



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Influence of Leader's Communication on Employee Turnover Intention in Micro-Enterprise in Sichuan province, China

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: March 16, 2024	<p>Micro-enterprises are subject to tremendous pressure to compete in business. Small size, poor risk tolerance, and loose management put microenterprises at risk. Any loss of personnel can significantly impact a microenterprise, as each person who may leave plays a vital role in the microenterprise. Previous research has found that salary, benefits, and life-work balance can impact employee turnover intention, and this study focuses on the impact of leadership communication on employee turnover intention in microenterprises. A cross-sectional survey was used in this study, and a sample of 436 valid data was collected by simple random sampling from employees of microenterprises in Sichuan Province, China, through an electronic questionnaire. The study used SPSS 20.0 for descriptive statistical analysis and SmartPLS 4.0 for structural equation modeling. The results showed significant negative correlations between leadership communication competence, style, frequency, and employee turnover intention. Leader-member exchange and interpersonal relationship theories were confirmed and developed by examining the relationship between leader communication and employee turnover intention. This study provides microenterprise leaders with new perspectives on employee retention and practical guidance to reduce the negative impacts of employee turnover, such as increased costs, loss of technology, and stability of the organizational structure, as well as to fill the theoretical and knowledge gaps in communication of employee turnover intention. Microenterprise managers need to establish good leader-member relationships with their employees through appropriate, frequent, and effective communication to build more vital trust and reduce employee turnover.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Micro-enterprises are subject to tremendous pressure to compete in business. Small size, poor risk tolerance, and loose management put microenterprises at risk. Any loss of personnel can significantly impact a microenterprise, as each person who may leave plays a vital role in the microenterprise. Employee turnover is an important topic. Previous research has proven that employee turnover can pose a significant challenge to organizational management, and so far, it remains a worthwhile issue in the social sciences (Tingfeng et al., 2022). Employee turnover can result in significant costs to the organization, including recruitment of new employees, training, severance packages, and lost productivity (Itlux, 2024; Shaw, 2011). In addition, employee turnover can affect organizational stability (Essel, 2020). Employee turnover can decrease strength within the organization, especially if the departing employee is a key employee or has a high position and influence, creating a risk of instability in the organization. At the same time, employee turnover may also affect organizational culture (E. S. Wright, 2021). Each employee contributes differently to the organizational culture, and

employees who leave take their expertise, skills, and experience with them, which may also harm the organizational culture and hamper the organization's sustainability (Lu et al., 2023).

Moreover, departing employees may also be lost to competitors, putting the company at a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace. Employee turnover also affects organizational performance. Employee turnover can lead to project delays, schedule lags, and reduced customer satisfaction, affecting organizational performance(Wynen et al., 2019). More importantly, the employee's turnover may affect the willingness of other employees to leave, which leads to a domino effect(Huang et al., 2022; Perizade et al., 2024).

According to the 2021 HR White Paper published by Iresearch(51Job HR research center, 2022), the overall turnover rate across all industries is 18.8% in 2021, an increase of 4% compared to 2020 (Figer1).

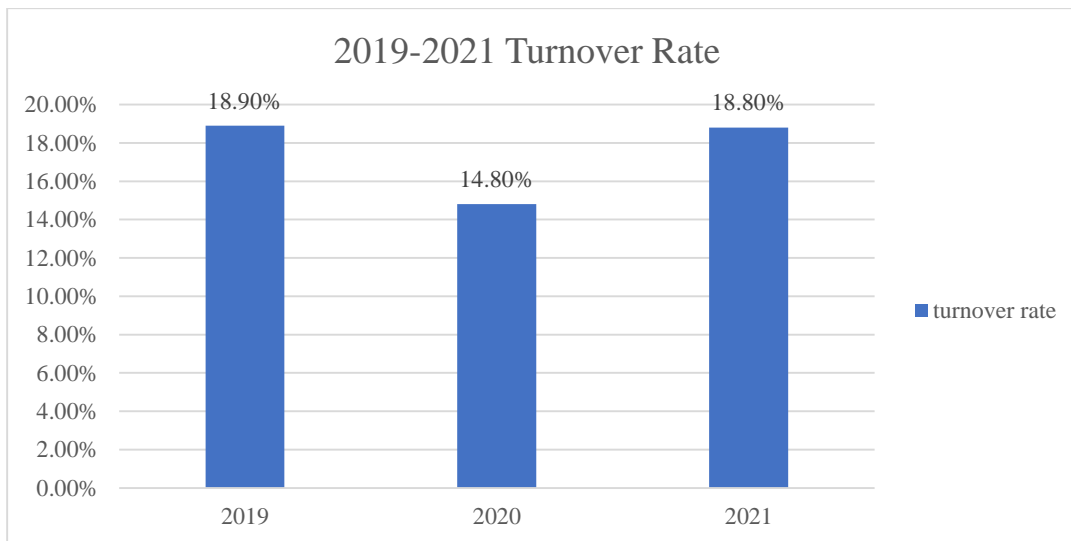


Figure 1: 2019-2020 job market turnover rate

Source: 51Job HR research center. (2022). White Paper on Human Resources 2021.research.51job.com

The report concludes that the epidemic in China has eased in the last two years, and there has been a recovery in hiring demand from companies and more outside opportunities for employees, leading to significantly higher turnover rates. At the same time, employee turnover can lead to various impacts, including increased costs, impacting employee work status, and organizational instability (Figure 2).

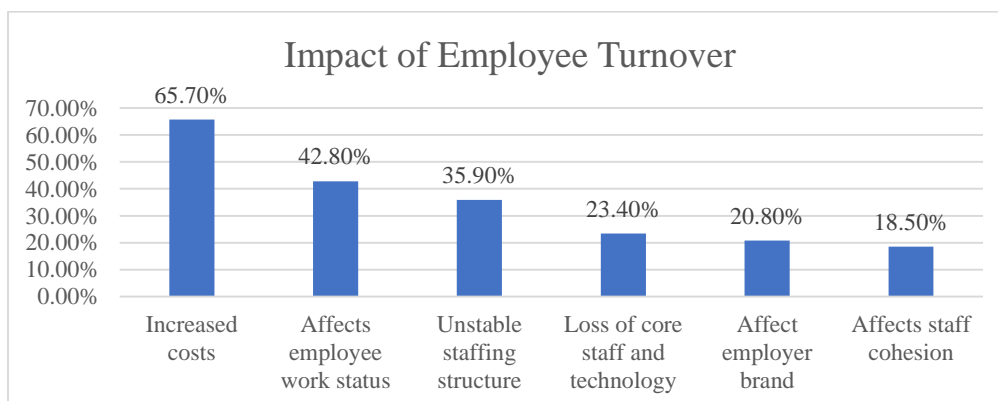


Figure 2: Impact of employee turnover

Source: 51Job HR research center. (2022). White Paper on Human Resources 2021.research.51job.com

Previous research has focused on salary, benefits, career development, and job stress and less on the impact of leadership communication on employee turnover intentions(Alubelkassaw Belete, 2018). Some researchers have begun to take an interest in the effect of leadership communication on

employee turnover intentions (de Leon, 2020; Maged Ezz et al., 2017; Onyekachi & Edwinah, 2018). Therefore, this study examines the effect of essential factors in leadership communication - communication competence, communication style, and communication frequency on employee turnover intentions. Previous studies have demonstrated the fundamental impacts of leadership communication competence, style, and frequency on employee turnover intentions. Still, there are some contradictions in the results of these studies, so scholars continue to have a strong interest in this topic.

Most research on leadership communication and employee turnover intentions has been conducted in Western countries, and there is little relevant research in the context of Eastern cultures. Some scholars suggest that this issue needs to be investigated in different cultural contexts (Men et al., 2021). Microenterprises play a significant role in the social economy, creating jobs, promoting social innovation, improving incomes in poor areas, etc. However, microenterprises have a smaller size, more significant competitive market pressure, and survival risk than other types of enterprises, and they are more likely to lose employees (Varghese & B, 2019).

Sichuan Province has a population of 83.2 million, accounting for 6% of China's total population, yet its GDP accounts for only 4.5% of the total GDP of the whole of China (Chinafolio, 2018). Compared with other provinces, it is a relatively poor region. Moreover, the birthplace of Ba Shu culture is in Sichuan, and most Sichuan people are influenced by this culture, which provides a relatively unified cultural background for the investigation of this study. Therefore, this study will investigate microenterprises in Sichuan Province, China.

This study attempts to explain the relationship between leadership communication and employee turnover intentions through a new perspective and to develop leader-member exchange theory and interpersonal relationship theory. The innovation of this study is to explore the influence of leadership communication and employee turnover intentions in microenterprises in the context of Eastern culture, a context lacking in previous studies. Therefore, this study can fill the knowledge gap on communication under the topic of turnover intention and develop leader-member exchange theory and interpersonal relationship theory, as well as provide new insights and guidance on employee retention for managers of microenterprises, governmental human resource departments, etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leader-member exchange theory

It was not until the leader-member exchange (LMX) hypothesis developed that researchers could systematically analyze leadership dynamics (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Although using a relationship-based approach to leadership isn't groundbreaking in the modern day, it does represent a substantial departure from the traditional two-domain leadership model (Omilion-Hodges & Ptacek, 2021).

The LMX leadership theory emphasizes the importance of relationships between leaders and followers. According to this view, an essential aspect of leadership is the exchanges between leaders and their followers. Relationships affect how happy and productive people are in their jobs, and high-quality communication is defined by trust, affection, and mutual respect (Erdogan & Bauer, 2015). There is no foolproof way to gauge how employees feel about their workplace, but regular check-ins with managers and friendly exchanges between coworkers can help boost morale (Mumtaz & Rowley, 2020). Consistent leaders and followers benefit from LMX because they can share information and foster a closer bond (Chen et al., 2016). In addition, the primary measure of a person's leadership ability is his ability to communicate. Without skilled communication skills, leaders are unlikely to achieve much success, or those victories may be short-lived. In essence, leadership means influence (Omilion-Hodges & Ptacek, 2021). Therefore, when leaders have strong communication competence and a high frequency of communication with their employees, this will help to build and maintain internal exchange relationships, which in turn enhances mutual trust between the two sides and makes employees feel valued and supported, thus increasing their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In this case, employee turnover intention decreases.

Interpersonal relationship theory

As a comprehensive management theory, interpersonal connection theory investigates how employee motivation can be increased through positive interactions with coworkers. Such workers are more "social people" than "economic people" (Weiner, 2016). Staff members are not inert automatons who operate only out of a desire to line their own pockets. In addition to formal organizations, which describe the roles and responsibilities of each member in detail, informal organizations exist in firms. Emotion is the guiding principle in informal groups (Fisher, 2019).

An organization is also a part of society. In other words, a small organization is a small society. "Social person" needs communication, so it is difficult for people to exist independently from society. Especially when people consider their interests related to the organization, they must learn to integrate into the organization. Otherwise, when they find that they cannot integrate into the organization, they will consider integrating into other organizations, that is, leave. Therefore, leaders can better meet their employees' social and psychological needs when they use an upbeat communication style; when employees feel understood, supported, and valued, their job satisfaction and sense of belonging increase, which reduces turnover intentions.

Communication competence

According to M. Wiemann (1977), communication competence pertains to the level of quality in communication. It has been an area of research for over 50 years, with varying definitions proposed by scholars across different periods. Andrews & Mohammed (2020) find that honest and constructive communication in small and medium-sized enterprises can promote long-term interpersonal relationships between managers and employees. Effective communication and timely feedback can reduce turnover. Leadership communication competence plays a crucial role in employee turnover intention. Effective communication not only helps in establishing good relationships but also contributes to a positive work environment (Mironova & Chorbadzhiyska, 2020), employee motivation, and job satisfaction (Delgado & Lubbers, 2021), which in turn helps in reducing turnover intention among employees. Recent studies have shown that internal communication significantly affects employee turnover intention (Duarte & Silva, 2023). Meanwhile, a survey of remote work in 14 countries showed that leadership communication competence negatively affects employee turnover intention (Antonio et al., 2024).

Therefore, this research proposes the hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant relationship between leadership communication competence and turnover intention in micro-enterprises in Sichuan province, China

Communication frequency

Farace et al. (1977) defined communication frequency as the quantity of interaction among individuals within an organization. Effective communication exists when information is conveyed through the proper channels, when people actively listen to one another, when there is regular conversation or engagement, and when suitable language is used. It is essential for there to be constant back-and-forth between the sender and the receiver during communication for there to be any chance of it succeeding (Chioma & Chukwujekwu, 2015). Promoting interdependence, encouraging frequent communication, and establishing teams can help mitigate negative group dynamics (Kaufman, 2019). The possible reason is that frequent communication can help build trust between employees and their superiors.

According to (Lazzari et al., 2022), when employees perceive high trust in their organization, it can lead to increased job security and a more substantial commitment to the company, ultimately reducing turnover intention. (Awad & Alhashemi, 2012; Curado et al., 2022) Suggests that frequent communication from superiors can make employees feel more valued and appreciated. The study by Weaver et al. (2021) demonstrates that more frequent communication between top-level managers and their teams is associated with lower employee turnover intention.

Therefore, this research proposes the hypothesis:

H2: There is a significant relationship between leadership communication frequency and turnover intention in micro-enterprises in Sichuan province, China

Communication style

De Vries et al. (2013) defines a leadership communication style as a collection of communicative behaviors employed by managers in interpersonal communication to enhance hierarchical relationships and accomplish objectives. Communication style in this study refers to positive communication styles and attitudes. It is necessary to address critical situations to solve all problems in real time. Each generation has preferences about how they communicate and address their colleagues and leaders. Conflict with communication occurs when one mistakenly interrupts communication, task, message, or tone (Stout, 2020). Bakar & Mccann (2015) found that by identifying with or adapting to leaders' communication methods, leaders can guide the team's adjustment process, improve the quality of interaction, and thus cultivate team members' sense of belonging and this will reduce staff turnover. An upbeat leadership communication style can have a significant impact on reducing employee turnover intention. An upbeat communication style is characterized by supportive, approachable, and influential leaders (Banwart, 2020; Baumann, 2017).

Therefore, this research proposes the hypothesis:

H3: There is a significant relationship between leadership communication style and turnover intention in micro-enterprises in Sichuan province, China

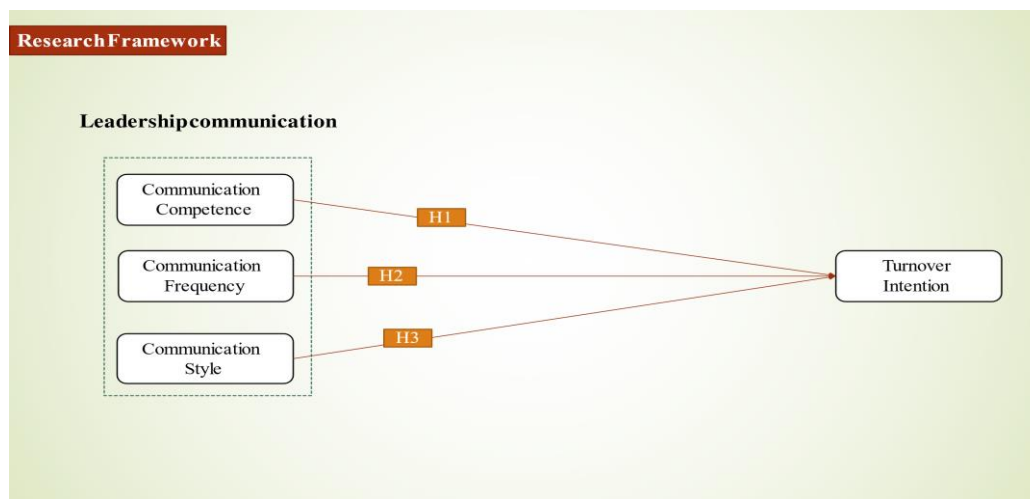


Figure 3: Research framework

METHODOLOGY

Sample and procedure

This study is quantitative, and the nature of the survey is deductive. Therefore, this study will use SPSS 20.0 and SmartPLS 4.0 for statistical analysis. An electronic questionnaire was distributed to employees of microenterprises in Sichuan Province, China, followed by descriptive statistical analysis and structural equation modeling to test the hypotheses. Participants will be informed at the questionnaire distribution that the study is being conducted purely for academic research purposes to avoid the implications of common method variance. They can withdraw at any time and will not take any risks. The entire process was completed in 2-time stages. In the first stage, data were collected on demographics, leadership communication competence, leadership communication style, and leadership communication frequency, resulting in 713 data. After two months, this study entered the second stage. We distributed the questionnaire again to the participants in the first stage, which was about the turnover intention. Finally, we collected 482 questionnaires, meaning that the sample size of those who participated in 2 surveys simultaneously was 482, and the effective response rate was 67.6%.

For inclusion in this study, all participants had to meet the following criteria: 1) a micro-enterprise in Sichuan, China, must employ them; 2) they must have worked for the enterprise for at least six

months to ensure the existence of communication opportunities with their leader; 3) they must have household registration in Sichuan, China to ensure a consistent cultural background; and 4) they must have a direct supervisor, according to Yan. Zhao (2020), as of the end of 2018, the number of micro-enterprises employing workers in Sichuan province had reached 7.026 million, accounting for 53.8% of the total number of enterprises in the province. This study will utilize a simple random sampling technique. Using the model of Krejcie & Morgan (1970) with a population size of $N=7026000$, a confidence level of $P=0.5$, a margin of error of $e=0.05$, and a chi-square value of $X^2=3.841$, the calculated sample size is 384.

Measurement scale

This study collected quantitative data using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to agree (7) to measure the variables firmly. The questionnaire comprised 40 questions, including seven questions related to demographic data and 33 questions related to the six variables under investigation. The scales used in this study were adapted from previous research. For instance, the turnover intention scale used was the TIS-6, which was employed in a survey conducted by Su (2020). The Cronbach's α value of TIS-6 is above 0.7 by the reliability test. At the same time, confirmatory factor analyses revealed that the shortened version (C-TIS-6) displayed a better model fit with the lowest chi-square statistic, SRMR, and RMSEA and the highest CFI and TLI. The Communication Competence questionnaire was selected from Madloc's (2008) study, and Cronbach's alpha was .90 ($M = 41.13$, $SD = 6.71$). The Communication Style Questionnaire was chosen from a survey (Montgomery & Norton, 1981), and the most representative questions were selected for this study and modified into a self-report format. In a study by Kang & Hyun (2012), it was reported that the loadings of the items in this scale ranged from 0.717 to 0.944, and Hwang & Park (2018), on the other hand, showed item loadings between 0.761 and 0.912 in their study. The Communication Frequency questionnaire was adopted from the questionnaire developed in the research of Kacmar et al. (2003), which contained eight questions ($\alpha=.84$), and two questions related to it were removed because emails are rarely used in Chinese microenterprises. In addition, the questionnaire was answered 1 to 2 times every six months (1) to many times a day (7).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Demographics profile

Four hundred eighty-two questionnaires were received for this study, of which six had missing values. After the Data cleaning and screening procedure, the data that did not match the sample characteristics were excluded, and finally, 436 questionnaires were retained. Following the rule of thumb suggested by Black & Babin (2019), the percentage of missing values for each indicator was less than 5%, allowing for a mean replacement to handle missing data in the sample.

The total number of participants was 436, of which 177 (40.6%) were male and 259 (59.6%) were female, and their ages were mainly concentrated in the 20-49 age group, which is the mainstream of the labor market. In addition, their positions in the enterprises are relatively low, mainly concentrated in the base employees (58.7%) and base managers (37.8%), which aligns with the organizational structure of microenterprises. Due to the small number of employees in microenterprises, there are not too many levels of employees, usually only 1-3 levels. Among the employees who participated in the survey, 162 (37.2%) had worked for six months to one year, 129 (29.6%) had worked for 1-2 years, 103 (23.6%) had worked for 2-3 years, and only 42 (9.6%) had worked for more than three years. Microenterprises are very vulnerable to market competition and tend not to survive for very long, which is the possible reason why most of the sample is concentrated at 0.5-3 years. Most microenterprise employees in this survey have relatively low education levels. Many employees did not go to college. Among them, 109 (25%) had a junior high school education or less, 189 (43.3%) had a high school education, 109 (25%) had a college education, only 23 (5.3%) had bachelor's degree employees, and only 6 (1.4%) had master's degree. Finally, this study also investigated the size of the firms in the sample, with 198 (45.4%) having less than ten employees and 238 (54.6%) having 10-20 employees.

Descriptive analysis

The questionnaire utilized in this study was designed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. The descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in the table below, which displays each variable's minimum and maximum scores and mean and standard deviation values.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Name	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	kurtosis	Skewness
TOI	4.051	4.000	1.300	.053	-1.023
CCOMP	4.541	4.750	1.147	-.547	-.245
CSTY	4.317	4.272	1.088	-.153	-.692
CFRE	4.309	4.166	1.223	.169	-.810

To evaluate normality, skewness, and kurtosis are commonly used (Sun et al., 2022). The skewness and kurtosis of the indicator are generally distributed if they are greater than -2 and less than 2 (Hair et al., 2020). However, it is not enough to report univariate item normality; for SEM, it is also necessary to understand univariate and multivariate normality. Mardia (1970) measures are by far the most common. Therefore, this study will also report univariate and multivariate skewness and kurtosis based on Mardia (1970). According to Zhang & Yuan (2018), the tool used to report univariate and multivariate in this section is WebPower. As can be seen from Figure 4, both skewness and kurtosis in this study are significant in the multivariate normal distribution test. Therefore, the data in this study conform to a normal distribution.

Output of skewness and kurtosis calculation

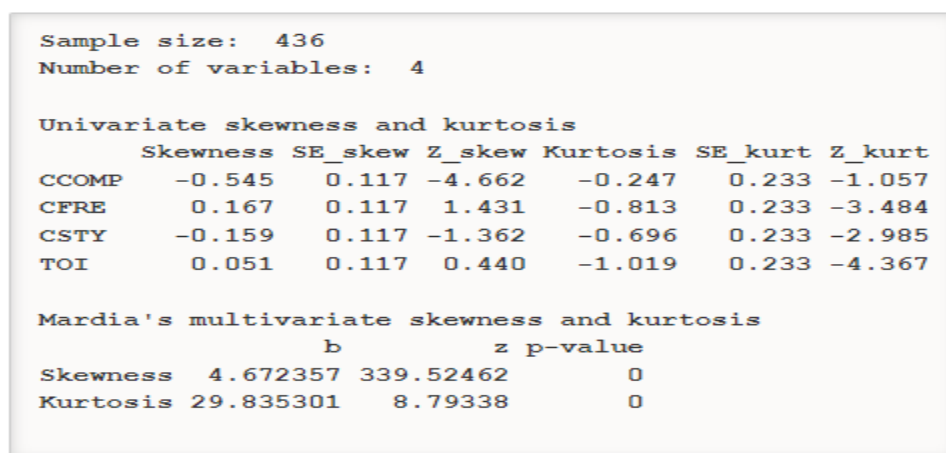


Figure 4: Multivariate normality test by WebPower

Source : Zhang, Z., & Yuan, K.-H. (2018). Practical Statistical Power Analysis Using Webpower and R (Eds).

Common method variance

Both procedural and statistical methods were utilized to address the issue of common method bias. The measures taken to mitigate this bias included ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents, pretesting the survey questionnaire to eliminate confusing items, and providing clear instructions to facilitate survey completion. A single-factor analysis was conducted, as recommended by Harman (1960), to evaluate the potential impact of common method bias on the dataset. The exploratory factor analysis revealed that the first factor explained only 47.934 percent of the variance, below the 50 percent threshold. The findings of Fuller et al. (2015) suggest that common method bias did not significantly impact the present study.

Assessment of measurement model

Convergent validity is another crucial aspect of reflective measurement model assessment. It is achieved when the factor loadings of all items are above 0.7 and no loadings of any items from other constructs (Hair et al., 2020). In the study, all 33 items were retained because they met the threshold

of having factor loadings exceeding 0.7. The measurement model in this study showed good agreement for all variables with Composite reliability values exceeding 0.8. Additionally, all constructs demonstrated high reliability with AVE values exceeding the threshold of 0.50, indicating that the measurement model is reliable (Hair et al., 2020).

Table 2: Measurement model and reliability and validity analysis

Variable	indicator	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Communication Competence (CCOMP)	CCOMP1	0.857	0.944	0.952	0.666
	CCOMP10	0.754			
	CCOMP2	0.815			
	CCOMP3	0.827			
	CCOMP4	0.823			
	CCOMP5	0.798			
	CCOMP6	0.727			
	CCOMP7	0.804			
	CCOMP8	0.868			
	CCOMP9	0.873			
Communication Frequency (CFRE)	CFRE1	0.834	0.909	0.929	0.687
	CFRE2	0.864			
	CFRE3	0.840			
	CFRE4	0.846			
	CFRE5	0.779			
	CFRE6	0.807			
Communication Style (CSTY)	CSTY1	0.842	0.940	0.948	0.626
	CSTY10	0.832			
	CSTY11	0.846			
	CSTY2	0.722			
	CSTY3	0.794			
	CSTY4	0.779			
	CSTY5	0.770			
	CSTY6	0.753			
	CSTY7	0.807			
	CSTY8	0.836			
CSTY9	0.706				
Turnover intention (TOI)	TOI1	0.843	0.918	0.936	0.708
	TOI2	0.848			
	TOI3	0.844			
	TOI4	0.856			
	TOI5	0.823			
	TOI6	0.837			

Table 3 shows the HTMT values between the variables, which ranged from 0.560 to 0.835, without any value exceeding 0.9 or even 0.85 (Hair et al., 2020). which also shows the existence of discriminant validity between the variables.

Table 3: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

Variable	CCOMP	CFRE	CSTY	TOI
CCOMP				
CFRE	0.560			
CSTY	0.607	0.798		
TOI	0.657	0.835	0.825	

Assessment of structural model

Each item of the prediction construct was evaluated, and the VIF value for each indicator was determined to be less than 5(Purwanto & Sudargini, 2019)

Table 4: Inner model

	CCOMP	CFRE	CSTY	TOI
CCOMP				1.542
CFRE				2.269
CSTY				2.468
TOI				

Most researchers use a p-value to determine the significance level of a coefficient. The P-value represents the probability of incorrectly rejecting a true null hypothesis(Andrade, 2019). a p-value of less than 0.05 is required to confirm that the relationship under investigation is statistically significant. In addition, confidence intervals for bootstrap methods allow testing whether a path coefficient significantly differs from zero. Bootstrap confidence intervals build on the standard errors obtained from bootstrapping. They can be considered the range in which the accurate population parameters are expected to lie, assuming a particular confidence level (Hair et al., 2021). The statistical significance of path coefficients was determined using bootstrapping techniques, which involved the generation of 10,000 subsamples and a two-tailed test, as outlined by (Hair et al., 2021). The resulting path coefficients and their corresponding significance (p-values) are presented in Figure 5.

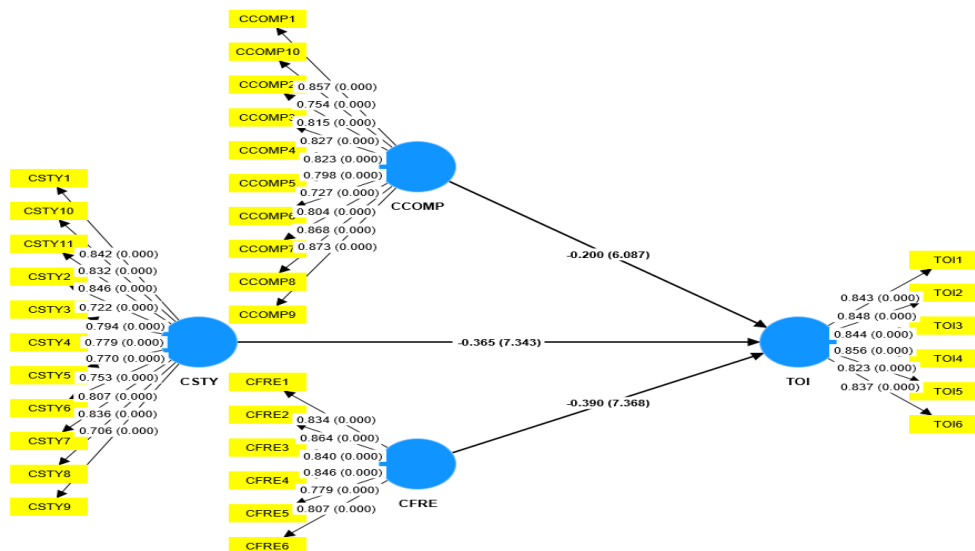


Figure 5: Structural model of two-tail test results showing the relationships' strength and significance.

The results in Table 5 provide information on the P-values and T-values of each path coefficient in the structural model. The path coefficients are standardized estimates of the hypothesized relationships between constructs. The T-values are compared to the critical value of 1.96 at a significance level of 5% to determine whether a path coefficient is significant (Hair et al., 2021). All path coefficients in this study between the independent and dependent variables are significant and negative.

Table 5: Size and significance of the path coefficients

Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
CCOMP -> TOI	-0.200	-0.200	0.033	6.087	0.000
CFRE -> TOI	-0.390	-0.390	0.053	7.368	0.000
CSTY -> TOI	-0.365	-0.364	0.050	7.343	0.000

Model's explanatory power

Hair et al. (2021) provide guidelines for interpreting R² values, suggesting that a value of about 0.75 is substantial, a value of about 0.5 is moderate, and a value of 0.25 and below is weak. Table 6 shows the explained variance of the variables in the model; R²=0.700 for TOI indicates a medium direct effect of other variables on TOI.

Table 6: Explained variance (R²)

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
TOI	0.700	0.698

The effect size (f²) measures the strength of the relationship between variables at the structural level. Values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate low, medium, and significant effects of predictor variables (Lorah, 2018; Selya et al., 2012). f² effect size shows the extent to which exogenous latent variables contribute to the R² values of endogenous latent variables (Jürkenbeck et al., 2019). Table 7 shows the effect size (f²) of each variable.

Table 7: Effect size (f²)

Variable	CCOMP	CFRE	CSTY	TOI
CCOMP				0.087
CFRE				0.223
CSTY				0.180
TOI				

Model's predictive power

Shmueli et al. (2019) suggested using the Q²predict value to evaluate the predictive power of PLS-SEM analysis, with values greater than zero indicating that the model outperforms the most naive benchmark. In Table 8, all Q²predict values exceed zero, indicating that PLS-SEM has predictive power exceeding the naive benchmark for all indicators. The study compared PLS-SEM_RMSE with LM_RMSE, as the errors were highly symmetric. The model had a high predictive power for all TOI indicators as their errors were smaller than LM_RMSE.

Table 8: PLS predict summary

Variable	Q ² predict	PLS-SEM_RMSE	PLS-SEM_MAE	LM_RMSE	LM_MAE
TOI1	0.491	1.080	0.899	1.097	0.919
TOI2	0.493	1.144	0.954	1.173	0.970
TOI3	0.501	1.119	0.930	1.161	0.958
TOI4	0.512	1.124	0.927	1.155	0.956
TOI5	0.466	1.053	0.856	1.068	0.869
TOI6	0.479	1.097	0.903	1.146	0.944

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the effect of leadership communication on employee turnover intention in Sichuan province, China. Four hundred thirty-six micro-enterprise employees in Sichuan, China, from different organizations and industries, covering a range of positions and years of

employment, participated in this study. The results showed that leadership communication competence, style, and frequency significantly negatively affected employee turnover intention in Sichuan province, China.

The present study revealed that communication competence had a significant negative relationship with turnover intention. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing a significant negative relationship between leadership communication competence and employee turnover intention (Antonio et al., 2024; Delgado & Lubbers, 2021; Mironova & Chorbadzhiyska, 2020). However, some studies have reported non-significant relationships between these variables (Salleh et al., 2017).

This difference may be due to organizational differences, as Salleh et al.'s (2017) study is about public administration in Malaysia. Considering that Malaysia is a multi-racial country, communication issues due to cultural and linguistic diversity are no longer a primary consideration for employees (Salleh et al., 2017), and employees may not care about the communication skills of their leaders. However, leadership communication competence may significantly predict employee turnover intention in areas like Sichuan, China, where few cultural differences exist.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Bakar & Mccann (2015) and Saunders (2020). Bakar & Mccann (2015) found that by identifying with or adapting to leaders' communication methods, leaders can guide the team's adjustment process, improve the quality of interaction, and thus cultivate team members' sense of belonging (Saunders, 2020) states Communication style was the most influential influencing factor. Suppose a leader's communication style is perceived as disrespectful, hostile, or insensitive. In that case, it can create a hostile work environment, leading to high turnover rates (Guedes et al., 2021). On the other hand, if a leader has a communication style that is supportive, empowering, and positive, it can lead to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty among employees (Specchia et al., 2021).

Frequent communication leaders can significantly impact information transmission mode, thus improving communication satisfaction and reducing quit intention (Pongton & Suntrayuth, 2019). Employees may appreciate it when their leaders communicate more frequently (Weaver et al., 2021). de Leon (2020) states that management often communicates with employees through regular meetings and feedback on mergers and acquisitions. Dugovicova (2019) also states that communication is an essential component, and the fear of retaliation should be eliminated by enhancing credibility, holding open forums, and communicating regularly and frequently to avoid employees' thoughts of retaliatory resignation. The current study is consistent with the findings obtained by several scholars above, which suggests that the higher the frequency of leadership communication, the lower the employee turnover intention in Chinese Sichuan micro-enterprises. A possible reason for this result is that frequent and effective communication helps leaders build good relationships with their employees, which increases employee loyalty and retention.

On the other hand, research findings on this issue are inconsistent, with some studies finding no significant relationship between the frequency of leadership communication and employee turnover intention. Excessive frequent communication by leaders may also disturb or interrupt employees, leading to increased job stress and dissatisfaction (Marsh et al., 2022; Wijngaards et al., 2022) and even improve employees' turnover intention. In addition, excessive frequent communication by leaders may cause employees to feel monitored and controlled (Jacobs, 2019). Razzak et al. (2024) also state that factors such as the quality of communication, leadership style, organizational culture, and other variables may play a more significant role in influencing turnover intentions than just the frequency of communication.

Therefore, the frequency of leadership communication needs to be adjusted within an appropriate range based on individual employee differences, job nature, and needs (Jacobs, 2019). Although some studies have concluded that there is no direct correlation between leaders' communication frequency and employee turnover intention, more studies have shown a relationship between leaders' communication frequency and employee turnover intention. This relationship may be influenced by factors such as the leader's communication style, employee job stress, and job satisfaction (K. B. Wright et al., 2014). Therefore, leaders must adjust communication frequency according to employees' needs and work situations to improve job satisfaction and reduce turnover intention. The

relationship between leadership communication frequency and employees' turnover intention is most likely not linear but U-shaped. When the communication frequency between leaders and employees is low, employees' turnover intention will gradually decrease as the communication frequency between leaders and employees increases. However, when this communication frequency reaches a certain level, increasing the communication frequency between leaders and employees will make employees feel bored and stressed, leading to increased turnover intention. The relationship between leadership communication frequency and employee turnover intention is negative and significant in microenterprises in the Sichuan Province, China. Still, it may not hold in a different context. Therefore, the relationship between leadership communication frequency and employee turnover intention must be further explored.

CONCLUSION

This study proposed hypotheses on the relationship between leadership communication competence, frequency, style, and employee turnover intention by reviewing previous literature on leadership communication and employee turnover intention. The results showed that all hypotheses were supported. That is, there is a significant negative effect of leadership communication competence, style, and frequency on employee turnover intention.

The operation of microenterprises is always accompanied by fierce competition and unstable financial income. Reducing employee turnover is an essential goal for them to reduce operating costs. This study provides insights and guidance for managers of microenterprises to reduce their operational costs from a communication perspective. At the same time, this study also provides ideas for the government's human resource department to increase the employment rate, i.e., by training the managers of microenterprises in communication skills to improve the retention of employees, which in turn will increase the employment rate of the whole society and contribute to the stability and sustainable development of the society.

This study further extends and develops these theories by using LMX and interpersonal theories to explain the impact of leadership communication on employee turnover. At the same time, this study fills the research gap on the effect of leadership communication on employee turnover intention, especially in microenterprises in the Eastern context, which has received little attention in previous studies. Based on the findings of this study, managers in microenterprises need to emphasize communication with employees rather than just using salary and benefits to retain employees. For microenterprises, the costs associated with communication are compared to the direct financial costs, which can directly impact the organization's survival. Therefore, communication is an important, low-cost employee retention strategy. It is essential to make sure that the information is accurate and effective when communicating, and at the same time, pay attention to the method of communication; open, positive communication is best. Finally, the frequency of communication with employees should be appropriate. Communicating more often with employees (both inside and outside of work) without being bored by them will help employees build a relationship with their manager and a sense of belonging with the organization.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study strictly followed the quantitative research paradigm and interpreted the study's findings, there are still some limitations. These limitations are also possible directions for future research in this area.

Firstly, this study used a survey questionnaire design. The study design used a cross-sectional study in which data were collected at a specific time to test the hypothesis. Future studies may consider longitudinal studies to demonstrate better the causal relationship between leadership communication and employee turnover intention. Also, the population of this study was employees of microenterprises in Sichuan Province, China, thus leading to the conclusion that the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other cultural contexts and regions. It is suggested that this study can be replicated in future studies in different regional and cultural contexts. Other firms of various sizes could also be the subject of future studies to control for firm size as a variable that may affect the study results.

Another limitation of this study is that the study design was not conducted for demographic characteristics. The employees' education level, income, etc., may affect the findings of this study because this study is about leadership communication and employee turnover intention. Previous studies have shown that material variables such as compensation, benefits, and bonuses influence employee turnover intention (Noorazem et al., 2021).

Based on the comparison between the findings of this study and those of previous studies, this study also suggests that future researchers may consider developing a new research framework to validate the relationship between leadership communication and employee turnover intention. For example, the relationship between communication frequency and employee turnover intention in extreme cases could be considered to verify that the relationship between leadership communication frequency and employee turnover intention is not linear but U-shaped, Communication satisfaction (Men et al., 2021), and trust in leader (Alharbi & Abuelhassan, 2020) can also be considered as intervening variables to explain the relationship between leadership communication and employee turnover intention.

Author contributions

Tingfeng Zhou presented this study's framework and basic idea, collected data, analyzed the data, and completed the first draft.

Alireza Mohammadi supervised the writing of this article and submitted it for publication.

Nanxi Liu performed the literature collection and organization and participated in the correction of the manuscript.

Amer Hamzah Jantan, Sun He, and Shyam Bihari Goyal assisted in reviewing the manuscript, provided revisions to the first draft, and advised on the research methodology.

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