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The role of communication in managerial excellence: An exploratory study with gender-inclusive perspectives

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Abstract
This paper investigates the importance of communication proficiency in achieving managerial excellence, with a focus on multinational organisations. It is a preliminary attempt to understand communication barriers and their influence on gender-inclusive communication styles in a business environment. By uncovering the influence of communication practices on stronger teams, positive workplace climates, the intention is to provide insights into inclusive leadership development. This is an exploratory study employing a preliminary survey and literature review. The qualitative and quantitative data from 24 professionals across India and the United States, representing diverse organisational roles, were collected. The qualitative responses were analysed to provide an in-depth insight using thematic analysis. The findings of the study suggest that managerial communication excellence relies on empathy, active listening, and cultural sensitivity as a holistic set of skills. With the integration of gender-inclusive communication styles, teamwork and organisational climate can be enhanced. The paper provides scope for future research that is broad and investigates the communication practices.

Keywords: Communication, gender and leadership, managerial communication, barriers to communication, emotional intelligence

Introduction

The need for soft skills is increasing today, and one of the most unrecognised yet significant skills is "communication". Whether someone pitches a startup idea or leads a team, their ability to communicate confidently and convincingly can determine whether they captivate the room. Effective communication is important to keep the company steady during difficult times. It fosters collaboration and effective employee engagement, providing a definitive guide to managerial excellence that will ultimately lead to a firm's success. However, despite knowing the merits, the native language of vocational communication has not been adopted by professionals. This issue is particularly relevant in emerging markets like India. As mentioned by (Fareen, n.d.), leading Indian firms such as Infosys, Wipro, L&T, Tata, Airtel, Reliance, and Ashok Leyland require new employees to possess adequate communication skills along with language, strategic, technical, and other organisational skills (Fareen, n.d.). This highlights the growing need for quality professionals in a country that is becoming a hub for global commerce. To captivate large-scale and long-term global markets, it needs to prove relevant capabilities to execute business projects and outsourcing services (Fareen, n.d.). This paper examines how feminist perspectives reshape the understanding of communication's role in organisational success. Along with addressing these two important objectives, the study intends to establish a relation with managerial excellence. First, the importance and interconnection of managerial communication in Global Commerce is understood, demonstrating how effective communication can lead to a better global presence. Second, managerial communication is redefined by integrating a feminist vision. For this approach, it was important to recognise that managerial excellence is the result of dismantling traditional hierarchical models and promoting equitable leadership and communication opportunities. Ultimately, this paper provides an argument that when effective managerial communication is redefined through a feminist lens, it serves as a critical driver of a firm's success.

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Research Questions
Q1. What are the barriers to acquiring communication proficiency faced by employees working at multinational companies?
Q2. How do professionals perceive the relationship between communication effectiveness and organisational performance?
Q3. Does the perception of gender dynamics differ in managerial communication styles and leadership representation?

Literature Review
Conceptualising Corporate Communication
"Communication is a facilitating process that enables an organisation to evaluate attitudes and understand the publics that impact it. Sophisticated management now recognises the strategic importance of communicating with those publics. Communication is the process that enables organizations to develop relationships with important stakeholders, to identify with them, and gain their approval. (Belasen 2008a) [2] There is a growing recognition of engaging with these groups by contemporary leaders. Communication is also about interpersonal relationships, building trust, and showing that the organisation values and listens to its employees.

Corporate communication in its broad context is a term that includes marketing, management, and organisational communication, which leads to a synchronised corporate environment (Cornelissen 2023) [5]. As (Dolphin and Reed 2009) [6] define, it includes all communications that involve an organisation as a corporate entity; everything that originates from corporate headquarters for employees or reflects the organisation as a whole. Therefore, it excludes communications such as departmental newsletters and public relations activities on behalf of brands or subsidiaries. But, suggests, to include activities like annual reports, corporate identity programs, corporate advertising, and investor relations (Dolphin and Reed 2009) [6]. It is crucial to understand the need for corporate communication as it is required to elevate corporate success as a whole.

Gareth Morgan, the renowned New Zealand-based economist, proposed that "organisations are open systems that are dependent on their environments for resources, affected by those environments, and in turn affect them." This shows that the foundation of communication is a two-way process that needs to be tailored to the needs and perceptions of all stakeholders. As an important component of corporate strategy, communication can impact the performance and overall competitive advantage of organisations (Dolphin and Reed 2009) [6]. Understanding the crux of corporate communication has proven to be an academic challenge. Hence, this paper is an attempt to uncover the essence of corporate communication from varied perspectives.

Taking the narrative further, let's understand the arguments presented by scholars in the field of public relations and corporate communication. Hart (1995), as stated in (Dolphin and Reed 2009) [6], suggests that the definition of corporate communication should be broad, rather than simple message exchange, suggesting a comprehensive view. Similarly, Goodman (1994), as stated in (Dolphin and Reed 2009) [6], suggests that corporate communication can be considered as an academic discipline or it can be viewed as part of public relations. Given the complexities of the business context, the more encompassing definition is crucial for both professional and academic study (Dolphin and Reed 2009) [6]. By embracing a holistic view that incorporates both definitions, it is easier to understand and navigate through the challenges of today's business environment efficiently.

Theoretical Approaches to Communication
Let's understand the narrative of corporate communication by examining its functions. It is important to consider each paradigm to make an accurate analysis of the communication happening in a firm.
Pragmatism is a method of solving problems in a practical way. Rather than through abstract theories and fixed ideas. Plays an important role in managerial excellence because it leads to internal efficiency and customer satisfaction. It also supports one of the important contributions of Frederick Winslow Taylor, that is,' Science, not rule of thumb'.It is one of his principles of management. According to this principle, Taylor insists that each job should be performed with scientific enquiry and not with the will and wishes of managers(Gandhi, n.d.)).
Interpretivism views organisational reality as socially constructed through human interaction (Belasen 2008b) [2]. This perspective emphasises understanding employee experiences, perceptions, and sense-making processes. Interpretivist approaches recognise organisations as cultures with unique symbols and identities, where communication manages organisational identity during change and facilitates meaning-making among diverse stakeholders.
Neither approach suffices alone; effective communication strategies must integrate both practical application and attention to human meaning-making.

Communication and Organisational Climate
Organisational communication shapes the emotional climate that is the shared affective environment influencing employee wellbeing and performance. It is important to recognise that emotionality and rationality coexist and work in parallel in organisational cohesion. As a framework of emotional climate, members of an organisation share three certain emotions that are goals, beliefs, and values (Tran 1998) [11]. When this climate is backed by creative idea generation, decision making, adaptability, and learning. As suggested in Figure 1, it creates a positive climate in an organisation. The existing literature suggests that professionals need to improve aspects related to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor factors to enrich knowledge management and display their competencies.
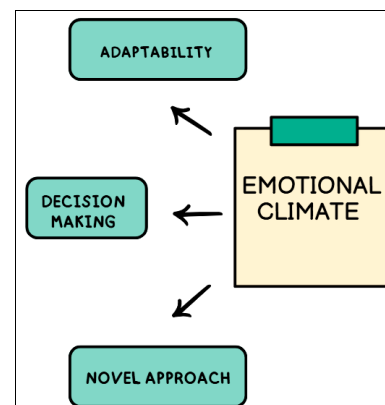

Fig 1: Emotional Climate in Business Environment

To mitigate anxiety during uncertainty, leaders should thoughtfully communicate with their teams.

It is best to explore this through a case study on Google (Liz, n.d.). It is the best example of organisational success by maintaining a transparent culture, where employees are encouraged to communicate freely. The company's success lies in leveraging multiple internal communication channels that help employees stay connected and informed. While these channels comprehensively contribute to organisational cohesion, it is equally important to understand and recognise the emotional climate within which communication occurs (Liz, n.d.).This is how psychomotor factors also play a very crucial role in leveraging the growth of a firm.

Barrier of Language in Multinational Companies (MNCs)

To withstand the global market, MNCs face various obstacles, one of which is the language barrier. This challenge arises from diverse linguistic backgrounds and varying cultural communication norms existing in such organisations. According to Oxford Languages, language barriers are a barrier to communication between people when they do not share a common language. At first glance, language barriers may not seem like they would have a direct impact on a company's financial health. But these influence plays a requisite effect on the management.

The problem can be observed in the following sectors

Cross-Cultural Complexity: In today's business environment, negotiating cross-cultural differences is vital for the development of an organization. The reputation of organizations depends on this parameter as they are looking towards a global oligopoly. Cultural communication norms influence the way individuals interact, negotiate approaches, and build relationships. While it enhances innovation and goodwill of the firm, it comes with certain cons. Operational delays and misunderstandings among different branches are a few popular examples (Anamaria-Mirabela and Monica-Ariana 2014) [1].

English as lingua franca: English becomes a guardian in combating this barrier. It facilitates external as well as internal growth for the firm. It gives access to global talent, allowing international networking and consumers. Likewise, for the internal workings of the firm, it becomes a common language between professionals connecting with a diverse array of individuals. It spikes the productivity of work and bridges the internal communication gap.

Operational implications: Using inconsistent language across branches affects meeting efficiency, document clarity, and decision-making, ultimately impacting organisational performance (Anamaria-Mirabela and Monica-Ariana 2014) [1]. The hindrances in corporate communication can be broadly categorised into internal and external aspects detailed below.

External aspects

The communications industry is constantly evolving, particularly as technology and platforms continue to advance. These changes can often be positive, but are challenging for corporate communication. The members of the Forbes Communication Council highlighted some key challenges in 2023, including intensified public scrutiny.

Companies face unprecedented visibility, requiring communicators to position their brands positively beyond traditional means. Executive opinions and internal practices must align the brand's values in externally visible ways.

Negative scrutiny can also have a great impact on leaders and the organisation as a whole. Procrastination of tasks and adhering to injunctive norms rather than descriptive norms are common consequences depicted during 'negative public scrutiny (Sutton and Galunic 1995) [10]. Another challenge is that technology offers opportunities, but it is important to consider the setbacks it comes with.

Internal Aspects

Encoding and decoding messages may seem smooth, but in real life, it's difficult to have the ideal structured corporate communication. One of the major problems one faces is mastering the skills and capabilities to sustain and adjust in an organisation. Continuous competence development is necessary, as highlighted by the EU's emphasis on lifelong learning as a strategic objective (Лалка Борисова 2013) [12]. Having professional skills alone does not guarantee mastery of acumen. Intuition, organisational, and managerial skills are equally important. Contemporary changemakers must think critically and formulate creative solutions. Drawing from the literature and its interpretation, the core of corporate communication and how the mechanism works as a whole. So, the priority of effective communications lies in defining a corporate vision and devising a communication strategy.

Managerial Communication in a Global Context

As effective communication plays a vital role in enhancing global business performance. It is essential to establish the relationship between organisational communication and success in the global marketplace. Emerging professionals need to possess both formal and social communication to acquire their dream job ((Fareen, n.d.).

Most of the multinational organisations prioritise candidates equipped with strong language skills, strategic thinking, technical know-how, and strong soft skills. These include communication proficiency, organisational competence, innovation, adaptability, and team leadership capabilities (Fareen, n.d.). Hence, in today's globalised and competitive environment, it's very hard to secure a job without strong soft skills.

Gender and Communication in Management

Managerial communication has been shaped by prevailing paradigms influenced by hierarchical and often masculine norms, prioritising authority, control, and efficiency. Yet over the last few decades, researchers have investigated how gendered histories, especially those of women, are reframing our understanding and practice of communication within managerial settings.

A critical body of work focuses on the position of Women's Business Networks (WBNs), which is understood not only as professional support groups but also as political sites in which women proactively exercise claim-making and world-building (Buzzanell 2000) [4]. Such spaces enable women to interpret their experiences, challenge corporate conventions, and develop new leadership and cooperation models. A study points out, WBNs facilitate feminist practices by promoting diverse forms of expression beyond top-down and conventional managerial structures

(Buzzanell 2000) [4].

Communication, from a gendered viewpoint, is not merely about providing instructions or team coordination; it's about making room for dialogue, empathy, and shared understanding. The article "Feminism in Women's Business Networks" introduces freedom-centred feminism as a theoretical framework, arguing that women's freedom at work is intricately tied to their freedom to engage in pluralistic, public communication. It also contends that freedom is not an endpoint that is achieved through equality, but a dynamic process of participation, dialogue, and action as key elements of successful communication (Buzzanell 2000) [4].

Women's perspective tends to prioritise relational communication that values care, openness, and cooperation. This stands in marked contrast to the "performative" or "task-oriented" styles of communication typically rewarded in managerial contexts. The research underlines a salient dialectic between performative care and relational care, in which the former prioritises self-enhancement and productivity, and the latter prioritises community, support, and mutual recognition. Relational care brings new potential for communication into being that is centred on listening, shared understanding, and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, women's voices dispute the presupposition of organisational communication homogeneity. The sameness versus openness concept discussed in the article portrays how managerial communication can either be exclusionary or inclusive of difference. Women of colour, queer community, and those from multicultural socioeconomic backgrounds frequently experience marginalisation not just in opportunity but also in whose voice is heard and accepted. Inclusive communication from a feminist perspective consciously attempts to hear these voices and break the established gatekeeping of leadership stories.

Research Methodology
This exploratory study employs a mixed-methods approach combining literature review with primary data collection through an online survey. Given the preliminary nature of this investigation, the research prioritises depth of qualitative insight over statistical generalizability.

Data and information have been gathered from various white paper reports, statistics from MNCs, feminist writers' articles, and famous economic theories. A questionnaire containing both closed-ended (Likert scale) and open-ended questions examined communication practices, gender dynamics, and perceived barriers in workplace settings. People above 18, working in corporate organisations across India and the USA, have answered the survey. The total number of participants for the survey was 24. This number gave an inclusive and in-depth analysis needed for understanding aspects of communication at the ground level. While this sample size limits general analysis, it provides sufficient preliminary data for exploratory thematic analysis for future research.

Twenty-four professionals from corporate organisations in India (n=14, 58.3%) and the United States (n=10, 41.7%) participated in this exploratory survey. They represented various organisational roles, with 58.3% reporting male team leaders, 37.5% reporting female team leaders, and 4.2% selecting other/prefer not to say. A convenience sampling method was used to reach the respondents who were available to answer the survey.

While analysing the data, thematic analysis was applied to open-ended responses based on the framework used by (Braun and Clarke 2006) [3]. First, the data were familiarised through repeated reading. Then the initial codes were generated based on patterns. By code clustering, the themes were identified, reviewed, and refined. The final themes were selected, and narratives were synthesised. Quantitative data were analysed using the Likert scale and multiple-choice questions through percentage distributions.

With limitations of time and resources, responses from 24 participants were studied; hence, the results cannot be generalised to broader populations. This limitation positions this work as preliminary rather than conclusive, indicating possibilities for future research. Additionally, the convenience sampling limits the generalizability of findings to the entire population. Hence, the study would serve as exploratory research aimed at providing a preliminary understanding of the topic.

Findings and Discussion
Participants identified multiple barriers to effective communication in multinational contexts, which have been segregated into three primary categories. First, hierarchical barriers were recognised, and the lack of credit attribution emerged as a significant concern. When asked whether their ideas, values, or strategies received appropriate recognition, 13 of them responded sometimes, which shows inconsistent recognition. While 7 of them experienced consistent recognition, and only 4 of them revealed they experienced a lack of recognition. Participants attributed inconsistent recognition to "management priorities, hierarchy, and timing." Several noted that good ideas often go unrecognised, not due to their merit but due to organisational politics, hierarchical limitations, and poor timing. One participant explained: "Even when suggestions cannot be acted upon, explaining the reasons behind decisions is essential. Failure to do so may cause employees to feel undervalued." This finding reveals what can be termed the "recognition gap", the disconnect between contributing ideas and receiving appropriate acknowledgement. Over half of the participants experience inconsistent recognition, suggesting systemic rather than individual failures in communication practices.

The second barrier identified in the study was the cultural and linguistic barriers. The literature review established that language diversity creates operational challenges. It includes meeting inefficiency when participants have varying English proficiency, document ambiguity due to cultural communication norms, decision-making delays from misunderstandings, and conflict management.

No participant identified language as a primary barrier in open-ended responses, despite the literature emphasising its importance. This dichotomy suggests either that the participants work in relatively linguistically homogeneous environments where language barriers are normalised and thus not consciously recognised.

Communication style and training gaps were identified as the third barrier. When asked what improvements would most enhance managerial communication, the answers were active listening and empathy training, practical, scenario-based learning rather than theoretical instruction, inclusive and culturally sensitive communication strategies, de-emphasising hierarchical models for collaborative approaches, and a continuous feedback culture on

communication effectiveness.

The preference for active listening and empathy (45.83%) suggests participants perceive a substantial gap in their managers' capacity for receptive communication. This is not about speaking clearly; it's about truly hearing and understanding team members. Combined with the 25% requesting practical training, 70.83% of participants want communication development grounded in real-world application and human connection rather than abstract theory or hierarchical directives.

The qualitative responses revealed strong perceived linkages between communication and performance. The participants referenced how communication shapes workplace atmosphere: "These skills help create a happy and strong workplace", and emphasised that emotional intelligence, empathy, and supportive communication "enhance the workforce" and "establish a secure environment." The responses emphasised collaboration, relationship-building, and inclusive environments as outcomes of effective communication. Participants viewed communication not as information transfer but as the foundation for "working as a team" and "fostering relationship building." Additionally, several participants noted the role of communication in "solving problems calmly" with a "solution-oriented approach" rather than "blame apportioning." This suggests communication quality affects both the speed and quality of organisational problem-solving. Future research should include specific questions about observed or measured performance differences in teams with varying communication approaches.

Results reveal a complex and contradictory picture of gender's role in workplace communication. The first question asked of the respondents on gendered strengths was 'What strengths do you think women bring to management which are often overlooked?' Nine themes were analysed from respondents' answers, which were as follows: Time Management, Strong Leadership Traits, Emotional Intelligence, Empathy, Inclusive Management, Effective Communication, Team Management, Patience and Consistency, and Multi-Tasking.

Fig 2: Diagrammatic representation of the analysis, with codes based on the first question

Theme 1: Time management
The survey participants identified the theme of time management and related information. Other sub-themes were Multi-Tasking and Punctuality, which women bring to the management roles. One of the participants expressed "Time Management and Punctuality" as an important strength of women have.

Theme 2: Emotional Intelligence
The survey participants identified the theme of emotional intelligence and related information. Other sub-themes were good at understanding and listening to others, and solving problems with compassion. Survey participants also identified that women often build an inclusive environment and that they offer support to colleagues.

Theme 3: Strong Leadership Traits
The survey participants identified the theme of strong leadership traits and related information. Other sub-themes were confidence, boldness, and long-term thinking.

Theme 4: Team Management
The survey participants identified the theme of Team Management and related information.
Other sub-themes were collaboration, supportive, and fostering relationship building.

Theme 5: Patience and Consistency
The survey participants identified the theme of patience and consistency and related information. Other sub-themes were staying calm, being regular with their projects, and having a solution-oriented approach throughout.

Theme 6: Effective Communication
The survey participants identified the theme of effective communication. Other sub-themes were speaking with clarity, articulation of ideas, and embracing confidence.

Moving forward, respondents were asked two significant opinion-based questions about what kind of strength women bring to management and what advice they would give to young women entering leadership roles. Analysis of both the questions was done through tabular representation, where the answers are backed by sub-themes, sub-sub themes, and narratives given by the respondents. (see Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of Themes and Sub-themes from Thematic Analysis

Themes	Sub theme	Sub-sub theme	Narrative
Strengths women bring to management	Time management	Multi-Tasking and Punctuality	"Empathy, collaboration, intuition, and relationship-building, along with fostering inclusive, supportive teams and innovative problem-solving, are often undervalued in traditional management."
	Emotional Intelligence	Good at understanding and listening to others, and solving problems with compassion	"Collaborative leadership, emotional intelligence, long-term thinking."
		Build an inclusive environment and offer support to colleagues.	"Women in management are often good at understanding others, working as a team, and solving problems calmly. These skills help create a happy and strong workplace, but are sometimes not given enough credit."
	Strong Leadership Traits	Confidence, boldness, and long-term thinking.	"Detail-oriented, willingness to document, and a problem-solving mindset rather than blame apportioning"
	Team Management	Collaboration, supportive, and fostering relationship building	
	Patience and Consistency	Staying calm, being regular with their projects, and having A solution-oriented approach throughout.	
	Effective Communication	Speaking with clarity, articulation of ideas, and embracing confidence.	
Advice to young women entering leadership roles	Confidence and Self-Belief	Staying bold and using your voice Understanding the importance of your goals and abilities	"Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself and voice your opinion out loud. Be assertive."
	Communication and Assertiveness	Understanding the art of communication Voice is your tool, and being always open to growth Be an active listener	"Active listening and trying to understand the other person before pitching your inputs."
	Skill Development and Continuous Growth	Developing a skill-oriented personality Be open towards learning	"To tackle the cohort and their everyday hiccups with an upfront stance and being more of a pragmatist."
	Strategic Leadership and Decision Making	Staying practical and sensible while dealing with endeavors Foster empathy and collaboration for others and yourself	"Embrace authenticity, build confidence, seek mentors, prioritize communication, and balance empathy with decisiveness to lead effectively." "To all young women: pour your energy into your goals and let go of the fear of judgment. Stay true to your path-hard work never goes unnoticed, even if the rewards take time. And remember, every question you ask is a step toward your growth. No question is ever too small when you're reaching for something greater."

The advice for emerging female leaders was focused on individual adaptation strategies rather than organisational transformation, reinforcing the need to navigate rather than challenge problematic systems. Another question asked of the participants was, "Have you developed any personal strategies for asserting your voice in a male-dominated environment?" While reviewing the answers, the realisation of two crucial elements was made. First, since survey participants came from safe work environments, a lot of them didn't require any personal strategies. Second, the next spectrum came from corporate sectors, and they realised that even though the participants knew this survey was anonymous, they were hesitant to answer. This concludes that awareness regarding such strategies should be increased, and females should always speak for themselves, even if the igniting point is a survey, interview, or any public forum. One of our male participants suggested that women should use clear, confident communication, active listening, and strategic timing to assert their voice effectively in any setting.

Three major observations analysed through thematic analysis are as follows
1. There is a major focus on soft skills. These skills

mentioned above might not show a revenue change. Rather, it teaches the ideology of consistent growth. Time management, emotional consistency, and strong leadership, all backed with effective communication, not only establish a secure environment but also enhance the workforce.

2. The rise that the interpretation leads to is understanding the power dynamics. Observations in the answers show a similarity of skills that one needs to manage themselves and others, along with professional responsibilities. This leads to the strengthening of power. A power where even if everything is overwhelming, one feels burned out, but still knows how to manage their chaos through using the above soft skills, can lead to massive and drastic growth.

3. It also provides us with a kaleidoscope of learning and a growing mindset. When asked to give advice, participants asserted that always learning, staying confident, and being open to new things always make a person stand out. This person enables authenticity, integrity, and a willingness towards learning.

Conclusion

This exploratory study confirms that effective managerial communication extends beyond communication skills. The findings reveal that communication is an interdisciplinary skill including active listening, empathy, fostering collaboration, adapting to diverse communication norms, and using correct timing for communication. It reveals the intersection of gender and workplace communication dynamics.

The value of empathetic and collaborative communication styles is consistent across gender, with a strong preference for active listening and participation, and emotional intelligence, over hierarchy-based channels. The professionals opined that they have experienced gender-based communication challenges rarely, while others report significant misunderstanding and undervaluation based on gender. This suggests the difference based on organisational culture. Practical skill development is preferred over theoretical instruction, indicating the need for scenario-based, experiential communication training. Some barriers persist in idea recognition and career advancement, which can be altered based on individual adaptation strategies.

The recommendations for organisations would include conducting regular audits of meetings, idea attribution, and ways to identify hidden biases. Create transparent criteria for leadership advancement that explicitly value collaborative communication competencies. Establish feedback mechanisms allowing employees to report communication climate concerns. They should reflect on voices overlooked and adapt communication styles to diverse cultural and individual preferences. Importantly, attribute ideas to originators in group settings, along with sharing regular feedback on communication effectiveness.

This paper opens numerous avenues for research. A large-scale quantitative study will possibly provide deeper insights to understand the relationship between communication practices, gender dynamics, and organisational outcomes across industries and cultures. This could also include testing effective communication training approaches and organisational policies. Another area for future research is to examine how other social aspects, such as ethnicity and race, intersect with gender in shaping communication experiences at the workplace.

Effective communication is not a part of management but rather a requirement fundamental to organisational success. Moving forward requires recognising that the communication styles traditionally coded as feminine (empathetic, collaborative, relational) become an integral part of managerial effectiveness.

The path to communication excellence lies not in training women to communicate "like men" or vice versa, but in expanding organisational definitions of leadership communication to include the diverse approaches that research increasingly links to innovation, retention, and performance in corporate environments.

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