workers in the communication industries, namely some clues to promote positive employee outcomes through the management of psychosocial working conditions.

Originality/value – This study examines the underexplored topic of work engagement and burnout in professionals in the communication industries as well as the relevance of psychological working conditions and employee voice to those outcomes. Furthermore, this study provides insightful information that is particularly useful to the European setting, where cultural aspects and working conditions may vary greatly from those in other parts of the world.

Keywords Employee voice, Psychosocial working conditions, Work engagement, Burnout, Europe

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

The communication industry stands as a pivotal sector in today's information-driven world, encompassing a wide range of professions such as journalism, public relations, advertising, and media production. Despite its influential role in shaping public opinion and disseminating information, professionals within this sector often grapple with demanding work environments characterized by long working hours, high-performance expectations, and an inherent pressure for continual innovation and better results. According to [Ziegele and Zeffass \(2021\)](#), the increasing complexity and dynamism of the communication field necessitate a high degree of flexibility and perpetual availability, which can exacerbate stress levels and negatively impact mental health. Additionally, the industry's steady march towards digitalization and 24/7 news cycles have only intensified these demands, creating environments where burnout and diminished well-being are prevalent concerns ([Gilstrap and Bernier, 2017](#)). Evidence suggests that these high-pressure working conditions, if not adequately addressed, can lead to serious psychosocial risks, including stress, anxiety, and professional burnout, thereby jeopardizing the overall engagement of communication professionals ([Aldoory et al., 2008](#); [Gascón et al., 2021](#)). Given these pressing challenges, it becomes imperative to explore how the work environment can be optimized to support positive employee outcomes for those working within the sector ([Álvarez-Nobell et al., 2022](#)).

Despite this context and the increasing interest in topics related to the profession's wellbeing ([Álvarez-Nobell et al., 2022](#)), few studies have been carried out with the aim of understanding the working conditions that may be fostering or limiting employee outcomes of communication industry professionals. As such, the present study aims to understand the role of psychosocial working conditions ([Schütte et al., 2014](#)) in communication industry professionals' work engagement and burnout.

Psychosocial working conditions refer to the factors related to work characteristics and work organization ([Teo et al., 2020](#)). For the purpose of this study, psychosocial working conditions include meaningful work, trust, and recognition. Meaningful work refers to the sense of purpose and fulfillment individuals derive from their job roles, which has been linked to higher levels of work engagement and lower incidences of burnout ([Schütte et al., 2014](#)). Trust in the workplace, encompassing both trust in colleagues and management, fosters a supportive work environment that is essential for work engagement and burnout ([Schütte et al., 2014](#)). Recognition refers to the acknowledgment and appreciation of an employee's efforts and achievements, which is documented to further enhance job satisfaction and mitigate burnout ([Gascón et al., 2021](#)).

Despite the established importance of these factors in other industries, a research gap remains when it comes to understanding their specific impact within the communication sector. The high demands and intense pressure characteristic of this profession calls for a closer examination of how these psychosocial working conditions contribute to both the promotion of work engagement and the mitigation of burnout. Existing literature has highlighted the need for such targeted research to better address the unique challenges faced by professionals in the communication industries ([Ziegele and Zeffass, 2021](#); [Gilstrap and Bernier, 2017](#)).

Additionally, this study aims to analyze the mediating role of employee voice in the relation between psychosocial working conditions, work engagement and burnout. Employee voice refers to the opportunity for employees to express their opinions, suggestions, concerns, and perspectives within their organization, either directly or through their representatives ([Bashshur and Oc, 2015](#)). This study focuses on direct voice, the type of voice where employees engage in situations such as meetings with colleagues and superiors or semi-autonomous groups ([Holland et al., 2013](#)), allowing them to be involved in problem-solving situations and influence decisions ([Holland et al., 2017](#)). When employees feel that their voice is valued, it fosters a sense of ownership and inclusion, which can significantly buffer against stress and burnout while enhancing work engagement ([Pinho et al., 2023](#)). Existing literature suggests that environments that support employee voice can lead to improved psychological well-being and job satisfaction, as well as lower levels of stress ([Ziegele and Zeffass, 2021](#);

[Aldoory et al., 2008](#)). Additionally, comprehensive studies in the context of the communication industries, especially in the European setting, are sparse. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how employee voice interacts with various psychosocial working conditions to influence communication professionals' work engagement and burnout in Europe.

This study makes an original contribution to the field by specifically targeting employee outcomes of professionals in the communication industry, a sector that has been underrepresented in academic literature despite its significant societal influence. By focusing on the psychosocial working conditions, this research provides a nuanced understanding of the factors that promote work engagement and mitigate burnout ([Pinho et al., 2023](#)). Moreover, this study adds a unique angle by scrutinizing the mediating role of employee voice—a factor often overlooked in research concerning psychosocial working conditions and their outcomes ([Schütte et al., 2014](#); [Ziegele and Zerfass, 2021](#)). Finally, by using data from the 2021 European Working Conditions Survey, this study fills these gaps and offers valuable insights that are particularly relevant to the European context, where working conditions and cultural factors may differ substantially from other regions ([Hu et al., 2014](#)). The emphasis on employee voice as a mediator not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of these dynamics but also offers practical implications, providing management with actionable strategies to enhance employee outcomes and productivity.

Literature review

Theoretical background

Considering the objective of the study, as well as the constructs considered and the research model formulated, the theoretical background is based on the combination of the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R) ([Bakker and Demerouti, 2017](#)) and the Social Exchange Theory (SET) ([Blau, 2017](#); [Emerson, 1976](#)).

The JD-R model is commonly used in studies that address burnout and work engagement (e.g. [Galanakis and Tsitouri \(2022\)](#) [Brockner and van Dijke \(2024\)](#)). This model proposes that each job requires its conditions or requirements, generating tension, which tends to be higher the smaller the resources available (in quantities and types) for workers. Thus, the more scarce or inadequate the available resources, the greater the tension level, deteriorating workers' well-being to exhaustion. On the contrary, if the available resources are adequate to the work demands, the tension decreases, and there is greater work engagement ([Lesener et al., 2020](#); [Mazzetti et al., 2023](#)).

On the other hand, SET assumes that, in general, individuals engage and adopt certain behaviors based on the expectation of return from the other party, being a cost-benefit approach ([Blau, 1964](#); [Emerson, 1976](#)). SET has been applied in studies that address employee voice (e.g. [Pinho et al. \(2023\)](#) [Nazir et al. \(2021\)](#) [Zeng and Xu \(2020\)](#)), mainly as a theoretical framework to explain the predictors of voice. This study uses this approach in which psychosocial working conditions (meaningful work, workplace trust and recognition) predict the voice of communication and information professionals. This way, voice results from work-related benefits ([Abdullah et al., 2021](#); [Nazir et al., 2021](#)). Thus, in the study, it is assumed that meaningful work, trust, and recognition in the workplace influence the manifestation and involvement with work through these professionals' voices. Furthermore, psychosocial working conditions and employee voice will affect workers' work engagement and burnout ([Kao et al., 2022](#); [Urbanaviciute et al., 2021](#)).

Psychosocial working conditions

Psychosocial working conditions refer to important work characteristics regarding content and work organization ([Teo et al., 2020](#)). In this way, they can be classified into job demands and job resources, creating opportunities to develop and apply workers' skills ([Dlouhy and Casper, 2021](#); [Gabriel and Aguinis, 2022](#)). Theoretical models consider them to be the aggregates of workers' psychological experiences at work, with lasting effects on employee outcomes at

work (Weziak-Bialowolska *et al.*, 2020). When workers are temporarily or insistently exposed to a set of psychosocial working conditions, it affects workers' outcomes differently (Russo and Terraneo, 2020). Job demands are psychological stressors that create tension in workers, such as excessive workloads, role conflicts and time pressure (Joy, 2020). Job resources are work resources that allow dealing with job demands such as, for example, meaningful work (Tan *et al.*, 2021), workplace trust (Bellamkonda *et al.*, 2021), and workplace recognition (Montani *et al.*, 2020), allowing for the improvement of employee outcomes at work.

Developing hypotheses

Psychosocial working conditions and employee voice

In the context of communication professionals, examining the complex relationship between "psychosocial working conditions" and "employee expression" reveals a compelling narrative about how the work environment shapes and influences the manifestation of employees' perspectives and opinions (Pinho *et al.*, 2023). Thus, psychosocial working conditions, including meaningful work, trust in the workplace, and recognition in the workplace, tend to be positively related to employee voice (Li *et al.*, 2022a).

Employees who find their work enjoyable are more inclined to commit to their work and participate in discussions that are important to them (Bellamkonda and Pattusamy, 2022). This is because meaningful work gives individuals a sense of purpose and completion, which can lead to greater motivation and participation. Tran *et al.* (2018) indicated that the association between high-quality work relationships and stress or fatigue is through social impact.

Regarding trust in the workplace, while employees trust their colleagues and supervisors, they're more likely to feel snug sharing their thoughts (Pinho *et al.*, 2023). This is due to a sense of mental safety, making individuals more hazard-adverse and communicating without worrying about reprisals. Research from (Liang and Yeh, 2020) confirmed an association between vocal conduct and bullying at work. This association was highlighted due to the importance of trust in developing a safe and supportive work environment (Liang and Yeh, 2020).

About recognition in the place of job employees that feel recognized and valued for their efforts are more inclined to share their thoughts and ideas with others (Liang and Yeh, 2020). This is because recognition gives the individual the feeling of being valued, leading to greater job satisfaction and commitment. There also seems to be a positive and significant association between three psychological conditions (meaning, security, and availability) and workers' voices (Arham *et al.*, 2022; Hasan and Kashif, 2021).

- H1. For communication professionals, psychosocial working conditions (a) meaningful work; (b) workplace trust; (c) workplace recognition will be positively related with employee voice.

Psychosocial working conditions, work engagement, and burnout

Work engagement is of extensive significance for the bodily and mental wellbeing of individuals, and for the effectiveness and competitiveness of organizations (Li and Chen, 2023). In this context, psychosocial working conditions, such as meaningful work, workplace trust and workplace recognition, together with the interaction between employees, work and the organizational environment, can potentially influence, foster or even decrease work engagement.

When personnel agree that their efforts have a cause, they may be extra willing to commit and experience stimulation, which will increase their productivity and task satisfaction (Bonaiuto *et al.*, 2022; Imran *et al.*, 2020). For communication professionals who are usually involved in projects that require creativity, the association between meaningful work and commitment to the project is especially important.

When it comes to trust at work, as long as employees accept their colleagues and superiors as genuine, they are much more likely to feel comfortable sharing thoughts, increasing their work engagement (Zhenjing *et al.*, 2022). For communication professionals, trust is

particularly important in organizations, since they often work in teams and rely on each other's expertise to achieve goals (Meng and Berger, 2022).

With regard to recognition in the workplace, when employees feel that their contributions are valued and appreciated, they are more inclined to exert more effort at work, as well as feeling more motivated (Bonaiuto *et al.*, 2022). In the same vein, Sypniewska *et al.* (2023) indicate that after workers agree that their efforts are recognized and valued, they may be much more likely to feel pleasure and pride, which makes them more dedicated and satisfied.

- H2. For communication professionals, psychosocial working conditions (a) meaningful work; (b) workplace trust; (c) workplace recognition will be positively related with work engagement.

One of the main risks associated with psychosocial working conditions is the development of burnout. Therefore, psychosocial working conditions can contribute to burnout among workers (Paskarini *et al.*, 2023). In this sense, meaningful work is critical for psychosocial conditions which can prevent burnout in communication professionals. Bilal and Ahmed (2017) have shown that a lack of meaningful work can lead to disappointment and ultimately burnout. On the other hand, when people believe that their work has a purpose and is aligned with their values and desires, they may be more inclined to be satisfied, which can lead to feelings of pleasure and a decreased chance of experiencing burnout (Seidler *et al.*, 2014).

Trust in the workplace can be an important factor in helping to reduce burnout (Hungerford and Cleary, 2021). When communication professionals believe they can count on their colleagues and superiors, they are more likely to feel supported and valued, leading to a lower degree of burnout (Tran *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, a lack of trust can lead to feelings of loneliness and apathy, which ultimately lead to higher levels of fatigue and burnout (Edú-Valsania *et al.*, 2022).

Recognition at work is another critical aspect of psychosocial working conditions that can affect burnout. When personnel trust their contributions are recognized and valued, they are extra willing to trust that they're motivated and committed to the organization, which decreases the probability of burnout (Lee and Kim, 2023). Conversely, a lack of recognition can cause feelings of lack of interest and demotivation, which could ultimately cause burnout (Zhou and Chen, 2021).

- H3. For communication professionals, psychosocial working conditions (a) meaningful work; (b) workplace trust; (c) workplace recognition) will be negatively related with burnout.

Employee voice, work engagement, and burnout

In organizations where communication professionals work, employee voice can influence work engagement as well as burnout, and it is essential to promote effective communication and a culture of employee participation in organizations. Some research has investigated the association between employee voice and overall work engagement, and has consistently found that there is a positive association between the two (Jha *et al.*, 2019; Sypniewska *et al.*, 2023). For example, a cross-sectional study by (Jha *et al.*, 2019) found that employee voice had a significant positive effect on work engagement, with higher levels of employee voice leading to greater work engagement. These findings are in line with the social exchange principle, which proposes that personnel who are valued and listened to are more willing to devote themselves to their work (Jha *et al.*, 2019). Another study by L. Li *et al.* (2022b) states that employees' voices had an effective impact on their dedication to artwork. This effect was more pronounced when workers had higher levels of self-esteem based on the organization. These outcomes suggest that after personnel have a revel in belonging and connection to their organization, their commitment is more likely to be inspired by employee voice.

- H4. For communication professionals, employee voice will be positively related with work engagement

Still, regarding employee voice, one of the most relevant issues in state-of-the-art organizational context is burnout (Shipton *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, expressing critiques, ideas, and concerns about work can save employees from burnout. According to Liang and Yeh (2020) and (Walden and Zeng, 2024), while people sense that their voices are heard and valued, they may be much less likely to suffer from burnout.

- H5. For communication professionals, employee voice will be negatively related with burnout.

The mediation role of employee voice

About the mediating results of worker voice on communication professionals, the observation by means of (Ge, 2020) factors out that mental working conditions, when mediated through worker voice, have a positive relationship with the work commitment of communication professionals. Thus, when workers feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to display voice behaviors, which can promote work engagement (Plouffe *et al.*, 2023; Weiss *et al.*, 2023).

- H6. For communication professionals, when mediated by employee voice, psychological working conditions will be positively related with work engagement.

The worker's voice can also act as a mediator inside the psychological working conditions and burnout (Farndale *et al.*, 2011). According to Seidler *et al.* (2014), psychological working conditions have a negative relationship with burnout. In the same vein, (Adanaqué-Bravo *et al.*, 2023) factor out that excessive workload, decreased autonomy, and lack of social support are considered elements connected to accelerated burnout and decreased mental health.

- H7. For communication professionals, when mediated by employee voice, psychological working conditions will be negatively related with burnout.

Figure 1 shows the research model.

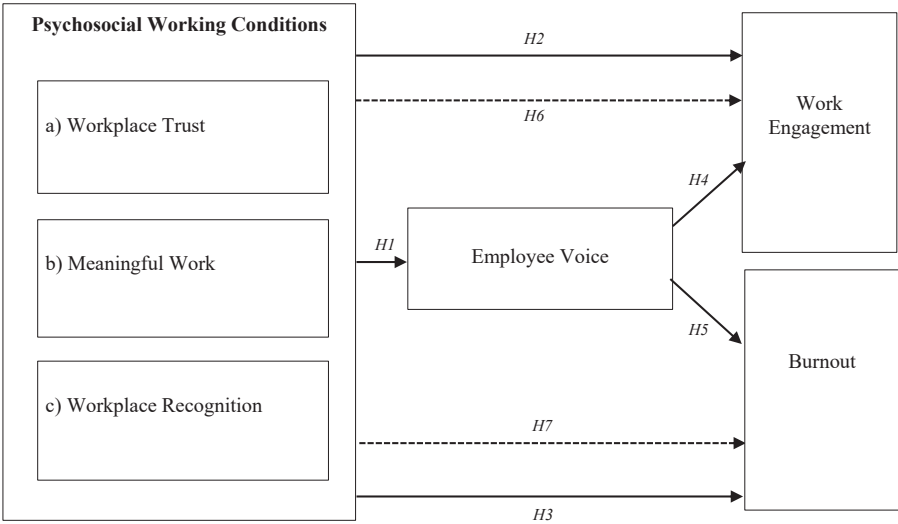
Methods

Sample

The sample for this study was collected in the 2021 European Working Conditions Survey by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. This survey collected data on workers' feelings about their work through 358 indicators. This survey was collected between March and November 2021, and a total of 71,758 workers, dependent and independent, from 36 European countries (the 27 member states of the European Union plus North Macedonia, Serbia, Norway, Montenegro, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Albania). The number of participants interviewed in each country varied between 1,000 and 4,100 and were selected through random direct dialing to mobile phone numbers. The survey was based on a questionnaire (translated into 55 languages), and responses were collected through telephone interviews lasting an average of 22 min. Informed consent was obtained from each participant by telephone at the beginning of the interview; participation was voluntary, and responses were confidential.

Given the study's objective, only workers whose professional occupations belonged to "25 Information and communications professionals" and "35 Information and communications technicians" were selected. Thus, the sample was made up of 3,386 information and communication professionals.

Regarding the sociodemographic description of the sample participants, the majority are men (78.3%). The average age of those interviewed is 37.24 years old, with the minimum age



Note(s): Direct effects (→) and mediating effects (----→)

Source(s): Authors' own work

Figure 1. Research model

being 17 and the maximum age being 77. In educational terms, 75.4% have higher education and 24.3% have completed secondary education. Regarding seniority in the profession, 13.7% have been working for less than one year, 38.3% between one and 4 years, 19.2% between five and 9 years and 28.6% for at least ten years. 69.9% of respondents work 35–40 h per week.

Constructs measurements

Considering the research model (Figure 1), items were selected from the 2021 European Working Conditions Survey to measure six constructs: (1) Meaningful Work using two items; (2) Workplace Recognition using three items; (3) Workplace Trust using three items; (4) Employee Voice using two items; (5) Burnout using two items; (6) Work Engagement using three items. In Appendix A1, describes the constructs, items used and their scales.

Methodological procedures

Given the study's objective, five stages of a quantitative methodology were used. The first stage consisted of a statistical description of the items that measure the constructs using SPSS software (v25). Afterward, a factor analysis was carried out, and an exploratory factorial analysis (EFA) was implemented to divide the items by factors and a confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA) to evaluate the confirmatory factor loads of each item and the reflective nature of the model to be carried out. Both analyzes were also carried out using SPSS software (v25). The third stage consisted of testing the relationships established in the research model shown in Figure 1, using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method in the Smart PLS (3.0) software (Sarstedt and Cheah, 2019). This multivariate analysis method is suitable for the study's objective and the sample, combining factor analysis with the estimation of linear regressions using the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) method. It has advantages over the OLS method as it does not require data normality, as confirmed by kurtosis and skewness statistics in this study. The PLS method has already been applied to other studies on similar themes (e.g. Pinho et al. (2023) Tan and Yeap (2022) Hafeez et al. (2023)). In the fourth stage, the model is evaluated

after applying the PLS method regarding convergence, reliability and discriminant validity, using the measures proposed by (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, to assess convergence and reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ($C\alpha > 0.70$), composite reliability ($CR > 0.70$) and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$) were used. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of correlations ($HTMT < 0.85$). In the last stage, a bootstrap analysis was carried out, which consisted of a non-parametric procedure to estimate the relationships established between constructs in the research model.

Results

Statistical description of construct items

Table 1 contains the statistical description (mean and standard deviation) of the items that measure the constructs. Regarding psychosocial working conditions, the items that generated, on average, greater agreement by communication and information professionals were those relating to workplace trust, namely cooperation trust ($M = 4.59$) and manager trust ($M = 4.37$). Regarding employee voice, communication and information professionals, on average, feel that they often have a voice measured by decision influence ($M = 3.77$) and consulted ($M = 3.91$). Furthermore, communication and information professionals, on average, present low burnout, that is physical ($M = 2.58$) and emotional ($M = 2.36$) exhaustion, despite greater engagement, especially engagement from enthusiasts ($M = 3.91$) and timeflies ($M = 3.99$).

Factor analysis

In Appendix A2, the results of the factor analysis are included. Regarding the implementation of EFA, the initial 15 items were divided into six factors corresponding to each of the constructs included in the research model, with no item being excluded. The accumulated variance of the factors is 57.8%, with none of the factors individually explaining more than 50% of the variance. Thus, the results of the common method bias demonstrate that there is no inconsistency or bias in the items collected. The CFA results confirm the reflective nature of the model and show that all items have high confirmatory factor loading (> 0.70).

Assessment of the measurement models

Table 2 contains the results of evaluating the research model after applying the PLS method. The results demonstrate that the model is reliable and convergent since results obtained for

Table 1. Statistical description of the items

Constructs	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meaningful Work (MW)	Work Welldone (WW)	3,382	4,18	0,785
	Usefull Work (UW)	2,329	4,26	0,803
Workplace Recognition (WR)	Prospects (PROS)	2,311	3,80	1,224
	Recognition (REC)	3,377	4,00	1,051
	Opportunities (OPOR)	3,382	4,31	0,912
Workplace Trust (WT)	Manager Trust (MT)	1,537	4,37	0,858
	Cooperation Trust (CT)	1,549	4,59	0,728
	Employees Trust (ET)	1,550	3,93	1,024
Employee Voice (EV)	Decision Influence (DI)	3,377	3,77	1,022
	Consulted (CONS)	1,951	3,91	1,174
Burnout (BRN)	Exhaustion Physical (EP)	1,701	2,58	1,087
	Exhaustion Emotional (EE)	1,701	2,36	1,023
Work Engagement (ENG)	Engagement Energy (ENG-ENER)	1,699	3,64	0,858
	Engagement Enthusiastic (ENG-ENTH)	1,701	3,91	0,86
	Engagement Timeflies (ENG-TIMES)	1,700	3,99	0,877

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 2. Reliability, consistency and discriminant validity

	Cα	CR	AVE	HTMT criterion					
				MW	WR	WT	EV	BRN	ENG
Meaningful Work (MW)	0.712	0.832	0.714				0.639	0.287	0.539
Workplace Recognition (WR)	0.717	0.792	0.564	0.655			0.614	0.271	0.424
Workplace Trust (WT)	0.702	0.834	0.627	0.324	0.498		0.365	0.420	0.404
Employee Voice (EV)	0.786	0.791	0.656					0.243	
Burnout (BRN)	0.742	0.811	0.683						
Engagement (ENG)	0.770	0.813	0.596				0.370	0.417	
Source(s): Authors' own work									

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ($C\alpha > 0.70$), composite reliability ($CR > 0.70$), and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE > 0.50$) are superior to the reference values. Furthermore, according to the HTMT ratio of correlations (Henseler *et al.*, 2015), there is discriminant validity since the HTMT ratio of correlation values is well below the reference value of 0.85 (one-tailed test, $p < 0.05$).

The model has a good fit: (1) the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) (0.915; reference value > 0.90); (2) Normative Fit Index (NFI) (0.942; reference value > 0.90) and 3) the Root Mean Square Approximation Error (SRMR) (0.077; reference value < 0.08).

The research model was also evaluated in terms of collinearity with the variance inflation factor (VIF) and explanatory (R^2), and predictive power (Stone-Geisser's $-Q^2$) (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The largest internal VIF of the items is 1.562, so collinearity is not critical. The dependent variables, employee voice ($R^2 = 0.252$), burnout ($R^2 = 0.216$), and engagement ($R^2 = 0.252$), present a "substantial effect", according to (Cohen, 2013). The model also has predictive capacity since Q^2 of the dependent variables is greater than zero (employee voice- $Q^2 = 0.123$; burnout- $Q^2 = 0.111$ and engagement- $Q^2 = 0.130$).

Research model estimation

Table 3 shows the relationships (direct and mediating) established between the constructs in the research model.

The results reveal that all the psychosocial working conditions of communication and information professionals considered in this study positively influence their employee voice ($MW - \beta = 0.263$; $MT - \beta = 0.085$; $WR - \beta = 0.213$), confirming hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c. However, meaningful work is the psychosocial working condition that most influence the voice of these professionals. Regarding the influence of psychosocial working conditions on work engagement, they positively affect work engagement ($MW - \beta = 0.253$; $MT - \beta = 0.197$; $WR - \beta = 0.097$), with meaningful work also being the most influential psychosocial working condition. Thus, hypotheses H2a, H2b and H2c are confirmed. On the contrary, the results reveal that psychosocial working conditions negatively affect the burnout of communication and information professionals ($MW - \beta = -0.034$; $MT - \beta = -0.011$; $WR - \beta = -0.027$), with psychosocial working conditions being more influential in reducing burnout, meaningful work and work recognition of these professionals. Thus, hypotheses H3a, H3b and H3c are confirmed. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the voice of communication and information professionals positively affects their work engagement ($\beta = 0.058$) and negatively affects burnout ($\beta = -0.027$), confirming hypotheses H4 and H5.

When the voice of communication and information professionals mediates the relationship between psychosocial working conditions and work engagement, this relationship is positively affected ($MW - \beta = 0.060$; $MT - \beta = 0.019$; $WR - \beta = 0.049$), confirming hypotheses H6a, H6b and H6c. However, when mediated by employee voice, the relationship between psychosocial working conditions and work engagement is weakened when compared

Table 3. Results of the relationships established between constructs in the research model

		t value (bootstrap)	p-value	Confidence interval		Hypothesis support
	Path (b)			2.5%	97.5%	
Direct Effects on Endogenous Variables						
H1a: MW > EV	0.263	13.337	0.000	0.223	0.298	Yes
H1b: WT > EV	0.085	4.286	0.000	0.046	0.122	Yes
H1c: WR > EV	0.213	10.831	0.000	0.172	0.251	Yes
H2a: MW > ENG	0.253	14.170	0.000	0.218	0.286	Yes
H2b: WT > ENG	0.197	7.820	0.000	0.147	0.245	Yes
H2c: WR > ENG	0.097	4.851	0.000	0.059	0.136	Yes
H3a: MW > BRN	−0.104	5.406	0.000	−0.147	−0.071	Yes
H3b: WT > BRN	−0.232	9.552	0.000	−0.281	−0.189	Yes
H3c: WR > BRN	−0.038	1.870	0.062	−0.077	0.003	Yes
H4: EV > ENG	0.058	3.065	0.002	0.024	0.095	Yes
H5: EV > BRN	−0.027	1.404	0.006	−0.067	0.010	Yes
Mediator Effects on Endogenous Variables						Yes
H6a: MW > EV > ENG	0.060	8.977	0.000	0.049	0.075	Yes
H6b: WT > EV > ENG	0.019	3.831	0.000	0.010	0.031	Yes
H6c: WR > EV > ENG	0.049	8.341	0.000	0.039	0.061	Yes
H7a: MW > EV > BRN	−0.034	6.318	0.000	−0.045	−0.024	Yes
H7b: WT > EV > BRN	−0.011	3.199	0.001	−0.018	−0.005	Yes
H7c: WR > EV > BRN	−0.027	5.735	0.000	−0.037	−0.019	Yes
Source(s): Authors' own work						

to the direct relationship between these variables. Furthermore, when the voice of communication and information professionals mediates the relationship between psychosocial working conditions and burnout, this relationship is negatively affected ($MW - \beta = -0.034$; $MT - \beta = -0.011$; $WR - \beta = -0.027$), confirming hypotheses H7a, H7b and H7c. However, there is also a weakening of the influence of psychosocial working conditions on burnout when mediated by the voice of communication and information professionals when compared to their direct relationship.

Discussion and implications

This research main goal was to examine the role of psychosocial working conditions for work engagement and burnout of communication industries professionals. Specifically, it examined the role of meaningful work, workplace trust and workplace recognition in work engagement and burnout. This study also sought to understand the role of employees' voice as a mediator of the relationship between psychosocial working conditions and work engagement and burnout.

To achieve these objectives, the study took a quantitative approach using data from the European Working Conditions Survey. A sample of 3,386 workers from the communication industries served as the basis for testing the proposed hypotheses.

Discussion of results

The results reveal that all hypotheses were confirmed by what was initially proposed. Generally, psychosocial working conditions therefore have a positive relationship with work engagement and a negative relationship with burnout of workers in the communication industries. Specifically, meaningful work, workplace trust and workplace recognition have a positive relationship with work engagement and a negative relationship with burnout.

This result is in line with a substantial part of the literature on the antecedents of work engagement and burnout (e.g. [Hungerford and Cleary \(2021\)](#) [Li and Chen \(2023\)](#)). In fact, and according to the literature ([Zhenjing et al., 2022](#)), aspects related to the work environment (such as trust) create the conditions for more positive work relationships, allowing support from co-workers, a fundamental component for promoting work engagement and preventing burnout. On the other hand, meaningful work and recognition represent an important part of psychological working conditions. These provide individual resources to individuals that allow them not only to increase their work engagement, but also serving as inhibitors of burnout ([Bonaiuto et al., 2022](#); [Lee and Kim, 2023](#); [Seidler et al., 2014](#)).

The results also confirm that the relationship between psychosocial working conditions and work engagement and burnout is fully mediated by employee voice. Again, the literature is also rich in evidence showing the mediator status of employee voice in many situations ([Bashshur and Oc, 2015](#)). This study also demonstrated that the voice of employees can play an important role in promoting work engagement and inhibiting burnout. Giving workers a voice is a way of valuing their work, their skills and experience, but also a way of enriching the work, allowing professionals to participate in the way the work is done and the decisions that are made ([Adanaqué-Bravo et al., 2023](#); [Ge, 2020](#); [Weiss et al., 2023](#)).

However, the results of this mediation also show that, in the presence of employee voice, the relationship between psychosocial working conditions and work engagement and burnout is slightly weakened. Although this evidence does not question the established model (relationships continue to be significant and in line with expectations), it nevertheless raises new questions, namely about the role of the employee voice as a mediator (isn't this practice also an antecedent, such as other psychosocial working conditions?), and about the relative importance that this practice may have for promoting work engagement and preventing burnout.

Although most previous research positions employee voice as a mediator ([Bashshur and Oc, 2015](#)), there is also evidence that employee voice may function as an antecedent of work engagement and burnout ([Pinho et al., 2023](#)). On the other hand, and following the findings of the present study, in the presence of other factors, employee voice does not seem to have a preponderant role in promoting work engagement and even inhibiting burnout. In the context of this research, employee voice was measured through influence on decisions and whether or not to be consulted on work matters. There are other ways of giving employees a voice ([Bashshur and Oc, 2015](#)), so it is possible to admit the possibility that by measuring employee voice with other indicators, the results could be different. Finally, previous research has shown that employee silence and employee voice are not necessarily different sides of the same coin. In fact, [Sherf et al. \(2021\)](#) demonstrated that employee silence is more related with lower levels of burnout than employee voice.

Theoretical implications

This study's main contribution is related to the approach to work engagement and burnout of communication professionals. By examining work engagement and burnout, this study highlights the relevance of looking for both sides (positive and negative) of employee outcomes as separate concepts, as already proposed by the literature ([Nunes et al., 2023](#)).

Additionally, and more specifically, the combination of SET ([Nazir et al., 2021](#); [Zeng and Xu, 2020](#)) and JD-R ([Brockner and van Dijke, 2024](#); [Galanakis and Tsitouri, 2022](#)) to explain the antecedents of communication professionals' wellbeing allows framing work engagement and burnout not only as a result of balancing demands and resources, but also as a result of the trade-off between what the organization and the employees offer to each other. For example, while trust can be understood as a resource, it can also be a way for workers to reciprocate to their colleagues and the organization.

Finally, another important contribution to the theoretical development of the topic is the focus on psychosocial working conditions. According to previous but recent literature,

psychosocial working conditions proved to be very important for the work engagement and burnout, namely prolonging employees' working life (Stengård *et al.*, 2022). As such, this research makes an additional contribution by examining a set of specific psychosocial working conditions not only for work engagement, but also for preventing burnout.

Practical implications

This study provides interesting insights for managers wishing to promote communication professionals' work engagement and inhibiting factors that can lead to burnout. The main idea is the need to reinforce psychological working conditions and voice mechanisms as a way to strengthen work engagement. For example, considering that communication professionals often work in teams (Meng and Berger, 2022), cultivating an organizational climate where people feel safe to express themselves, can foster cooperation and trust (Zhenjing *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, interpersonal trust should be built based, among others, on promoting specific traits of the trustees (in this case, colleagues and superiors), such as voluntary help, individualized support, behavioral integrity and leadership style, but also processes of communication (such as transparent and positive communication and information sharing) (Fulmer and Gelfand, 2012). Also, given the pressure that is common to communication professionals (such as tight deadlines) it is essential to pay attention to work content and provide the conditions (resources) so that people feel they can do a good job. Finally, by implementing recognition programs and providing regular feedback and praise, organizations can create a more positive and supportive work environment that promotes work engagement and reduces burnout (Qin and Men, 2023).

Conclusion

This study showed that psychosocial working conditions and employee voice are important for the work engagement and burnout of communication professionals. The results suggest that all the psychosocial working conditions under study have a positive impact on employees' voice. It was also found that when we consider the impact of psychosocial conditions on work engagement, it is observed that these conditions have a positive influence on work engagement. On the other hand, the results indicate that psychosocial working conditions negatively affect burnout, with meaningful work having the greatest influence on reducing burnout. In addition, the results revealed that the voice of communication professionals has a positive effect on their involvement at work and a negative effect on burnout.

This study also provides other important results regarding the mediating effects of employee voice. When mediated by employee voice, psychological working conditions have a positive association with work engagement. However, when mediated by employee voice, psychological working conditions have a negative association with burnout.

Despite the study's many contributions, it is not completely free of limitations, and these limitations could lead to future lines of research. Regarding theoretical limitations, the study is analyzed from the perspective of SET and the JD-R model, and other models such as the demand-control model, job characteristics model, and psychological empowerment theory may be included in the future. Thirdly, the study only considers meaningful work, trust, and recognition as psychosocial working conditions. Other psychosocial working conditions could be included in future studies, such as work-life balance, leadership and expectations, professional growth and development, or protection of physical safety at work (in high-risk geographical areas), belonging and inclusion. Possible moderators could be considered in the future. For example, the literature tends to support generational differences in employee outcomes (Twenge, 2023). Finally, the variables used in this research are limited to those available in the database used.

Regarding research design, this study focuses only on communication professionals and could be applied to other professionals. Secondly, due to data limitations, the study does not

consider potential differences between working in a consultancy or an in-house role (Kang, 2010; Verwey *et al.*, 2017; Wolf, 2010). Finally, being a study focused on the European context, further qualitative studies should be conducted to depict the cultural and generational nuances and differences of managing communication professionals' work engagement and burnout.

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Further reading

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AppendixA1. Constructs measurements available at: <https://shorturl.at/ntOW4>.

A2. Results of factor analysis (EFA and CFA).

Table A1.

Items	Confirmatory factor loads	Factor						Communalities	
		1	2	3	4	5	6		
Meaningful Work (MW)									
Work Welldone (WW)	0.777	0.775						0.733	
Useful Work (UW)	0.908	0.798						0.749	
Workplace Recognition (WR)									
Prospects (PROS)	0.719		0.761					0.733	
Recognition (REC)	0.837		0.795					0.85	
Opportunities (OPOR)	0.779		0.861					0.768	
Workplace Trust (WT)									
Manager Trust (MT)	0.854			0.799				0.753	
Cooperation Trust (CT)	0.799			0.768				0.872	
Employees Trust (ET)	0.815			0.791				0.778	
Employee Voice (EV)									
Decision Influence (DI)	0.875				0.783			0.747	
Consulted (CONS)	0.740				0.784			0.747	
Burnout (BRN)									
Exhaustion Physical (EP)	0.877					0.812		0.769	
Exhaustion Emotional (EE)	0.772					0.772		0.766	
Engagement (ENG)									
Engagement energy (ENG-ENER)	0.822						0.701	0.782	
Engagement enthusiastic (ENG-ENTH)	0.857						0.791	0.763	
Engagement timeflies (ENG-TIMEs)	0.715						0.745	0.804	

Source(s): Authors' own work**Corresponding author**Pedro Ferreira can be contacted at: pjferreira@ua.pt