Organisational Communication, Organisational Identification and Job Satisfaction:

A Case Study of Home and Foreign Employees and Leaders in an International SME

Master Thesis

V. Janssen

S2765039

International Management & Consultancy

MSc Business Administration

Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences

University Twente

Supervisors: Dr L. Carminati

Dr M. de Visser

Date: 7-6-2023

Abstract

Aim: The aim of this master's thesis is to explore how home and foreign employees and their leaders perceive organisational communication and its impact on organisational identification and job satisfaction in an international SME.

Method: A mixed-method research design was applied. For the qualitative data, an inductive case study was executed, during which semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees and leaders (N=19) from home and foreign offices in an international SME. The interview data was analysed through thematic analysis and structured according to the Gioia methodology. For the quantitative data, an online survey was conducted (N=87), also among employees and leaders in both home and foreign offices of the international SME.

Findings: The findings of this study indicate no differences in perception between managers and employees with regard to the impact of organisational communication on organisational identification and job satisfaction, but do point to the presence of both positive and negative drivers of organisational communication and organisational identification. The study also highlights the importance of addressing geographic and cultural distance as well as hierarchical communication difficulties in international offices. The exploratory quantitative analysis further reveals positive associations between organisational communication, organisational identification and job satisfaction, with organisational identification mediating the relationship between communication and job satisfaction, as justified by the Social Identity Theory. These findings emphasize the significance of implementing effective communication practices for positive outcomes in international SMEs and contribute to our understanding of employee perceptions in this context.

Theoretical implications: The study confirms the relationship that the previously found relationship between organisational communication, organisational identification and positive work-related outcomes like job satisfaction applies to the context of international SMEs. Moreover, it grants novel insight into the drivers of organisational identification and communication in this context, specifically into how within-foreign-office bonding can compensate for poor communication with the home office. Additionally, the study's examination of the potential manager-employee difference with regard to organisational identification and communication fills a gap in the previous literature. The observed mechanisms are consistent with Social Identity Theory.

Practical implications: The practical implications of this study are that international SMEs should implement strategies to enhance organisational identification among home and foreign employees and leaders. These strategies must include fostering a shared culture and values, promoting strong connections within departments and offices, enhancing identification with management, addressing frustrations and challenges experienced by employees in international offices, streamlining communication processes, and addressing language barriers. By implementing these strategies, international SMEs can create a positive communication environment that fosters organisational identification and ultimately improves employee engagement, satisfaction, and business success in international workplaces.

Keywords: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), Organisational Communication, Organisational Identification, Job Satisfaction, Internationalisation, Foreign Expansion

Preface

This master's thesis represents the completion of my studies in the Master of Business Administration program at the University of Twente. The focus of this thesis is on organisational communication, organisational identification, and job satisfaction. It is a case study of home and foreign employees and leaders in an international SME. It was my genuine interest in understanding how individuals perceive their connection to the organisation and how communication influences this perception that motivated me to undertake this research. The presence of multiple international locations within the SME and the company's specific needs increased my curiosity, leading me to explore the potential differences between home and foreign offices.

By the opportunity to conduct this research, I am my supervisors very grateful. Therefore, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to my first supervisor Dr Lara Carminati for her unwavering support, valuable feedback, and quick replies to my questions. Her guidance played a crucial role in maintaining my progress and ensuring the quality of this thesis. I would also like to extend my thanks to my second supervisor Dr Matthias de Visser for his insightful feedback and fresh perspectives that added depth to my work.

I would like to express my gratitude to the survey participants and interviewees who generously shared their time, personal experiences, and insights, which contributed greatly to the richness of this study. Additionally, I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement I received from my boyfriend, family, friends, and colleagues during this final phase of my studies.

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the collective effort and support of these individuals, and for that, I am truly grateful. My hope is that this research adds value to the field and inspires further studies on how organisational communication and identification are interconnected in international SMEs.

Valerie Janssen

Wierden, June 2023

Table of contents

1. Introduction

The world is becoming ever more economically integrated, which leads to opportunities for firms to benefit from internationalisation (Onkelinx, Manolova, Edelman, 2016). Buckley et al. (1992, p. 39) defined internationalisation as everything related to “the foreign market servicing strategy of the firm”. Organisations with a higher degree of international involvement are more likely to experience higher revenues, cost savings from economies of scale and scope, and quicker returns on research and development investments (Hitt, Bierman, Uhlenbruck, Shimizu, 2006).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in the global economy, accounting for over 90% of businesses and employing over 50% of the workforce in many countries (World Bank, n.d.). Still, SMEs lag behind large enterprises in internationalisation (Svetličič, Jaklič, & Burger, 2007), even though international expansion has many potential benefits for SMEs, like positive impact on organisation growth (Lu, & Beamish., 2006), creating and sustaining competitive advantage (Zahra, Ucbasaran, Newey., 2009), cutting unemployment and creating potential mini-MNEs (multinational enterprises) (Ruzzier, Hisrich, & Antoncic, 2006). Therefore, international expansion has become an increasingly common strategic option for SMEs (Li, Li, Goerzen, & Shi, 2018). However, international expansion can be a complex and challenging process. Challenges for internationally expanding SMEs can be economic and cultural uncertainties, as well as a lack of experienced management involvement (Yener, Dogruoglu, Ergun., 2014). Another challenge SMEs may face during international expansion is achieving organisational identification in new business locations (Wilkins, Butt, & Annabi, 2018).

Organisational identification is the degree to which an individual feels connected to and part of their workplace. It is a sense of belonging to the organisation, sharing its values, and feeling aligned with its goals. Essentially, it is a personal link between an individual and the organisation they work for, and it helps define their identity in relation to that organisation (Aitken & von Truer, 2020; Riketta, 2005; Edwards, 2009). Organisational identification is a powerful, distinct concept which relates to many positive work-related behaviours and outcomes, like performance, cooperation, and intention to stay (Van Dick, 2001; Riketta, 2005; Liu, Loy, & Lam, 2011). As such, a high level of organisational identification carries many benefits for the organisation. Furthermore, Ashforth, Harrison and Corley (2008) argue that in increasingly uncertain times employees also individually benefit from identifying with their organisation.

However, research has shown that organisations may have less organisational identification at foreign locations than at ‘home’ locations (Wilkins et al., 2018). Worse organisational identification may be one of the reasons why foreign locations often face many human resources problems, like a high turnover rate and low worker motivation (Schuler, Jackson, & Tarique, 2011). Clinebell and

Shadwick (2005) for instance showed that employees that work at foreign branches, compared to the main branch, score worse at job satisfaction and organisational commitment. In the study on employees of international educational institutions, Wilkins et al. (2018) argue that less organisational identification at foreign locations could be because organisational communication with foreign employees is worse than with home employees and because foreign employees perceive their organisation as less prestigious than home employees do.

Organisational communication refers to the process of producing, transferring, and understanding information within an organisation. It entails the interchange of communications, both official and informal, between individuals or groups within an organisational framework ((Tompkins, 1984; Muscalu et al., 2013). Indeed, a study from Smidts, Pruyn, and Van Riel (2001) found that employee communication positively impacts perceived external reputation and enhances organisational identification. On top of that, management may be unaware of employees' low organisational identification, since leaders tend to experience more organisational identification (Scott & Lane, 2000).

And yet, despite the importance that organisational identification may have for international businesses, to date, there has been limited research conducted into how home and foreign employees and leaders of an international SME perceive and experience organisational identification in relation to organisational communication. Furthermore, this little research has mostly investigated and focused on international educational institutions rather than SMEs (Wilkins et al., 2018). Lappe and Dörrenbächer (2016) suggested that SMEs have received far less international attention, which underscores the importance of exploring this topic in an SME context. In addition, no research has explored this topic in relation to home and foreign offices with the perception of both leaders and employees on organisational communication in relation to their identification with their organisation (Bartels, 2006). Moreover, in the context of an international SME, no research has yet examined the relation between organisational identification and positive business outcomes, like job satisfaction.

Therefore, the current work aims to address these gaps in the scientific literature by answering the following research question:

"How do home and foreign employees and leaders perceive organisational communication and its impact on organisational identification in an international SME?"

In doing so, this thesis explores the case of an SME that has expanded internationally. Through mixed-methods research, consisting of in-depth interviews and a quantitative survey, it compares employees and leaders at home and foreign locations with regard to their perception of organisational identification and how they think organisational identification was or could be achieved The study aims to explore how organisational communication, being all the communication within the organisation, influences the perceived sense of belonging and identification that individuals have with the organisation. The quantitative study further explores the potential relationship between job satisfaction and organisational identification and communication in the context of an SME.

By answering the above research question this thesis contributes to the literature on organisational identification in foreign locations, specifically those of SMEs, in several ways. Firstly, it explores how employees and leaders at home and foreign locations perceive organisational identification, what challenges they encounter in achieving organisational identification, and how they address these challenges or think these challenges should be addressed. Consequently, this thesis enriches the understanding of the factors that influence organisational identification for employees and leaders in international SMEs. Secondly, by focusing on how organisational communication affects organisational identification in international SMEs, this research extends current knowledge on how communication styles and cultural differences may impact organisational identification.

On a more practical level, it delivers insights which may help (future) international SMEs in achieving organisational identification for all employees, and so improve business success. It investigates what challenges home and foreign employees and leaders encounter in relation to organisational identification, and how these challenges may be addressed. Thus, management of international SMEs will be provided with insights into how to promote a stronger sense of organisational identification among employees and leaders and they can use this study's outcomes to ensure positive results in their foreign workplaces.

This thesis is divided into five sections. The first section describes the theoretical background. It explains the definition and characteristics of SMEs and their internationalisation, what organisational identification is, how organisational communication can act as a determining factor for it, the difference between home and foreign, and employees and leaders, and organisational identification in an international setting. The second section describes how the research is conducted, including the method to gather and analyse data. The third section presents the results of both qualitative and quantitative research, followed by a discussion with the theoretical and practical implications, and potential limitations with future research suggestions. Finally, the thesis concludes with a conclusion, summarizing the key findings and their implications.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

2.1.1 Definition of SMEs

Firm size has been deemed a significant control variable in various academic fields that study businesses (Rodiguez et al., 2003). Enterprises are commonly classified as either small and medium enterprises (SMEs) or large enterprises (LEs). Legal definitions of firm size are usually based on staff size or total revenue (Steinhäuser, Paula, de Macedo-Soares, 2021). The European Commission defined several criteria for a business to be considered an SME, namely autonomy, a staffing level of fewer than 250, and a financial turnover of less than €43 million (Oricchio et al., 2017, p. 10), shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The criteria of autonomy, staffing, and financial turnover:

Autonomy	An enterprise is defined as “autonomous” if it is neither associated with nor linked to another business – that is, if it does not control (or is not controlled by) other companies.
Staffing levels	• A micro-enterprise should have fewer than 10 employees; • A small enterprise should have fewer than 50 employees; • A medium-sized enterprise should have fewer than 250 employees.
Financial turnover	A micro-enterprise is defined by an annual turnover or total annual balance sheet of less than €2 million. A small enterprise must have an annual turnover or total annual balance of less than €10 million. And a medium-sized enterprise is characterized by an annual turnover or total annual balance of less than €43 million.

(Adapted from Oricchio et al., 2017, p. 11).

Hence, based on the criteria set by the European Commission, the definition of an SME is that of an autonomous business with fewer than 250 employees and a financial turnover of less than €43 million. More specifically, a micro-enterprise has fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover or total annual balance sheet of less than €2 million, while a small enterprise has fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover or total annual balance sheet of less than €10 million.

2.1.2 Characteristics of SMEs

Apart from the above-mentioned lower staffing levels and financial turnover, several distinctive characteristics differentiate SMEs from larger companies. Firstly, their ownership structure: SMEs are usually owned by their managers; therefore, decision-making and the crafting of strategy tend to usually be a one-sided process (Van Gils, 2005). Secondly, SMEs are characterized by a much more informal way of functioning than larger organisations (Ates & Bititci, 2011, O'Regan et al., 2004). Thirdly, SMEs are generally considered to be more flexible and adaptive than larger organisations (Levy and Powell, 1998). They have a greater ability to respond quickly to changing market conditions and customer needs compared to larger businesses (Hadi, 2020). Fourthly, SMEs have, in general, more limited resources in the form of time, money and human capital (Van Gils 2005). Wickramansinghe and Sharma (2005) state that SMEs not only face a lack of information regarding the availability and sources of new technology but also have a shortage of resources to search for potential partners. The fifth and final differing characteristic of SMEs is their entrepreneurial mindset, which tends to be characterized by a strong tendency towards taking advantage of opportunities and a tendency to act on ideas without excessive planning (Lazarević-Moravčević et al., 2014; Ates & Bititci, 2011).

2.1.3 Internationalisation of SMEs

International expansion has the potential to bring significant benefits to SMEs, including increased growth, competitive advantage, and the development of mini-multinational enterprises (Ruzzier et al., 2006, p. 477; Zahra et al., 2009, p. 81). SMEs are known for their entrepreneurial spirit, flexibility, and higher motivation towards internationalisation (Steinhäuser et al., 2021). SMEs often utilize exporting as the most feasible and dominant option for entering foreign markets, given its speed, simplicity, and cost-effectiveness compared to other alternatives (Leonidou et al., 2007; Majocchi and Zucchella, 2005).

However, studies have shown that SMEs generally exhibit less commitment to internationalisation compared to large firms, with limited resources and entry barriers being major challenges for SMEs (Bell et al., 2001; Leonidou et al., 2007; Majocchi and Zucchella, 2005). SMEs face unique challenges in the internationalisation process, including limited resources and lower political influence. Different patterns of SME internationalisation have been identified in the literature, including gradual, rapid, and rapid but late internationalisation, with strategies and performance differing between SMEs and large enterprises (Bell et al., 2001; Paul et al., 2017; Steinhäuser et al., 2021). Flexibility and nimbleness of SMEs allow them for quick adaptation to changing environments (Cheng and Yu, 2008; Zacharakis, 1997).

Another challenge SMEs may face during international expansion is achieving organisational identification in new business locations (Wilkins, Butt, & Annabi, 2018, p. 48-66). The limited resources of SMEs can make it difficult for them to establish a presence in foreign markets and develop strong relationships with local stakeholders. As such, SMEs may need to invest significant time and resources in building relationships and establishing their brand reputation in new markets, which can be a daunting task for firms with limited resources.

2.2 Organisational Identification (OI)

2.2.1 Conceptualisation of Organisational Identification

Organisational identification refers to "an individual's sense of connection with or belongingness to the organisation" (Aitken & von Treuer, 2020, p. 312), or "the congruence of individual and organisational values" (Riketta, 2005, p. 360). It involves a "self-defining psychological linkage between the individual and the employing organisation" (Edwards, 2009, p. 91). It is defined as an individual's perception of oneness with, or belongingness to, an organisation, where the individual defines themselves in terms of their membership in the organisation (Mael and Ashforth, 1992). Organisational identification is a form of social identification that is specific to one's membership in a particular organisation (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

The concept of organisational identification has its roots in social identity theory, which proposes that people derive a part of their self-concept from their membership in social group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Tajfel (1978, p. 63) defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership". Social identities are shared by members and accentuate members' perceived similarity. Members share the group's prototypical traits, and thus depersonalize their self-concepts (Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015); through this process of categorizing the self into a more inclusive social entity, "I becomes we" (Brewer, 1991, p. 476).

The idea of organisational identification emerged in the 1970s, when researchers began exploring the psychological and emotional connections that employees have with their organisations. Ashforth and Mael (1989) and Tajfel and Turner (1979) developed the concept of organisational identification to understand why employees may feel a strong sense of belonging to some organisations but not to others. Since then, researchers have studied organisational identification in various contexts.

Since then, several studies have underlined the importance of organisational identification. Organisational identification has been found to be a powerful and unique concept, which is connected to numerous positive work-related behaviours and outcomes, such as improved performance, increased cooperation, and higher intention to stay (Van Dick, 2001; Riketta, 2005; Liu et al., 2011). Employees who identify strongly with their organisations are more likely to show a supportive attitude toward them (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and to make decisions that are consistent with organisational objectives (Lieu et al., 2011). Consequently, organisations profit greatly from achieving a high level of organisational identification among employees. In addition to this, Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008) argue that, particularly in times of uncertainty, employees can also derive personal benefits from identifying with their organisation. Organisational identification is positively associated with job involvement (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000) and job satisfaction (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). For individuals with high organisational identification, the identities of the individual and the organisation overlap, and thus they are inclined to find positive aspects of their organisation to attain a positive self-concept (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Dutton et al., 1994; Pratt, 1998).

2.2.2 Organisational Identification in an International Setting

Javidan et al. (2007) argued that in order for organisations to achieve effectiveness and success, their employees, managers, and executives must possess the ability to comprehend and adjust to the global business environment. This entails recognizing, observing, interpreting, and comprehending the diverse differences that exist among countries (Ananthram et al., 2010; Gupta and Govindarajan, 2002).

Research suggests that employees at foreign locations likely experience less organisational identification compared to home employees. An example of this is the study of Wilkins et al. (2018), who have shown that employees working in foreign branches of educational institutions have less organisational identification. They state that foreign branches differentiate in perceived prestige. Another potential cause of lower organisational identification at foreign locations is from Healey (2015), since it may be that organisations often find it more cost-effective and convenient to hire local workers for their foreign office. However, compared to employees transferred from the "home" office, these locally recruited workers may have a weaker grasp of the organisation's objectives, values, and culture. Moreover, they may be less dedicated to the organisation if they perceive disparities in treatment, such as lower compensation or fewer promotion opportunities, in comparison to transferred employees (Healey, 2015). As a consequence, foreign offices employees who were recruited locally may feel less affiliated with their organisation than their home colleagues. The majority on these studies have looked mostly at employees without exploring the leader's perspective.

2.2.3 Difference between Employees and Leaders on Organisational Identification

Previous research has shown that employees and leaders often differ in the way they experience organisational identification. McCaul et al. (1995) discovered a correlation between hierarchical level and organisational commitment, a concept closely related to organisational identification. This study found that commitment tends to increase with years in position and years of experience. Corley (2004) also provided evidence that suggests the existence of hierarchical differentiation in organisational identity. Their findings showed that different levels within an organisation (e.g., senior managers, mid-level managers, and front-line employees) may perceive the organisation's identity differently, based on factors such as their role within the organisation, their exposure to the organisation's culture, and their alignment with the organisation's strategy.

Furthermore, Scott and Lane (2000) argued that managers' identities and organisational identity are likely to overlap to a greater extent than those of other organisational employees. Due to their higher visibility, public promotion of the organisation, and higher level of interaction, managers are more likely than other employees to strongly identify with the organisation. However, this can lead to the management being unaware of low levels of organisational identification amongst employees.

In conclusion, understanding the differences in organisational identification between leaders and employees, as well as the impact of hierarchical level on commitment, can be crucial for management to effectively promote a strong sense of organisational identification among all employees.

2.2.4 Organisational Communication as a determinant of OI

Factors such as organisational culture (Schrodt, 2002), organisational communication (Smidts et al., 2001), leadership, work relationships and work environment are known to affect organisational identification (Tsai, 2011).

In particular, communication is defined as "the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver and the inference of meaning between organisational participants" (O'Reilly and Pondy, 1979, p.121). The definition of organisational communication can be defined as the "study of sending and receiving messages that create and maintain a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more people" (Tompkins, 1984, p.662-663, as cited in Dance et al., 1985, p. 62-64). Over the past years, organisational communication has undergone significant changes and has become a critical aspect of organisational theory and practice (Tucker et al. 1996). McKenna's (2006, p.171) stated that 'communication is the lifeblood of the organisation'. Effective communication is crucial in the business environment as every human action is a form of communication. The exchange of information and messages among employees typically occurs through various channels such as conversations, debates, public speaking, or report submissions (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo,1983). Today, organisational communication has become more complex and varied, and is crucial to the overall functioning and success of organisations. (Tucker et al. 1996; Desanctis and Fulk 1999).

While the significance of communication in organisations has been apparent for some time (Redding, 1972), there is limited empirical research into how employees perceive organisational communication in relation to their identification with the organisation (Bartels, 2006).

Past studies have found positive correlations between a good organisational communication climate and organisational commitment, but only two decades ago organisational communication climate quality has been linked to organisational identification (Bartels, 2006). Smidts et al. (2001) were the first who found that an organisation's communication climate, which is the perceived quality of communication in an organisation (Denis, 1974, p. 29), has a significant impact on how well employees identify with their organisation. Specifically, they identified three dimensions of an organisation's communication climate that were particularly important in predicting organisational identification: openness, participation, and supportiveness. Thus, it can be concluded that organisational communication plays a crucial role in predicting an employee's identification with their organisation, in addition to their organisational commitment. Organisations that prioritize creating a positive internal communication climate are more likely to have employees who feel a strong sense of identification with the organisation (Bartels, 2006; Smidts et al. 2001).

2.2.5 Job Satisfaction as a Consequence of OI and OC

Job satisfaction can be considered a consequence of organisational identification (OI) and organisational communication (OC) when the underlying idea is that effective communication within the organisation and a strong sense of identification with the organisation result in higher levels of job satisfaction. Consequently, this research investigates how organisational communication affects job satisfaction via organisational identification as a mediator among both home and foreign employees, as well as leaders.

Job satisfaction refers to individuals' attitudes and internal emotions towards their work and the company they are associated with (Landis et al., 2015). When employees experience positive emotions towards their job, the organisation, and the characteristics of their work, their job satisfaction tends to be high (Robbins, Judge & Campbell, 2017). Beyond positive emotions, several other factors identified by Robbins et al. (2017) have the potential to influence employees' perceived job satisfaction. These factors encompass the nature of the job, administrative practices, salary, opportunities for career advancement, and interpersonal relationships within the workplace. Conversely, certain factors can have a negative impact on job satisfaction. For instance, Barakat et al. (2016) argue that stress can diminish employees' satisfaction with their work, potentially leading to decreased performance.

Previous research has consistently indicated a positive association between job satisfaction and organisational identification (Meal & Tetrick, 1992; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). More recently, Karanika-Murray et al. (2015) have reinforced this positive relationship, further establishing the link between organisational identification and job satisfaction. On the contrary, a lack of identification with the organisation or work group can lead to disparities in goals and motivation, subsequently resulting in reduced motivation and job satisfaction (van Dick et al., 2008). Additionally, Clinebell and Shadwick (2005) have shown that employees working in foreign offices, although not in an SME context, tend to report lower levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment compared to those in the home office. Empirical evidence strongly supports the connection between organisational and workgroup identification, on one hand, and job satisfaction and extra-role behaviour, on the other (van Dick et al., 2008). This study is the first to investigate this relationship in the context of international SMEs.

Communication plays a major role in employees' job satisfaction and has been explored in previous research (e.g. Giri & Pavan Kumar, 2010; Srivastava, 2013). Organisational communication is how supervisors communicate, their credibility, and the content they convey, as well as the organisation's communication system, it all contributes to employee satisfaction and morale, according to Giri and Pavan Kumar (2010). Relational characteristics of communication are especially significant in improving work satisfaction in an organisational environment (Giri & Pavan Kumar, 2010). Srivastava (2013) discovered that upstream and downward communication, both types of organisational communication, have an effect on work satisfaction. On the other hand, remote employees may feel disconnected and have poorer morale owing to different communication dynamics, relying more on co-workers for critical information (Fay & Kline, 2011). While informal co-worker contact is vital for job satisfaction, it should not be the organisation's main source of information (Proctor, 2014). Besides studies focusing on remote workers, there has been no research conducted specifically on the impact of organisational communication on job satisfaction at foreign locations.

In conclusion, understanding the relationship between organisational communication, organisational identification, and job satisfaction can provide valuable insights into the dynamics between employees and managers within an organisation and their overall levels of satisfaction and motivation. This study is the first to investigate this relationship in the context of international SMEs.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research employed a mixed-methods research design, which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data to increase the reliability of the research outcomes through triangulation. By utilizing both types of research methods, the strengths of each can be leveraged while mitigating any potential weaknesses (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013).

Firstly, an inductive qualitative study is conducted. Qualitative research is a methodology that aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of behaviours, experiences, attitudes, intentions, and motivations through observation and interpretation, with a focus on the perspectives of participants (Ahmad et al., 2019; Verhoeven, 2014). While qualitative methods have the advantage of providing insight into underlying reasons for participant's responses, as opposed to quantitative studies, Verhoeven (2014) also highlights some limitations of the qualitative approach: open-ended questions can be more difficult to interpret and the sample size is often small, which can raise concerns about generalizability.

Secondly, a quantitative study is conducted through a online survey. A quantitative survey is a method of gathering information by asking individuals questions about their opinions, attitudes, beliefs, values, or behaviour regarding a specific topic, person, or event (Stockemer, 2019). Additionally, surveys allow for the collection of data from a large and representative sample of respondents (Hox & Boeije, 2005). The mixed-method approach enhances the validity and generalizability of the findings, providing a more robust foundation for drawing conclusions and informing practical implications for the international SME context.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The case company of this research is an SME in the Netherlands that has expanded internationally. This specific organisation is selected for the study because of its recent expansion into three foreign countries (namely, Germany, Belgium, and France) and its plans for further expansion in the future. The organisation experiences challenges with operating in both home base and foreign offices and is keen to understand the study's outcomes and recommendations to improve its operations. The company has existed for more than five years and works in the printing industry with around 150 employee total in offices in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and France. The study focuses on comparing the foreign branches in Belgium, France, and Germany with the home offices in the Netherlands.

To conduct this study, the researcher had access to the company and reached out to potential participants via email. Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the qualitative study based on specific criteria, such as their role and team within the company, their time within the organisation, and their availability to participate. The aim was to recruit participants who have an opinion and could provide valuable insights for the study. Five participants have a management role (a 'Captain' or 'Chief' position). The other 16 participants are employees from all different departments and countries: 4 from the Netherlands, 4 from Germany, 4 from France and 4 from Belgium.

For the quantitative study, the researcher sent out a survey to all employees within the company, including both leaders and employees from different departments and countries. No specific criteria were used for participant selection in the quantitative study, as the aim was to gather data from a maximally broad and diverse sample.

3.3 Research Instruments

3.3.1 Qualitative study

The collection of qualitative data was done through interviews. With interviews, individual participants' perspectives can be explored (Gill et al., 2008). The interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner. Semi-structured interviews include a combination of closed and open-ended questions, as well as follow-up questions (Adams, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are advantageous because they allow interviewers to ask follow-up questions that help to clarify or expand on participants' answers. However, it is important for interviewers to be mindful of the way they interact with interviewees and the types of questions they ask, as these factors can influence the data collected. As pointed out by Smith (2006), the interviewer's approach can have an impact on the quality and accuracy of the information obtained through the interviews. Roughly 20 participants were interviewed; this was done in a face-to-face setting when possible, and otherwise online. Prior to the interviews, written informed consent was obtained from each participant. Participation in the interviews was anonymous and voluntary. The interviews with Dutch employees were conducted in Dutch, while the interviews with foreign employees were carried out in English. The researcher transcribed the recordings verbatim, in Dutch or English. Relevant Dutch quotes that are presented in the results section were translated into English.

Table 2. Characteristics of participants in the qualitative study.

Role (Leader/employee)	Gender (M/F)	Age (range)	Time working at the company	Homebase/foreign office
Leader	*Male*	*55-64*	*+3 years*	*Homebase*
Employee	*Female*	*18-24*	*+3 years*	*Homebase*
Employee	*Male*	*18-24*	*+4 years*	*Homebase*
Employee	*Female*	*35-44*	*+3 years*	*Homebase*
Employee	*Male*	*25-34*	*+1 year*	*Homebase*
Employee	*Male*	*35-44*	*+2 years*	*Homebase*
Leader	*Female*	*25-34*	*+3 years*	*Homebase*
Leader	*Male*	*55-64*	*+3 years*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Male*	*25-34*	*+3 years*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Female*	*18-24*	*+1 year*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Male*	*25-34*	*+2 years*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Male*	*18-24*	*0-6 months*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Female*	*18-24*	*0-6 months*	*Foreign Office*

Leader	*Male*	*25-34*	*+1 year*	*Foreign Office*
Leader	*Male*	*35-44*	*+1 year*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Female*	*35-44*	*0-6 months*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Female*	*35-44*	*+1 year*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Female*	*35-44*	*+1 year*	*Foreign Office*
Employee	*Female*	*25-34*	*0-6 months*	*Foreign Office*

3.3.2 Quantitative study

The survey was sent to every employee in the company, will be anonymous and voluntary. The survey was conducted in English. The survey was administrated to conduct gather information about variables organisational identification and communication. The survey comprised a few demographic questions, question on job satisfaction and then the questions about organisational identification and organisational communication.

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction was measured using the Job Satisfaction scale by Thompson and Phua (2012). This scale consists of four items and the responses are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Organisational identification: Organisational identification was measured using the Organisational Identification Scale (OIS) developed by Ashforth and Mael (1989). This scale consists of six items that assess the extent to which employees identify with their organisation. The responses are measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Organisational communication: Organisational communication was measured using the Organisational (Climate) Scale developed by Bartels et al. (2006; 2007). This scale consists of nine items that assess the communication climate at the organisation. The responses are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, indicating their level of agreement with statements such as "People within the organisation are open to each other" and "Colleagues in the whole organisation sincerely listen to me when I speak."

Sample characteristics

The sample consisted of 93 participants; however, 5 incomplete responses were removed from the analysis. In addition, an outlying participant was removed from the sample (see ‘Data analysis – Quantitative study’), resulting in a final sample of 87 participants. In Table 3, the characteristics of the participants are shown.

Table 3. Characteristics of the participants of the quantitative study.

Variable	*Level*	*N*	*%*
		87	100
Gender	Male	51	58.6
	Female	36	41.4
Age	16-24	13	14.9
	25-34	44	50.6
	35-44	17	19.5
	45-54	6	6.9
	55-64	7	8.0
	65+	0	0.0
Time in service	0– 1 year	28	32.2
	1 -2 years	26	29.9
	2 -3 years	12	13.8
	3 – 4 years	5	5.7
	4 – 5 years	12	13.8
	> 5 years	4	4.6
Position	Leader	6	6.9
	Employee	81	93.1
Office	Home	69	79.3
	Foreign	18	20.7

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Qualitative Study

In this study, an inductive approach to thematic analysis was selected to analyse the qualitative data. The inductive approach was chosen for this study because it allows the researcher to explore relationships and patterns between the research question and topics emerging from the data. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to explore patterns between the topics and the research question, and to summarize extensive data rapidly (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Gioia's method with first-order concept, second and third-order themes, and an aggregate dimension to organise the data will be used for thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis involves six stages. First, the data is reviewed by transcribing and examining the transcripts. Second, the transcripts will be coded using the participants' own words as much as possible, which corresponds to the first-order concepts as defined by Gioia et al. (2013). Third, the codes will be clustered based on similar outcomes to create second and third-order themes.

Fourth, the themes will be revised and clustered into aggregate dimensions. Fifth, the themes are named and defined. Finally, a report is produced by analysing the data, selecting examples that support the codes and themes, and responding to the research question. After this thorough analysis, the study's results will be supported by quotations related to both the codes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Gioia et al., 2013).

3.4.2 Quantitative Study

The data of quantitative survey was analysed with both descriptive and inferential statistics.

First, mean scores were computed for the scale items of organisational communication, organisational identification, and job satisfaction. Outliers were then inspected on each of these three mean score variables; one participant was outside of the Q1/Q3 + 1.5*IQR range on all three variables and was therefore deemed an outlier and removed from the dataset. The reliability of each scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, after which no scale items were dropped since all scales showed high reliability (see 'Results'). Normality of all continuous variables (organisational communication, organisational identification, job satisfaction, age, and years in service) was visually checked with a QQ-plot, and all data appeared to roughly follow a normal distribution.

Then, descriptive, and correlational statistics were computed for all variables. The theorized mediated effect of organisational communication on job satisfaction via organisational identification was tested via a series of linear regressions, following the mediation assessment procedure proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), and the significance of the mediation was assessed using the bootstrap method of Preacher and Hayes (2004) with the PROCESS macro (version 4.3), using the default recommendation of 5000 bootstrap samples. Control variables (age, gender (male/female), years in service, role (leader/employee), and office (home/foreign)) were added to each regression equation of each step in the mediation assessment procedure (see recommendations of Lee et al., 2021, p. 1052). Finally, linear regression models which predicted the three key outcome variables (organisational communication, organisational identification, and job satisfaction) with the beforementioned control variables, as well as an interaction term between role and office; this allowed for assessing the relation between each control variable and each key outcome variable, as controlled for the other variables.

4. Results

4.1 Results from the Qualitative Study

From the data analysis, five aggregated dimensions were identified regarding the perception of organisational communication on organisational identification, namely the positive and negative drivers of organisational identification, the positive and negative drivers of organisational communication and lastly, the impact of organisational communication on organisational identification.

Regarding organisational identification, four positive drivers and two negative drivers were identified. The positive drivers included shared culture and values, good connection with colleagues in the department, good connection with colleagues in the office, and identification with the management. On the other hand, the negative drivers of organisational identification included frustrations from the international offices and ineffective processes.

In terms of organisational communication, three positive drivers and three negative drivers were identified. The positive drivers included improvements in communication, efficient use of communication channels, and effective communication from management. On the other hand, the negative drivers of organisational communication included inefficient use of communication channels, language problems, and inefficient communication within the organisation.

The impact of organisational communication on organisational identification was also explored. Two second-order themes emerged: geographic and cultural distance and hierarchical communication breakdowns. The international offices expressed feelings of isolation, exclusion, and disconnection due to geographic and cultural distance, which hindered effective communication and organisational identification. Additionally, employees highlighted a lack of communication with top management, perceiving a breakdown in hierarchical communication.

Worthwhile to note is that in contrast with what discussed in the theoretical background, there was no clear distinction between managers and employees. Consequently, this difference is not visible in the data structure. However, a distinction was made between home and foreign offices, and the legend for this is included in the data structures.

4.1.1 Results related to Organisational Identification: Positive and Negative Drivers

In Figure 1 the data structure of organisational identification is shown. The results from these two dimensions revealed positive and negative drivers of organisational identification, which were identified through four positive themes and two negative themes.

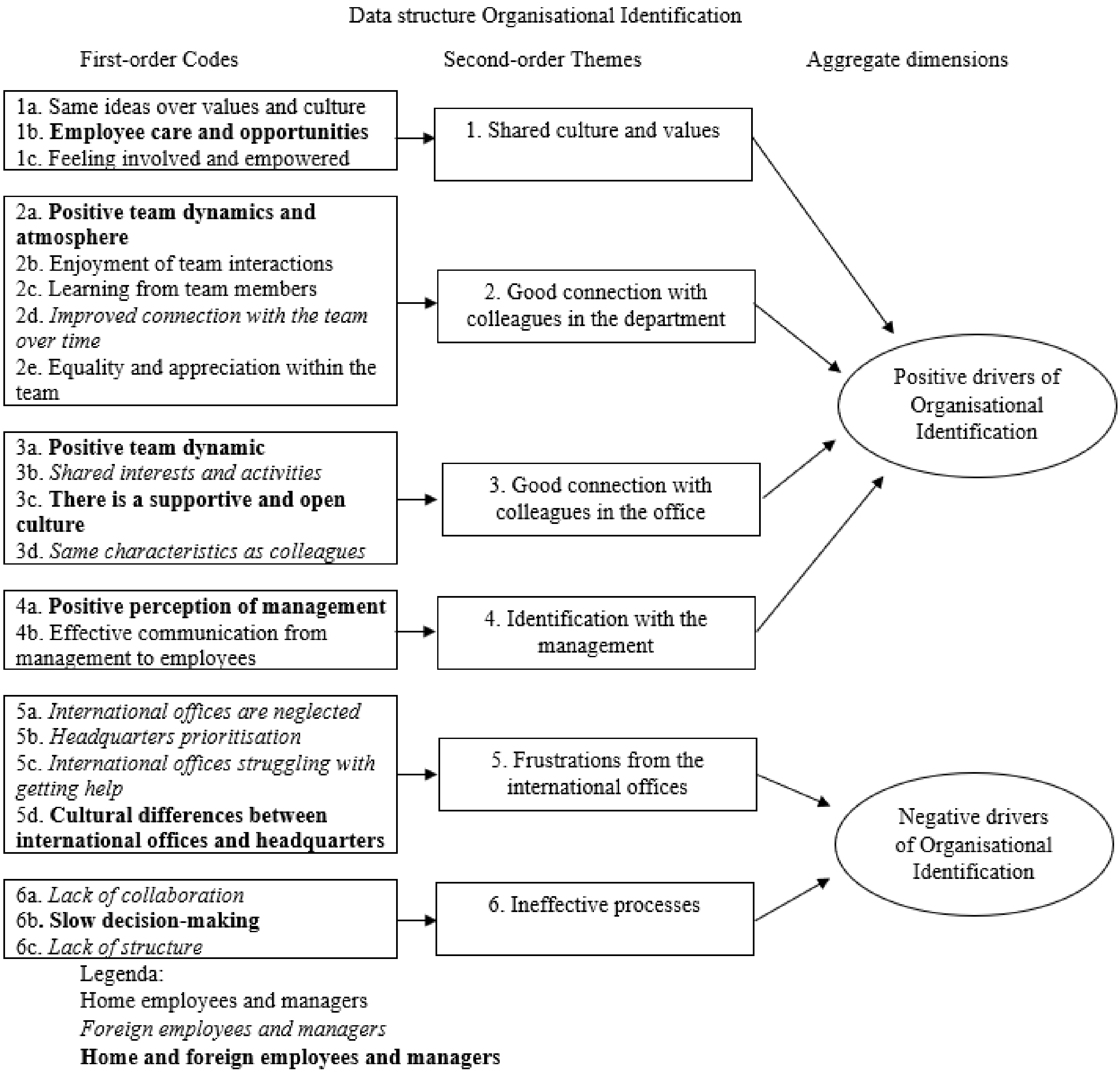

Figure 1. Data Structure Organisational Identification (based on Gioia et al, 2013).

Positive Drivers of Organisational Identification

1. *Shared culture and values*

This first 2nd-order theme derived by many quotes from our participants who underlined the cohesive and familiar atmosphere they perceived both in their home office and foreign branch. For instance, one of them noted: "I feel like, everyone has a say in the company" (Home Office, employee). Similarly, other two employees mentioned: "I like the culture, it is flexible and open" (Home office, employee), and "Company is taking care of the employees" (Foreign Office, employee). On the same line, also the managers noted “I am feeling proud to work for this company every day. We are really flexible, and solution focused.” (Home Office, manager)

2. *Good connection with colleagues in the department*

Positive team dynamics and supportive atmosphere were reported by both home and foreign employees and managers regarding to the colleagues in their department. This was seen in employees' comments such as "I have a very good connection with my whole team" (Foreign Office, employee), and "Everyone is equal and we have a lot of fun as well" (Home Office, employee). Another employee from emphasized the mutual appreciation with the team, stating, "The team appreciates each other" (Home Office, employee). In addition to the positive feedback from employees, managers also expressed a strong connection with their teams. This sentiment is reflected in the following quotes: "I have a very good connection with everyone in my team" (Home Office, manager) and "It changes based on the person I am connecting with, but overall, with most of them, I have a good connection" (Foreign Office, manager). These statements highlight the positive relationships and rapport that managers have established with their team members.

3. *Good connection with colleagues in the office*

In all interviews, both home and foreign employees and managers consistently expressed a strong bond with their colleagues in the office. This was evident not only in their comments but also in their non-verbal communication. The enthusiasm of the foreign employees was palpable when discussing this topic. The theme of a good connection with colleagues in the office emerged prominently. The following quotes exemplify the sentiment expressed by employees and managers: "Our connection almost feels like friendship" (Foreign Office, employee), "We have daily contact about business and non-business stuff" (Home Office, employee), and "The people in the office grow together, I enjoy seeing that" (Foreign Office, manager). These statements highlight the deep relations between employees and managers in their respective offices.

4. *Identification with the management*

The theme of identification with the management was strongly evident in the comments made by employees. They praised the transparency of the management, as one employee from the Home Office stated, "The management is truly transparent." Another employee from the Foreign Office highlighted the importance of being treated as an individual, saying, "You feel like a human being, not just like a number." These positive drivers of organisational identification have the potential to create a nurturing and inclusive culture within companies, fostering employee engagement and overall satisfaction. By prioritizing transparency and valuing employees as unique individuals, organisations can cultivate an environment where employees feel seen, heard, and appreciated.

Negative Drivers of Organisational Identification

5. *Frustrations from the international offices*

A major concern for the international offices was that employees and managers felt neglected by the headquarters. Most foreign-office interviewees reported feeling disconnected from the rest of the organisation, as if the international offices were an afterthought. This was reflected in the following quotes: "Sometimes people forget about our international office", "Our international office is a bit forgotten sometimes" (Foreign Office, employees). Several interviewees expressed the feeling that the headquarters prioritised its own needs over those of the international offices. This made them feel unimportant and underappreciated. One interviewee reported: "I have got the feeling that the headquarters comes first. We do not feel important as an international office" (Foreign Office, employee).

Interviewees reported difficulties in getting the help they needed from colleagues at the headquarters. This was a source of frustration, as they felt unsupported and isolated. One interviewee reported: "Some people from the headquarters just do not want to help me" (Foreign Office, employee).

Cultural differences between the international offices and the headquarters were another source of frustration. Dutch people, for example, were seen as being too direct and sometimes even rude. Interviewees reported feeling that Dutch values were being pushed too much. This was reflected in the following quotes: "Cultural differences also play a role in how we feel towards the headquarters. Dutch people are really direct and can also be really rude" (Foreign Office, manager), "Dutch values are pushed too much" (Foreign Office, employee). In conclusion, the findings reveal that international offices expressed concerns regarding feelings of neglect and disconnection from the headquarters, as well as a perception of the headquarters prioritizing its own needs. Difficulties in receiving necessary support from colleagues at the headquarters and cultural differences further contributed to their frustrations and sense of isolation.

6. Ineffective processes

Ineffective processes, a lack of structure and slow decision-making were common themes that emerged from the interview data, from foreign offices as well as the home office. Interviewees reported that decision-making took too much time and that there was a lack of collaboration between offices and teams. This was reflected in the following quotes: "We should exchange more information with each other", "There should be more collaborations", "I think we are missing decision-makers", "There is a lack of structure", "Processes take a long time", "There is not a contact person between the international office and the headquarters, I think we need one " (Foreign and Home Offices, employees).

In conclusion, the international offices feel neglected by the headquarters and that their needs are not being prioritised. Cultural differences, ineffective processes, and a lack of collaboration between the international offices and the headquarters were also seen as negative drivers of organisational identification.

4.1.2 Results related to Organisational Communication: Positive and Negative Drivers

The interviews showed that there were positive drivers of organisational communication, which were identified through the theme of progress in communication. In Figure 2 the data structure of organisational communication is shown. The results from these two dimensions revealed positive and negative drivers of organisational communication, which were identified through three positive themes and three negative themes.

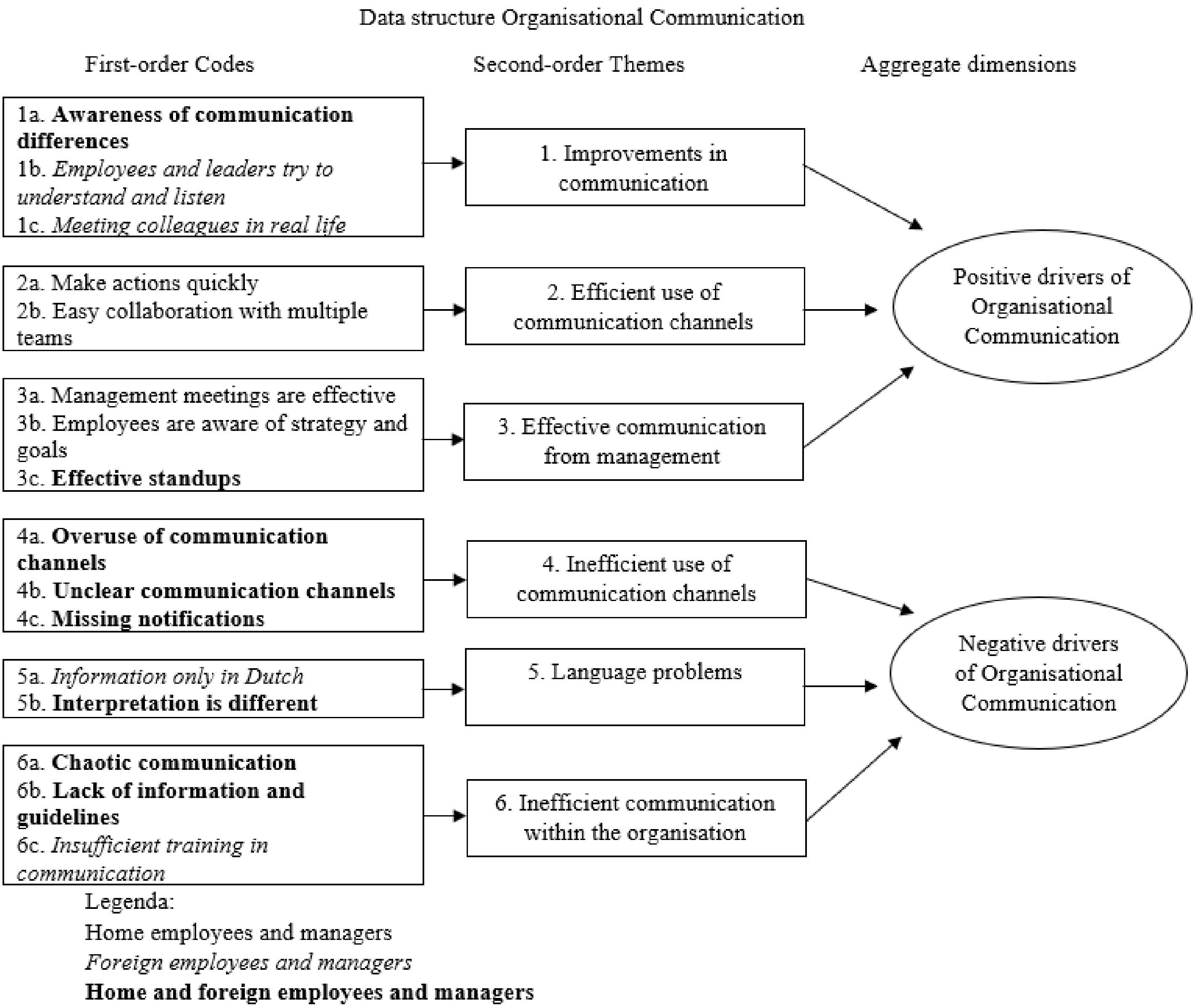

Figure 2. Data Structure Organisational Communication (based on Gioia et al, 2013)

Positive Drivers of Organisational Communication

1. *Improvements in communication*

Positive drivers of organisational communication can greatly impact the effectiveness and collaboration with the organisation. One significant driver, from the data, is the observed improvements in communication. This is evident from the interviews provided by both foreign office employees and managers, who have noticed positive changes in communication practices. For instance, one Foreign Office manager mentioned, “The communication has improved since attention has been paid to it. People are aware of differences between countries, and it has improved.” Similarly, a foreign office employee highlighted, “Since meeting colleagues in real life, communication has also improved. I have the feeling that they listen to me.” These positive developments in communication signify the organisational communication and promoting better understanding among in the company.

2. *Efficient use of communication channels*

Employees and managers from both foreign and home offices have emphasized the advantages of utilizing communication channels efficiently. An employee from a foreign office highlighted the effectiveness of the communication channels, stating, “Our communication channel can be really efficient when you need to take action quickly.” This indicates that the channel enables swift decision-making and facilitates effective problem-solving. Similarly, a home office employee acknowledged the speed of receiving responses through the communication channel, saying, "You get most of your answers really fast. It can be chaotic, but it works for me." The acknowledgement of the communication channel's efficiency in delivering timely information and support enhances organisational communication.

3. *Effective communication from management*

Effective communication from management is a crucial factor in fostering positive organisational communication. During the interviews, it was evident that positive feedback regarding effective communication from management primarily came from the home office employees. They expressed satisfaction with the clear and timely communication they received from their managers, which significantly enhanced their understanding of the organisation's goals and strategies. One home office employee highlighted the effectiveness of management communication, stating, "I am well aware of the goals and strategy of the organisation. I find it really effective when we have a crew meeting, and the boss is giving a presentation." This testimony emphasizes the impact of effective communication from management during team gatherings and presentations.

Additionally, both home and foreign offices acknowledged the effectiveness of stand-up meetings with their respective managers. A common sentiment expressed was that these daily stand-up meetings provided an effective platform for team members to connect, share updates, and stay informed about ongoing activities. As one foreign office employee mentioned, "We have a stand-up every day, and it is good to see other colleagues and know what is happening." This highlights the positive impact of such communication practices in fostering collaboration and keeping employees informed across offices.

Negative Drivers of Organisational Communication

4. *Inefficient use of communication channels*

The findings of the interviews revealed several negative drivers of organisational communication. One of the main issues identified, shared by home and foreign employees and managers, was the inefficient use of communication channels within the organisation. Both home and foreign offices expressed concerns about the excessive reliance on various communication channels, leading to information overload and important messages being overlooked. A manager from the home office pointed out, "We are using too many channels, which often results in missing out on crucial information." Similarly, an employee from the foreign office stated, "We are inundated with multiple channels, and it becomes a chaotic situation."

Moreover, participants highlighted that the communication channels lacked clarity, making it difficult to effectively receive and respond to notifications. Notifications were frequently missed, and there was no provision to prioritise or set reminders for important messages. A manager from the home office mentioned, "Notifications often go unnoticed, and there is no way to prioritise or set reminders for them."

5. *Language problems*

The interviews highlighted language problems as a significant challenge faced by international offices. Non-native Dutch employees expressed difficulties in understanding information that was exclusively provided in Dutch. They mentioned that some materials or announcements were still exclusively available in Dutch, creating a language barrier. One employee from the foreign office explicitly mentioned, "Some things are still only in Dutch. At first, I would then throw those texts through a translator but I no longer do that. They know I don't speak Dutch, so I assume they understand that I haven't read it then."

Furthermore, communication through chat platforms posed additional challenges due to language differences. One foreign office manager pointed out that "the interpretation is different, and this causes problems." The reliance on written communication in a predominantly chat-based environment made it challenging to convey messages accurately, leading to potential misunderstandings.

It is worth noting that both home office employees and managers raised this issue when discussing communication with foreign offices. They emphasized the difficulty of effective communication when encountering language barriers, with one home office employee stating, "Some of the people in foreign offices do not speak proper English, and it is hard to communicate."

6. Inefficient communication within the organisation

Another prominent issue identified in the interviews was the inefficient and chaotic nature of communication within the organisation. Participants, including both home office and foreign office employees, expressed frustration over the lack of information and clear guidelines for communication. One foreign office employee mentioned, "Not much information is written down, and it would be helpful if there was a guideline in how to use the tools." This highlighted the need for structured documentation and guidelines to facilitate effective communication. Similarly, a home office employee added, "I am sometimes a bit lost in how I need to contact for what." This indicated the confusion and challenges faced when trying to determine the appropriate channels and contacts for specific communication needs.

Furthermore, a foreign office manager emphasized the importance of training, stating, "People need to be trained in how to use the tools and how to communicate with each other, different cultures included." This highlighted the necessity of providing training and support to employees in utilizing communication tools effectively and navigating cross-cultural communication dynamics. Overall, the interviews revealed a shared concern about the lack of information, guidelines, and training in the organisation, leading to inefficient communication practices.

4.1.3 Results of Organisational Communication on organisational identification

The impact of organisational communication on organisational identification emerged as a key dimension in the data analysis. In Figure 3 the data structure of organisational communication is shown. Two second-order themes were identified: Distance and Lack of communication with top management.

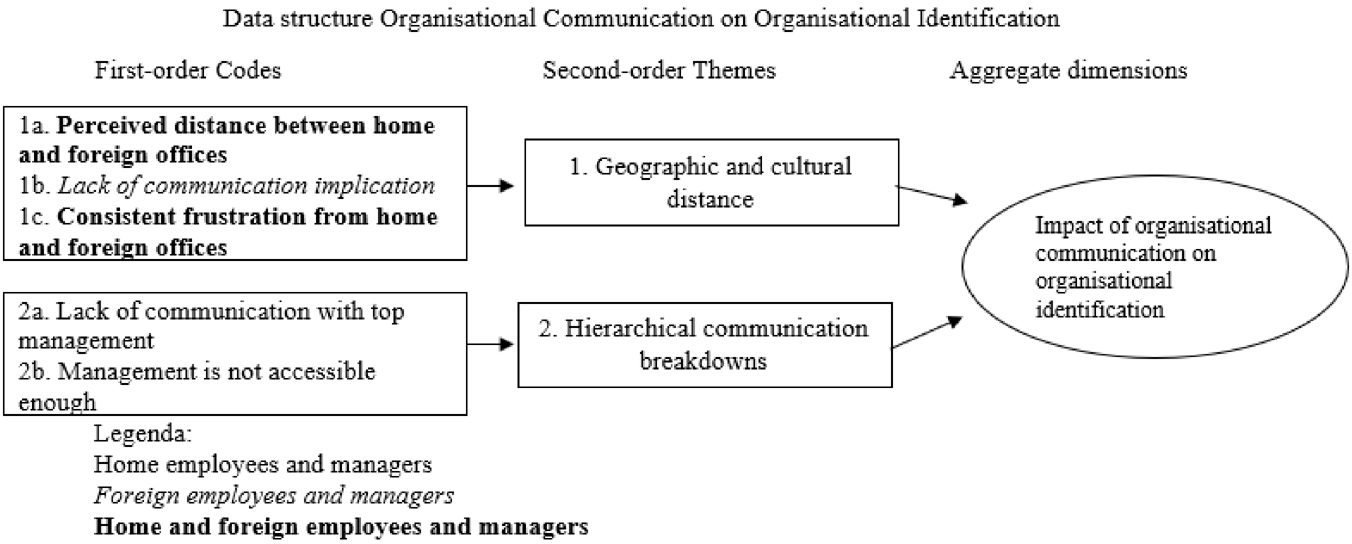

Figure 3. Data Structure Organisational Communication on Organisational Identification

1. *Geographic and cultural distance*

Geographic and cultural distance emerged as a significant factor impacting organisational communication and subsequently organisational identification. The interviews revealed that international offices often felt isolated and excluded from important communication channels, leading to a sense of disconnection. One interviewee from a foreign office expressed this sentiment, stating, "It is a feeling that we do not get information because we are too far away." This highlights the perception that distance plays a role in the limited flow of communication between the headquarters and the international offices.

Furthermore, a foreign office manager emphasized that colleagues at the headquarters might not fully grasp the implications of this communication gap between different countries. Another employee added, "All the international offices have the same perception and frustration about communication to the headquarters." These comments underscore the shared experience and frustration among international offices regarding the lack of effective communication with the headquarters.

The presence of geographic and cultural distance negatively affects the communication dynamics between the headquarters and international offices, ultimately impacting organisational identification.

2. Hierarchical communication breakdowns

The second theme, hierarchical communication breakdowns, was consistently highlighted by both home and foreign employees as a significant concern. One of the employees noted that "I never speak to the 'big' boss anymore, I do not know why but there is a big distance. It was not there when I started here" (Home Office, employee), while another said, "The management is not accessible at all. I have the feeling that they keep things behind" (Foreign Office, employee).

These comments, shared by employees from both home and foreign offices, shed light on the perceived lack of communication between employees and top management. This issue is not limited to a specific location but seems to be prevalent across the organisation.

Figure 4 provides an overview of the themes and aggregated dimensions found in the data. Overall, the interviews indicated that distance and inadequate communication with headquarters and top management had a negative impact on organisational identification. The international offices frequently felt left out and overlooked, leading to a sense of detachment from the company.

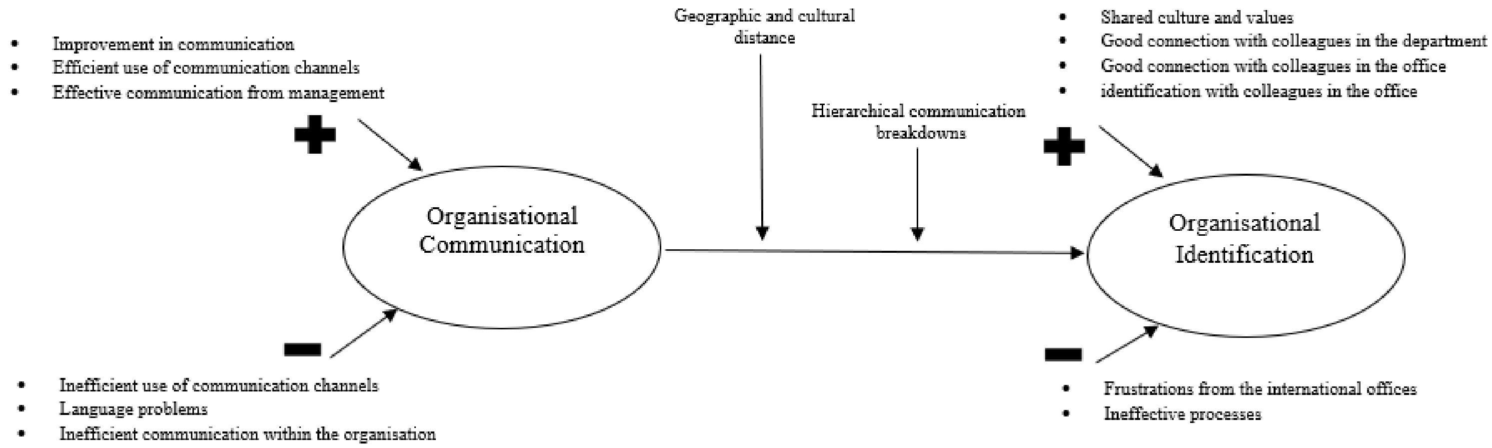

Figure 4. Overview Organisational Communication on Organisational Identification

4.2 Results from the Quantitative Study

4.2.1 Reliability, Descriptives and Correlation

Reliability statistics were calculated using Cronbach's Alpha for three dependent variables scales in the study. The results indicate high levels of internal consistency for each variable, with job satisfaction scoring 0.857, organisational identification scoring 0.819, and organisational communication scoring 0.817. These findings suggest that the measures used in the study are reliable and consistent (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the study's variables are reported in Table 4. Job satisfaction was associated positively with organisational identification ($r = .54$, $p < .01$) and with organisational communication ($r = .49$, $p < .01$). Organisational identification was also positively associated organisational communication ($r = .32$, $p < .01$).

Age positively correlated with both job satisfaction ($r = .27$, $p < .05$) and organisational identification ($r = .25$, $p < .05$). Year in service positively correlated with organisational identification ($r = .22$, $p < .05$) and age ($r = .29$, $p < .01$). Being situated at a foreign office (instead of a home office) negatively correlated with years in service ($r = -.25$, $p < .05$). Being an employee (instead of a leader) negatively correlated with age ($r = -.31$, $p < 0.01$), positively correlated with being female ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), and negatively correlated with years in service ($r = -.35$, $p < 0.01$).

4.2.2 Predictors of Organisational Communication, Organisational Identification, and Job Satisfaction

Appendix 4 shows linear regression analyses predicting the three key outcome variables of the study by the control variables. This allows for assessing the relation of each predictor to each outcome variable, controlling for the other variables in the model.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and correlations with 95% confidence intervals in square brackets.

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
1. Job satisfaction	4.03	0.71							
2. Organisational identification	5.69	0.92	.54** [.37, .67]						
3. Organisational communication	3.94	0.64	.49** [.32, .64]	.32** [.12, .50]					
4. Age[a]	2.43	1.09	.27* [.07, .46]	.25* [.04, .44]	.12 [-.10, .32]				
5. Female gender (ref.: male gender)	1.41	0.50	.07 [-.14, .28]	.16 [-.05, .36]	-.05 [-.26, .16]	-.20 [-.40, .01]			
6. Years in service[b]	2.53	1.55	.09 [-.12, .30]	.22* [.01, .41]	.06 [-.15, .27]	.29** [.08, .47]	-.18 [-.38, .03]		
Foreign office (ref.: home office)	1.21	0.41	.01 [-.21, .22]	.04 [-.18, .24]	-.15 [-.35, .07]	-.02 [-.23, .19]	.15 [-.07, .35]	-.25* [-.44, -.04]	
8. Employee (ref.: leader)	1.93	0.25	-.21* [-.40, -.00]	-.18 [-.38, .03]	-.07 [-.28, .14]	-.31** [-.49, -.11]	.23* [.02, .42]	-.35** [-.52, -.15]	-.08 [-.29, .13]

[*]: p < 0.05; [**]: p < 0.01; [***]: p < 0.001; [a]: Age was a continuous variable divided in six groups, 16-24 (1), 25-34 (2), 35-44 (3), 45-54 (4), 55-64 (5), and 65+ (6). [b]: Time in service was a continuous variable divided in six groups: 0-1 year (1), 1-2 years (2), 2-3 years (3), 3-4 years (4), 4-5 years (5), and 5+ years (6).

4.2.3 Organisational Identification as a Mediator of the effect of Organisational Communication on Job Satisfaction

A series of linear regression analyses, following the Baron and Kenny (1986) procedure, was conducted to test if organisational identification mediates the theorized effect of organisational communication on job satisfaction (see Figure 5). This includes testing the relationship between organisational communication and job satisfaction (step 1, see Table 5), testing the relationship between organisational communication and organisational identification (step 2, see Table 6), as well as assessing if the relationship between organisational communication and job satisfaction weakens when organisational identification is added to the step 1 regression equation (step 3, see Table 6).

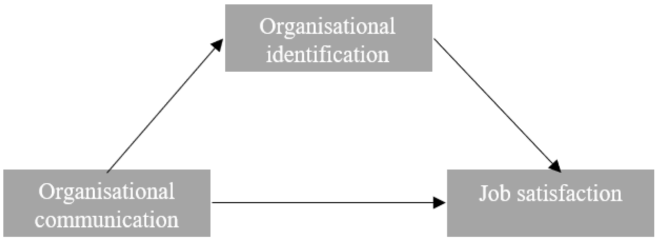

Figure 5. Mediated relationship: organisational communication, organisational identification, job satisfaction

The first regression analysis, showed in Table 5, revealed a significant positive relationship between organisational communication and job satisfaction ($b = .531$, $t = 5.116$, $p < .001$).

Table 5. Linear regression of organisational communication with control variables predicting job satisfaction

	Job satisfaction (range: 1-5)			
Predictor	*Estimate* b	*Standard error*	*Statistic* *t*	*p*
(Intercept)	1.892 **	0.573	3.305	0.001
Organisational communication	0.531 ***	0.104	5.116	<0.001
Age (group[a])	0.138 *	0.065	2.114	0.038
Female (ref.: male)	0.244	0.138	1.766	0.081
Years in service (group[b])	-0.004	0.048	-0.082	0.935
Employee (ref.: leader)	-0.417	0.289	-1.444	0.153
Foreign office (ref.: home office)	0.069	0.171	0.400	0.690
Observations (df)	87 (80)			

R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.336 / 0.286			

*: p<0.05. **: p<0.01. ***: p<0.001. [a]: Age was a continuous variable divided in six groups, 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. [b]: Time in service was a continuous variable divided in six groups: 0-1 year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, 4-5 years, and 5+ years.

The second regression analysis, presented in Table 5, revealed a significant positive relationship between organisational communication and organisational identification (b = .444, t = 3.089, p = .003).

Table 5. Linear regression of organisational communication with control variables predicting organisational identification

	Organisational identification (range: 1-7)			
Predictor	*Estimate* b	*Standard error*	*Statistic* *t*	*p*
(Intercept)	3.355 ***	0.793	4.232	<0.001
Organisational communication (range: 1-5)	0.444 **	0.144	3.089	0.003
Age (group[a])	0.158	0.090	1.757	0.083
Female (ref.: male)	0.478 *	0.191	2.501	0.014
Years in service (group[b])	0.108	0.066	1.632	0.107
Employee (ref.: leader)	-0.333	0.400	-0.832	0.408
Foreign office (ref.: home office)	0.189	0.237	0.799	0.427
Observations (df)	87 (80)			
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.244 / 0.187			

*: p<0.05. **: p<0.01. ***: p<0.001. [a]: Age was a continuous variable divided in six groups, 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. [b]: Time in service was a continuous variable divided in six groups: 0-1 year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, 4-5 years, and 5+ years.

The third regression, presented in Table 7, showed that both organisational communication (b = .403, t = 3.978, p = <.001) and organisational identification (b = .288, t = 3.869, p = <.001) were significant predictors of job satisfaction.

Table 7. Linear regression of organisational communication and organisational identification with control variables predicting job satisfaction

	Job satisfaction (range: 1-5)			
Predictor	*Estimate* b	*Standard error*	*Statistic* *t*	*p*
(Intercept)	0.925	0.584	1.583	0.117
Organisational communication (range: 1-5)	0.403 ***	0.101	3.978	<0.001

Organisational identification (range: 1-7)	0.288 ***	0.075	3.869	<0.001
Age (group[a])	0.092	0.061	1.502	0.137
Female (ref.: male)	0.106	0.132	0.801	0.425
Years in service (group[b])	-0.035	0.045	-0.782	0.436
Employee (ref.: leader)	-0.321	0.268	-1.199	0.234
Foreign office (ref.: home office)	0.014	0.159	0.088	0.930
Observations (df)	87 (79)			
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.442 / 0.392			

**: p<0.05. **: p<0.01. ***: p<0.001. a: Age was a continuous variable divided in six groups, 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. b: Time in service was a continuous variable divided in six groups: 0-1 year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, 4-5 years, and 5+ years.*

Since organisational communication has a significant effect on job satisfaction, organisational communication has a significant effect on organisational identification, and organisational communication has a weaker effect on job satisfaction when organisational identification is added to the regression equation (b = 0.531 versus 0.403), all basic requirements for the theorized mediation are met (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The Preacher-Hayes bootstrapping method, performed with the PROCESS macro with 5000 bootstrap samples, estimated the indirect effect (organisational communication -> organisational identification -> job satisfaction) to be in the 95% confidence interval range of 0.013 to 0.299; since this range does not include zero, it means that the theorized mediation was found to be significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

To conclude, the quantitative analysis of the study revealed several important findings. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis revealed positive associations between job satisfaction and both organisational identification and organisational communication. Additionally, a positive correlation was found between organisational identification and organisational communication. Age and years in service were also found to have positive correlations with job satisfaction and organisational identification. The analysis further explored the mediating role of organisational identification between organisational communication and job satisfaction. Regression analyses confirmed a significant positive relationship between organisational communication and job satisfaction, as well as between organisational communication and organisational identification. The inclusion of organisational identification weakened the relationship between organisational communication and job satisfaction, supporting the theorized mediation (see Figure 6). Overall, the quantitative analysis provides valuable insights into the relationships among these variables and contributes to a better understanding of employee perceptions in the context of an international SME.

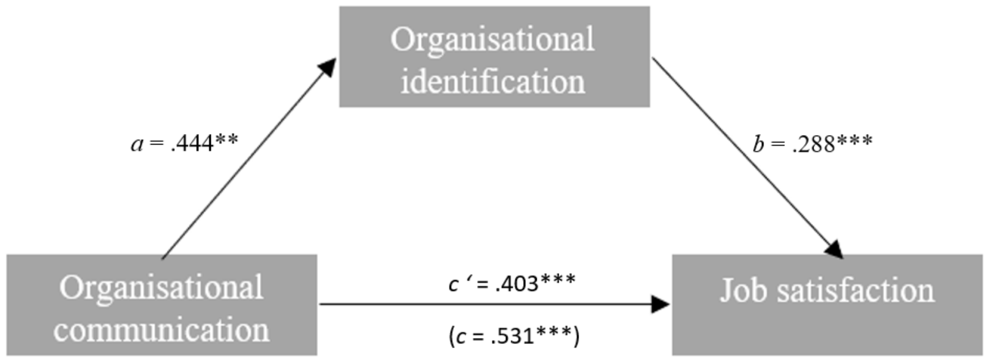

Figure 6: The mediating effect of organisational identification in the relationship between organisational communication and job satisfaction. Notes: *: p<0.05. **: p<0.01. ***: p<0.001; All presented effects are unstandardized; a is the effect of organisational communication on organisational identification; b is the effect of organisational identification on job satisfaction; c' is the direct effect on organisational communication on job satisfaction; c is the total effect of organisational communication on job satisfaction.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this master's thesis was to explore how communication within a company affects the way employees and leaders identify with that company, particularly in the context of international small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The qualitative and quantitative parts of the study shed light on how home and foreign employees and leaders perceive organisational communication and its impact on organisational identification in an international SME. The qualitative analysis identified positive and negative drivers for both organisational identification and communication, including shared culture and values, good connections with colleagues, and effective communication from management. Negative drivers included frustrations from international offices and inefficient communication processes. The study also explored the difference in impact between home and foreign offices, highlighting geographic and cultural distance as well as hierarchical communication difficulties. International offices expressed feelings of isolation and disconnection. The quantitative analysis revealed positive associations between job satisfaction and both organisational identification and communication. Organisational identification was found to mediate the effect between communication and job satisfaction. These findings enhance our understanding of employee perceptions and emphasize the significance of effective communication practices for positive outcomes in international SMEs.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the existing literature by examining the difference in perception of organisational communication and identification between home and foreign employees and leaders in an international SME.

First, organisational identification is a powerful concept that has been linked to various positive work-related behaviours and outcomes, including job satisfaction, performance, cooperation, and intention to stay (Van Dick, 2001; Riketta, 2005; Liu, Loy, & Lam, 2011). Previous studies have also emphasized the significant role of organisational communication in influencing employees' identification with the organisation (Bartels, 2006; Smidts et al., 2001). To date, however, no studies examined these relationships between organisational communication, organisational identification, and positive work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, in the context of an international SME. The current study was the first to do so, and the results confirm that these previously found relationships also apply to the context international SMEs. The results of the quantitative namely show that organisational identification played a significant mediating role in the relationship between organisational communication and job satisfaction. Therefore, the following can now be proposed:

Proposition 1: In the context of an international SME, organisational communication and organisational identification are related to positive business outcomes like job satisfaction; herein, organisational identification mediates the effect of organisational communication

This proposition can be explained by the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel et al., 1979). According to this theory, social identity is formed through social interactions and communicative behaviours. Individuals express their affiliation with various groups during communication and incorporate the image and reputation of those groups into their self-concept (Guan and So, 2016). This process of social interactions and evaluations shapes an individual's defined identity, which in turn influences their behaviour. Applying the theory to current study, good organisational communication is crucial for organisational identification, and the shaped identity will subsequently have large influences on the individual, such as their level of job satisfaction.

Second, the current study was the first to investigate what the drivers of organisational identification are in the context of an international SME (a qualitative investigation, besides the quantitative investigation into organisational communication as a driver of organisational identification). The results of the qualitative study show that positive drivers include a shared culture, a good connection with colleagues, and identification with the management. On the other hand, the negative drivers include frustrations from the international offices and ineffective processes. Thus, the following can be proposed:

Proposition 2a: Shared culture, a good connection with colleagues, and identification with the management has a positive impact on the overall organisational identification in international SMEs

Proposition 2b: Frustrations from international offices and ineffective processes have a negative impact on the overall organisational identification in international SMEs

Third, the current study also was the first to investigate what the drivers of organisational communication are in the context of an international SME. The results of the qualitative study show that positive drivers include efficient use of communication channels and effective communication from the management on enhancing collaborating and understanding within the organisation. On the other hand, the negative drivers include inefficient use of communication channels, language problems and ineffective internal communication. Thus, it is proposed that:

Proposition 3a: Efficient communication channels and effective communication from the management have a positive impact on the overall organisational communication in international SMEs

Proposition 3b: Inefficient communication channels, language problems and ineffective communication within the organisation have a negative impact on the overall organisational communication in international SMEs

Fourth, contrary to initial expectations, the conducted study revealed unexpected results, namely that there was no clear difference between managers and employees in how they perceive organisational communication and organisational identification. Neither the quantitative nor the qualitative results indicated differing perceptions between managers and employees. This study's examination of that potential manager-employee difference addresses a gap in the previous literature (see Bartels, 2006). Now that it is known there may not be a manager-employee difference in relation to organisational communication and organisational identification, the following can be proposed:

Proposition 4: Managers and employees do not differ in their perceptions of both organisational communication and organisational identification

Fifth, the difference in impact between home and foreign offices of organisational communication on organisational identification was explored. The results showed clear differences between home and foreign offices, highlighting geographic and cultural distance as well as hierarchical communication difficulties. While previous research of Wilkins et al. (2018) has already focused on the difference in perception between home and foreign employees in international educational institutions, this study was the first to focus on this in the context of international SMEs. The findings of this study do support the argument by Wilkins et al. (2018) that communication with employees in foreign offices may be worse. However, unlike the findings of Wilkins et al. (2018), the current study did not find that organisational identification was worse in foreign employees. In this study, despite the communication challenges that foreign offices experienced, foreign offices still felt a strong sense of organisational identification. This was explained largely due to the good connections they established with the people in the same foreign office; the bond among employees in the foreign offices was reported to be exceptionally strong. Thus, this bond within foreign offices may have compensated for the negative influence of the worse organisational communication that foreign offices experience --- consequently, foreign office workers do not experience worse organisational identification than home office workers. Taking this into account, the following can be proposed:

> *Proposition 5: Foreign office workers experience worse organisational communication than home office workers, but since foreign office workers experience a compensating, strong within-office bond they do not experience a lower level of organisational identification than home office workers*

This proposition, like the first proposition, can be explained by the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel et al., 1979). Foreign office workers align themselves with the values, norms, and social dynamics of the group they perceive themselves to belong to, in this case, their foreign office. In that way, they develop a strong sense of identification with their local team and consequently the organisation, despite communication challenges with the home office.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for international SMEs aiming to enhance organisational identification among home and foreign employees and leaders. First, it confirms that striving for organisational identification among employees is important, as it directly relates to job satisfaction. The identified positive and negative drivers of organisational identification and organisational communication can guide management and HR in implementing strategies to improve employee engagement and satisfaction. The following propositions can be suggested:

Firstly, to promote organisational identification, it is crucial to foster a shared culture and values that create a cohesive and familiar atmosphere. Emphasizing core values and cultivating inclusivity allows everyone to feel valued and involved in decision-making. This can be achieved, by, for instance, having a clear onboarding with the culture explained (Hill, 2020), creating team-building events (Fapohunda, 2013) and organising effective work groups (Xenikou & Pendleton, 2017). Encouraging strong connections within departments and offices through positive team dynamics, collaboration, and communication enhances relationships and fosters a sense of camaraderie. Additionally, enhancing identification with management is essential by prioritizing transparent communication, valuing employee input, and providing opportunities for managers to interact, share goals, and build strong relationships (Castaneda & Ramirez, 2021). These strategies nurture a sense of belonging, leading to improved organisational identification.

To address various challenges within an organisation, several key strategies can be implemented. First, it is important to overcome frustrations experienced by employees in international offices. Proactive measures should be taken to address their feelings of neglect and disconnection (Leask, 2013). This can be achieved by ensuring their needs are given equal importance, providing regular communication and support, and organising events that facilitate interaction and collaboration between different offices. Efficient communication processes are crucial for success (Muscalu et al., 2013). Streamlining communication channels, reducing information overload, and establishing clear guidelines can improve overall efficiency. It is essential to prioritize important messages to prevent crucial information from being overlooked. Investing in effective communication tools and systems can further enhance communication and decision-making processes. Lastly, language barriers should also be addressed. Recognizing the challenges faced by non-native employees and providing support, such as language training and multilingual information, promotes inclusivity and understanding. A culture that respects and accommodates language differences fosters a more cohesive and collaborative environment (Lo Bianco, 2010).

By implementing these practical implications, international SMEs can create a positive communication environment that fosters organisational identification among employees and leaders. This, in turn, can enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and overall business success in international workplaces.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

While conducting this study on the differences in perception of organisational communication and its impact on organisational identification between home and foreign employees and leaders in an international SME, certain limitations and opportunities for future research have emerged.

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge the limited scope and sample size of this study. The research was carried out within a single international SME, involving 19 interviews and a sample of 87 participants in the quantitative survey. Although for the interviews saturation was likely reached (following Saunders et al., 2009 and Guest et al., 2006) and both the qualitative and quantitative (i.e., survey) data was of high quality, future studies could run a similar study with bigger samples to gather more nuances of the relationships explored in this current study. Secondly, the sample size of leaders in this study was relatively small, which may have affected the analysis of the relationship between leadership roles and organisational identification since there is no difference shown between managers and employees. Future research should aim to include a larger sample size of leaders to obtain more robust insights into this relationship.

Thirdly, due to time constraints, it was not possible to include other international SMEs. Although this study tried to account for many and diverse international branches, to enhance the generalizability of the findings, future research could replicate the study in different international SMEs. The geographical focus of the study was on an international SME based in the Netherlands with foreign offices in Belgium, Germany, and France. To gain a deeper understanding of organisational communication and identification in diverse contexts, future research could explore similar organisations in different countries, considering cultural, linguistic, and contextual variations.

Lastly, this study employed a cross-sectional design for both its qualitative and quantitative parts, collecting data at a specific point in time. This may have limitations in capturing accurate memories and perceptions, as they might fade or become less clear over time. To address this, future studies could adopt a longitudinal approach, observing employees and leaders in an international SME over an extended period, thereby capturing potential changes in organisational identification and communication dynamics.

By acknowledging and addressing these limitations, researchers can contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of organisational communication and organisational identification, within the context of international SMEs. This will allow for a more comprehensive understanding and provide a foundation for future studies in this area.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this master thesis examined the research question: "*How do home and foreign employees and leaders perceive organisational communication and its impact on organisational identification in an international SME*?" The qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted in this study provided valuable insights into these dynamics.

Positive drivers of organisational identification and communication include shared culture, good connections with colleagues, efficient communication channels, and effective communication from management. Negative drivers include frustrations from international offices, ineffective processes, inefficient communication channels, and language problems. The study highlights the importance of organisational identification as a mediating factor between organisational communication and job satisfaction, especially in international SMEs. It suggests strategies such as fostering a shared culture, addressing frustrations in international offices, and overcoming language barriers to enhance organisational identification and communication. Future research should focus on larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal studies, and exploring the dynamics between leadership roles and organisational identification to develop effective communication strategies for positive outcomes in international SMEs.

7. References

Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews. Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, 492–505.

Ahmad, S., Wasim, S., Irfan, S., Gogoi, S., Srivastava, A., & Farheen, Z. (2019). Qualitative v/s. quantitative research-A summarized review. *Journal of Evidence Based Medicine and Healthcare*, *6*(43), 2828-2832.

Aitken, K., & von Treuer, K. (2020). Leadership behaviours that foster organisational identification during change. *Journal of Organisational Change Management*.

Ananthram, S., Pearson, C., & Chatterjee, S. (2010). Do organisational reform measures impact on global mindset intensity of managers? Empirical evidence from Indian and Chinese service industry managers. Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies, 3(2), 146-168.

Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organisation. Academy of management review, 14(1), 20-39.

Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2008). Identification in organisations: An examination of four fundamental questions. *Journal of management*, *34*(3), 325-374.

Ates, A., & Bititci, U. (2011). Change process: a key enabler for building resilient SMEs. *International Journal of Production Research*, *49*(18), 5601-5618.

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. Journal of managerial psychology, 22(3), 309-328.

Barakat, S. R., Isabella, G., Boaventura, J. M. G., & Mazzon, J. A. (2016). The influence of corporate social responsibility on employee satisfaction. Management decision.

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. Journal of personality and social psychology, 51(6), 1173.

Bartels, J. (2006). Organisational identification and communication: employees' evaluations of internal communication and its effect on identification at different organisational levels. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Twente, The Netherlands.

Bartels, J., Douwes, R., De Jong, M., & Pruyn, A. (2006). Organisational identification during a merger: Determinants of employees' expected identification with the new organisation. British Journal of Management, 17(S1), S49-S67.

Bartels, J., Pruyn, A., De Jong, M., & Joustra, I. (2007). Multiple organisational identification levels and the impact of perceived external prestige and communication climate. Journal of Organisational Behavior, 28(2), 173-190.

Bell, J., McNaughton, R., & Young, S. (2001). 'Born-again global'firms: An extension to the 'born global'phenomenon. Journal of international management, 7(3), 173-189.

Bergami, M., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2000). Self-categorization, affective commitment and group self-esteem as distinct aspects of social identity in the organisation. British journal of social psychology, 39(4), 555-577.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Weate, P. (2016). Using thematic analysis in sport and exercise research. In *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 213-227). Routledge.

Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. Personality and social psychology bulletin, 17(5), 475-482.

Buckley, P. J., Pass, C. L., & Prescott, K. (1992). The internationalization of service firms: A comparison with the manufacturing sector. *Scandinavian international business review*, *1*(1), 39-56.

Castaneda, D. I., & Ramírez, C. A. (2021). Cultural values and knowledge sharing in the context of sustainable organisations. Sustainability, 13(14), 7819.

Cheng, H. L., & Yu, C. M. J. (2008). Institutional pressures and initiation of internationalization: Evidence from Taiwanese small-and medium-sized enterprises. *International Business Review*, *17*(3), 331-348.

Clinebell, S., & Shadwick, G. (2005). The importance of organizational context on employees' attitudes: an examination of worlking in main offices versus branch offices. Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 11(2), 89-100.

Corley, K. G. (2004). Defined by our strategy or our culture? Hierarchical differences in perceptions of organisational identity and change. *Human relations*, *57*(9), 1145-1177.

Dance, F. E., & Larson, C. (1985). The functions of human communication. Information and behavior, 1(1), 62-75.

Dennis, H. S. (1974). A theoretical and empirical study of managerial communication climate in complex organisations. Purdue University.

Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organisational images and member identification. Administrative science quarterly, 239-263.

Edwards, M. R. (2009). HR, perceived organisational support and organisational identification: an analysis after organisational formation. *Human Resource Management Journal*, *19*(1), 91-115.

Fapohunda, T. M. (2013). Towards effective team building in the workplace. International journal of education and research, 1(4), 1-12.

Fay, M. J., & Kline, S. L. (2012). The influence of informal communication on organizational identification and commitment in the context of high-intensity telecommuting. Southern Communication Journal, 77(1), 61-76.

Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving Integration in Mixed Methods Designs-Principles and Practices. Health Services Research, 48(6pt2), 2134–2156. doi:10.1111/1475-6773.12117

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups. British dental journal. 204. 291-5. 10.1038/bdj.2008.192.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organisational research methods*, *16*(1), 15-31.

Giri, V. N., & Pavan Kumar, B. (2010). Assessing the impact of organisational communication on job satisfaction and job performance. Psychological Studies, 55, 137-143.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. Field methods, 18(1), 59-82.

Gupta, A. K., & Govindarajan, V. (2002). Cultivating a global mindset. Academy of Management Perspectives, 16(1), 116-126.

Hadi, S. (2020). New perspective on the resilience of SMEs proactive, adaptive, reactive from business turbulence: A systematic review. *J. Xi'an Univ. Arch. Technol*, *12*, 1265-1275.

Hill, D. (2020). Onboarding dos and don'ts for distributed teams. Training & Development, 47(3), 30-33.

Hitt, M. A., Bierman, L., Uhlenbruck, K., & Shimizu, K. (2006). The importance of resources in the internationalization of professional service firms: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Academy of management journal*, *49*(6), 1137-1157.

Hox, J. J., & Boeije, H. R. (2005). Data collection, primary versus secondary. In K. Kempf-Leonard (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement* (Vol. 1, pp. 593-599). Elsevier.

Javidan, M., Steers, R. M., & Hitt, M. A. (2007). Putting it all together: so what is a global mindset and why is it important?. In The Global Mindset. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Karanika-Murray, M., Duncan, N., Pontes, H. M., & Griffiths, M. D. (2015). Organisational identification, work engagement, and job satisfaction. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 30(8), 1019-1033.

Kirby, D. A., & Kaiser, S. (2003). Joint ventures as an internationalisation strategy for SMEs. Small Business Economics, 21, 229-242.

Kreiner, G. E., & Ashforth, B. E. (2004). Evidence toward an expanded model of organisational identification. Journal of Organisational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organisational Psychology and Behavior, 25(1), 1-27.

Landis, E. A., Vick, C. L., & Novo, B. N. (2015). Employee Attitudes and Job Satisfaction. Journal of Leadership, Accountability & Ethics, 12(5).

Lappe, C., & Dörrenbächer, C. (2017). Organisational identity, global mindset and the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises. Organisational identity and firm growth: Properties of growth, contextual identities and micro-level processes, 183-207.

Lazarević-Moravčević, M., Slavica, S., & Grozdana, B. (2014). Specifics of management in small and medium-size enterprises in Serbia. *Economic analysis*, *47*(3-4), 104-117.

Leask, B. (2013). Internationalizing the curriculum in the disciplines—Imagining new possibilities. Journal of Studies in International Education, 17(2), 103-118.

Lee, E. S., Park, T. Y., & Koo, B. (2015). Identifying organisational identification as a basis for attitudes and behaviors: A meta-analytic review. Psychological bulletin, 141(5), 1049.

Lee, H., Cashin, A. G., Lamb, S. E., Hopewell, S., Vansteelandt, S., VanderWeele, T. J., ... & Henschke, N. (2021). A guideline for reporting mediation analyses of randomized trials and observational studies: the AGReMA statement. JAMA, 326(11), 1045-1056.

Leonidou, L. C., Katsikeas, C. S., Palihawadana, D., & Spyropoulou, S. (2007). An analytical review of the factors stimulating smaller firms to export: Implications for policy-makers. International Marketing Review.

Levy, M., & Powell, P. (1998). SME flexibility and the role of information systems. *Small Business Economics*, *11*, 183-196.

Li, L., Li, D., Goerzen, A., & Shi, W. S. (2018). What and how do SMEs gain by going international? A longitudinal investigation of financial and intellectual resource growth. *Journal of World Business, 53*(6), 817-834.

Liu, Y., Loi, R., & Lam, L. W. (2011). Linking organisational identification and employee performance in teams: The moderating role of team-member exchange. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 22*(15), 3187-3201.

Lo Bianco, J. (2010). The importance of language policies and multilingualism for cultural diversity. International Social Science Journal, 61(199), 37-67.

Lu, J. W., & Beamish, P. W. (2006). SME internationalization and performance: Growth vs. profitability. *Journal of international entrepreneurship*, *4*(1), 27-48.

Mael, F. A., & Tetrick, L. E. (1992). Identifying organisational identification. Educational and psychological measurement, 52(4), 813-824.

Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organisational identification. Journal of organisational Behavior, 13(2), 103-123.

Majocchi, A., & Zucchella, A. (2003). Internationalization and performance: Findings from a set of Italian SMEs. International Small Business Journal, 21(3), 249-268.

McCaul, H. S., Hinsz, V. B., & McCaul, K. D. (1995). Assessing organisational commitment: An employee's global attitude toward the organisation. The Journal of applied behavioral science, 31(1), 80-90.

Muscalu, E., Todericiu, R., & Fraticiu, L. (2013). Efficient organisational communication-A key to success. Studies in Business and Economics, 8(2), 74-78.

Onkelinx, J., Manolova, T. S., & Edelman, L. F. (2016). The human factor: Investments in employee human capital, productivity, and SME internationalization. *Journal of International Management*, *22*(4), 351-364.

O'Regan, N., Ghobadian, A., & Sims, M. (2004). The link between leadership, strategy, and performance in manufacturing SMEs. *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, *15*(2), 45-58.

O'Reilly III, C. A., & Roberts, K. H. (1974). Information filtration in organisations: Three experiments. Organisational Behavior and Human Performance, 11(2), 253-265.

Oricchio, G., Crovetto, A., Lugaresi, S., Fontana, S., Oricchio, G., Lugaresi, S., ... & Fontana, S. (2017). SMEs in Europe: An Overview. *SME Funding: The Role of Shadow Banking and Alternative Funding Options*, 7-41.

Pacanowsky, M. E., & O'Donnell-Trujillo, N. (1983). Organisational communication as cultural performance. *Communications Monographs*, *50*(2), 126-147.

Park, H. M. (2009). Comparing group means: t-tests and one-way ANOVA using Stata, SAS, R, and SPSS.

Paul, J., Parthasarathy, S., & Gupta, P. (2017). Exporting challenges of SMEs: A review and future research agenda. *Journal of world business*, *52*(3), 327-342.

Pratt, M. G. (1998). Central questions in organisational identification. Identity in organisations, 24(3), 171-207.

Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2004). SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models. Behavior research methods, instruments, & computers, 36, 717-731.

Proctor, C. R. (2014). Effective organisational communication affects employee attitude, happiness, and job satisfaction (Doctoral dissertation, Southern Utah University. Department of Communication. 2014.).

Rasheed, H. S. (2005). Foreign entry mode and performance: The moderating effects of environment. Journal of Small Business Management, 43(1), 41-54.

Redding, W. C. (1972). Communication within the organisation: An interpretive review of theory and research. Industrial Communication Council.

Riketta, M. (2005). Organisational identification: A meta-analysis. *Journal of vocational behavior*, *66*(2), 358-384.
Robbins, S. P., Judge, T. A., & Campbell, T. T. (2017). Organisational behaviour. pearson.

Rodríguez, A. C., Molina, M. A., Pérez, A. L. G., & Hernández, U. M. (2003). Size, age and activity sector on the growth of the small and medium firm size. Small Business Economics, 21, 289-307.

Ruzzier, M., Hisrich, R. D., & Antoncic, B. (2006). SME internationalization research: past, present, and future. *Journal of small business and enterprise development*.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). Research methods for business students. Pearson education.

Schrodt, P. (2002). The relationship between organisational identification and organisational culture: Employee perceptions of culture and identification in a retail sales organisation. *Communication studies*, *53*(2), 189-202.

Schuler, R. S., Jackson, S. E., & Tarique, I. (2011). Global talent management and global talent challenges: Strategic opportunities for IHRM. *Journal of world business*, *46*(4), 506-516.

Scott, S. G., & Lane, V. R. (2000). A stakeholder approach to organisational identity. Academy of Management review, 25(1), 43-62.
Smidts, A., Pruyn, A. T. H., & Van Riel, C. B. (2001). The impact of employee communication and perceived external prestige on organisational identification. Academy of Management journal, 44(5), 1051-1062.

Smith, H. M. (2006). Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction 3rd edition. Sociological research online, 11(4), 100-101.

Srivastava, S. (2013). Job satisfaction and organisational commitment relationship: Effect of personality variables. Vision, 17(2), 159-167.

Steinhäuser, V. P. S., Paula, F. D. O., & de Macedo-Soares, T. D. L. V. A. (2021). Internationalization of SMEs: a systematic review of 20 years of research. Journal of International Entrepreneurship, 19(2), 164-195.

Stockemer, D. (2019). *Quantitative methods for the social sciences*. Springer International Publishing.

Svetličič, M., Jaklič, A., & Burger, A. (2007). Internationalization of small and medium-size enterprises from selected central European economies. *Eastern European Economics*, *45*(4), 36-65.

Tajfel, H. E. (1978). Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations. Academic Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2004). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In Political psychology (pp. 276-293). Psychology Press.

Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. International journal of medical education, 2, 53.

Tsai, Y. (2011). Relationship between organisational culture, leadership behavior and job satisfaction. BMC health services research, 11(1), 1-9.

Van Dick, R. (2001). Identification in organisational contexts: Linking theory and research from social and organisational psychology. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *3*(4), 265-283.

Van Dick, R., van Knippenberg, D., Kerschreiter, R., Hertel, G., & Wieseke, J. (2008). Interactive effects of work group and organisational identification on job satisfaction and extra-role behavior. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 72(3), 388-399.

Van Gils, A. (2005). Management and governance in Dutch SMEs. *European Management Journal*, *23*(5), 583-589.

Van Knippenberg, D., & Van Schie, E. C. (2000). Foci and correlates of organisational identification. Journal of occupational and organisational psychology, 73(2), 137-147.

Verhoeven, N. (2014). Kwalitatieve methoden van dataverzameling. In Wat is onderzoek? (5th ed.). (p. 147-155). Amsterdam, NL: Boom Lemma uitgevers

Wickramansinghe, N., & Sharma, S. K. (2005). Key factors that hinder SMEs in succeeding in today's knowledge-based economy. *International Journal of Management and Enterprise Development*, *2*(2), 141-158.

Wilkins, S., Butt, M. M., & Annabi, C. A. (2018). The influence of organisational identification on employee attitudes and behaviours in multinational higher education institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *40*(1), 48-66.

Wood, R., & Bandura, A. (1989). Social cognitive theory of organisational management. The Academy of Management Review, 14(3), 361–384.

World Bank. (n.d.). *Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Finance: Improving SME's access to finance and finding innovative solutions to unlock sources of capital*. Retrieved January 2, 2023, from https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/smefinance

Xenikou, A., & Pendleton, D. (2017). Group dynamics and organisational culture: Effective work groups and organisations. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Yener, M., Doğruoğlu, B., & Ergun, S. (2014). Challenges of Internationalization for SMEs and Overcoming these Challenges: A case study from Turkey. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *150*, 2-11.

Zacharakis, A. L. (1997). Entrepreneurial entry into foreign markets: A transaction cost perspective. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *21*(3), 23-40.

Zahra, S. A., Ucbasaran, D., & Newey, L. R. (2009). Social knowledge and SMEs' innovative gains from internationalization. *European Management Review*, *6*(2), 81-93.

8. Appendix

Appendix 1. Interview Questions (NL)

How do home and foreign employees and leaders perceive organisational communication and its impact on organisational identification in an international SME?

General	*Waarom heb je besloten om voor het bedrijf te gaan werken?*	
	Wat vind je van het werken voor het bedrijf?	
	Wat vind je leuk aan je baan?	
Must-have		
Identification	1. *Hoe zou je de band met je collega's in je team omschrijven? En het hele kantoor?*	*Kun je me daar meer over vertellen?* *Hoe heb je die situatie aangepakt?* *Heb je een (ander) voorbeeld?*
	2. *Hoe zou u uw band met uw collega's in andere kantoren beschrijven?*	
	3. *Kunt u een moment beschrijven waarop u zich bijzonder trots voelde om aan het bedrijf verbonden te zijn?*	
	4. *Hoe ervaart u de cultuur en de waarden van het bedrijf en hebt u het gevoel dat deze effectief worden gecommuniceerd?*	
Communication	5. *Enkele vragen over communicatie: hoe belangrijk is een goede communicatie binnen de organisatie voor u?*	*Kun je me daar meer over vertellen?* *Hoe heb je die situatie aangepakt?* *Heb je een (ander) voorbeeld?*
	6. *Hoe ontvangt u informatie over het bedrijf en zijn doelstellingen?*	
	7. *Hoe zou u de gebruikte communicatiekanalen binnen het bedrijf omschrijven? (Mail/Slack/Teams/Confluence)*	
	8. *Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van een moment waarop u vond dat de communicatie binnen de organisatie effectief was?*	
	9. *Kunt u daarentegen een voorbeeld geven van een moment waarop u vond dat de communicatie binnen de organisatie niet effectief was of ontbrak?*	
	10. *Hoe verschillen volgens u de communicatiepraktijken tussen het thuiskantoor en de buitenlandse kantoren?*	
	11. *Hoe denk je dat het bedrijf zijn communicatiepraktijken zou kunnen verbeteren?*	

Appendix 2. Interview Questions (EN)

How do home and foreign employees and leaders perceive organisational communication and its impact on organisational identification in an international SME?

General	*Why did you decide to start working for the company?*	
	How do you feel with working for the company?	
	What do you like about your job?	
Must-have	***"we do not have same way of working"***	
Identification	*12. How would you describe your connection with your colleagues in your Team? And the whole office?*	*Can you tell me more about that?* *How did you approach that situation?* *Do you have an/another example?*
	13. How would you describe your connection with your colleagues in other offices?	
	14. Can you describe a time when you felt particularly proud to be associated with the company?	
	15. How do you perceive the company's culture and values? and do you feel that they are communicated effectively?	
Communication	*16. How important is a good communication within the organisation for you?*	*Can you tell me more about that?* *How did you approach that situation?* *Do you have an/another example?*
	17. How do you receive information about the company and its goals?	
	18. How would you describe the communication channels used within the company? (Mail/Slack/Teams/Confluence)	
	19. Can you provide an example of a time when you felt that communication within the organisation was effective?	
	20. Conversely, can you provide an example of a time when you felt that communication within the organisation was ineffective or lacking?	
	21. How do you think communication practices differ between the home office and foreign offices?	
	22. How do you think the company could improve its communication practices?	

Appendix 3. Survey Questions (EN)

Control variables

1. What is your gender?
- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Other
- ○ I prefer not to say

2. What is your age?
- ○ 18-24 years old.
- ○ 25-34 years old.
- ○ 35-44 years old.
- ○ 45-54 years old.
- ○ 55-64 years old.
- ○ 65 years or older

3. For how long do you work in the company?
- ○ Less than one year
- ○ 1 year
- ○ 2 years
- ○ 3 years
- ○ 4 years
- ○ 5 years or more

4. What is your position in the company?
- ○ I am an agent
- ○ I am an artist
- ○ I am an engineer
- ○ I am an explorer
- ○ I am a guide
- ○ I am a chief or captain
- ○ I am: ______

5. In which office do you work most of your hours?
- ○ Amsterdam
- ○ Brussel
- ○ Deventer
- ○ Montpellier
- ○ Würzburg

Job satisfaction (Thompson, & Phua, 2012).
(5-point Likert scale, strongly disagree to strongly agree)

Thinking specifically about your current job, do you agree with the following?

1. I find real enjoyment in my job
2. I like my job better than the average person
3. Most days I am enthusiastic about my job
4. I feel fairly well satisfied with my job

Organisational identification:

1. When someone criticizes The company, it feels like a personal insult.
2. The successes of The company are my successes.
3. I am proud to tell others that I am part of The company.
4. When I talk about The company, I usually say "we" rather than "they."
5. I feel a strong sense of belonging to the company
6. I share the values and beliefs of the company

The responses are measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

1 - Strongly disagree
2 - Somewhat disagree
3 - Slightly disagree
4 - Neutral
5 - Slightly agree
6 - Somewhat agree
7 - Strongly agree

Communication (climate) (Bartels et al., 2006; 2007)

1. In general, people at The company are honest with each other.
2. I can discuss everything with colleagues in the whole organisation.
3. In general, people at The company are open to each other.
4. When I talk to colleagues at The company, I feel taken seriously.
5. Colleagues from my department and I are consulted first before an important decision is made that affects the work.
6. People at The company are open to opinions of others.
7. If I ask a colleague in the organisation something, he/she would like to help me.
8. Colleagues at The company sincerely listen to me when I speak.
9. Suggestions I make are seriously considered by people at The company.

The responses are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1 - Strongly disagree
2 - Somewhat disagree
3 - Neither agree nor disagree
4 - Somewhat agree
5 - Strongly agree

Appendix 4. Predictors of Organisational Communication, Organisational Identification, and Job Satisfaction

Three linear regression models were specified to predict organisational communication, organisational identification, and job satisfaction with the control variables of the study, as well as an interaction term between role (leader/employee) and office (home/foreign). This allowed for assessing the relation of each predictor variable to each key outcome, as controlled for all other predictor variables.

Predictors of Organisational Communication

Table 9 shows the results of a linear regression model predicting organisational communication, together with the scores per group of organisational communication in a subsample at each level of each categorical predictor.

There were no significant predictors of organisational communication.

The scores per group show that participants in the foreign office scored somewhat lower at organisational communication than participants in the home office (respectively 3.76 versus 3.99), and that leaders scored somewhat higher than employees (respectively 4.11 versus 3.93), though these factors were not significant predictors in the model. Male and female employees scored roughly the same (respectively 3.97 versus 3.9; non-significant predictor in the model). Participants across all ages and years of time in service scored about the same, only participants with age 25-34 scored somewhat lower and participants with 5+ years time in service scored somewhat higher. Home leaders scored highest (4.44), while foreign leaders scored lowest (3.44); employees scored in between, with home employees scoring slightly higher than foreign employees (respectively 3.96 versus 3.8).

Table 9. Linear regression model predicting organisational communication, alongside the average score in a subsample of each level of each predictor

	DV: Organisational communication (range: 1-5)				
Predictor	*Estimate* b	*Standard error*	*Statistic t*	*p*	*Average score (sd)*
(Intercept)	4.293 ***	0.449	9.565	<0.001	-
Office (ref.: home office)					3.99 (0.58)
Foreign office	-1.060	0.561	-1.890	0.062	3.76 (0.82)
Role (ref.: leader)					4.11 (0.56)
Employee	-0.442	0.357	-1.236	0.220	3.93 (0.64)

Age (group[a])	0.068	0.069	0.990	0.325	16-24: 4.13 (0.51) 25-34: 3.78 (0.67) 35-44: 4.07 (0.57) 45-54: 4.17 (0.63) 55-64: 4.16 (0.7) > 65: - (-)
Gender (ref.: male)					3.97 (0.63)
Female	-0.013	0.147	-0.090	0.928	3.9 (0.66)
Years in service (group[b])	-0.018	0.051	-0.346	0.730	0-1: 4 (0.7) 1-2: 3.85 (0.51) 2-3: 3.83 (0.8) 3-4: 4.07 (0.78) 4-5: 3.86 (0.57) 5+: 4.56 (0.24)
Foreign office * employee	0.894	0.585	1.528	0.131	Foreign employee: 3.8 (0.86) Foreign leader: 3.44 (0.31) Home employee: 3.96 (0.59) Home leader: 4.44 (0.2)
Observations (df)	87 (80)				
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.065 / -0.005				

**: p<0.05. **: p<0.01. ***: p<0.001. a: Age was a continuous variable divided in six groups, 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. b: Time in service was a continuous variable divided in six groups: 0-1 year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, 4-5 years, and 5+ years.*

Predictors of Organisational Identification

Table 10 shows the results of a linear regression model predicting organisational identification, together with the scores per group of organisational identification in a subsample at each level of each categorical predictor.

Age was a significant predictor of organisational identification; higher age was associated with higher organisational identification (β = 0.193, *t*(80) = 2.036, p = .045). Gender was also a significant predictor of organisational identification (β = 0.467, *t*(80) = 2.322, p = .023); female gender was associated with higher organisational identification.

The scores per group furthermore show that leaders had higher organisational identification than employees (respectively 6.31 versus 5.64), though role was a non-significant predictor in the model. Participants at the home and foreign offices scoured roughly the same at organisational identification (respectively 5.67 versus 5.75; non-significant predictor in the model). Participants with more time in service scored increasingly higher, with the exception of the 3-4- and 4-5-years categories, while those categories did score higher than the 0-1 and 1-2 years categories. Foreign employees and foreign leaders scored roughly the same (respectively 5.74 versus 5.83), while the difference between home employees and home leaders was bigger (respectively 5.62 versus 6.54); home leaders thus also scored higher than foreign leaders (respectively 6.54 versus 5.83), while home employees and foreign employees scored somewhat the same (respectively 5.62 versus 5.74).

Table 10. Linear regression model predicting organisational identification, alongside the average score in a subsample of each level of each predictor

	DV: Organisational identification				
Predictor	*Estimate* b	*Standard error*	*Statistic* *t*	*p*	*Average score (sd)*
(Intercept)	5.379 ***	0.615	8.751	<0.001	-
Office (ref.: home office)					5.67 (0.95)
Foreign office	-0.658	0.768	-0.857	0.394	5.75 (0.85)
Role (ref.: leader)					6.31 (0.44)
Employee	-0.659	0.489	-1.347	0.182	5.64 (0.94)
Age (group[a])	0.193 *	0.095	2.036	0.045	16-24: 5.63 (0.81) 25-34: 5.43 (1.05) 35-44: 6.14 (0.63) 45-54: 5.72 (0.62) 55-64: 6.29 (0.45) > 65: - (-)
Gender (ref.: male)					5.56 (0.96)
Female	0.467 *	0.201	2.322	0.023	5.86 (0.85)
Years in service (group[b])	0.098	0.069	1.408	0.163	0-1: 5.4 (0.9) 1-2: 5.67 (0.99) 2-3: 6 (0.59) 3-4: 5.87 (1.19) 4-5: 5.82 (1.04) 5+: 6.21 (0.37)
Foreign office * employee	0.812	0.802	1.013	0.314	Foreign employee: 5.74 (0.89) Foreign leader: 5.83 (0.47) Home employee: 5.62 (0.95) Home leader: 6.54 (0.16)
Observations (df)	87 (80)				

R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.164 / 0.102

*: $p<0.05$. **: $p<0.01$. ***: $p<0.001$. [a]: Age was a continuous variable divided in six groups, 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. [b]: Time in service was a continuous variable divided in six groups: 0-1 year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, 4-5 years, and 5+ years.

Predictors of Job Satisfaction

Table 11 shows the results of a linear regression model predicting job satisfaction, together with the scores per group of job satisfaction in a subsample at each level of each categorical predictor.

Age was a significant predictor of job satisfaction; higher age was associated with higher job satisfaction (β = 0.169, $t(80)$ = 2.257, p = .027).

The scores per group furthermore show that leaders had higher job satisfaction than employees (respectively 4.58 versus 3.99), though role was a non-significant predictor in the model. Participants at the home and foreign offices scored roughly the same at job satisfaction (respectively 4.03 versus 4.04; non-significant predictor in the model), and female participants scored slightly higher than male participants (respectively 4.1 versus 3.99; non-significant predictor in the model). Participants with higher age scored increasingly higher at job satisfaction, except for the 25-34 years category; participants with more time in service score increasingly higher, except for the 4-5 years category. Home and foreign employees scored the same (3.97), while home leaders scored slightly lower than foreign leaders (respectively 4.56 versus 4.63).

Table 11. Linear regression model predicting job satisfaction, alongside the average score in a subsample of each level of each predictor

	DV: Job satisfaction (range: 1-5)				
Predictor	*Estimate* B	*Standard error*	*Statistic t*	*p*	*Average score (sd)*
(Intercept)	4.024 ***	0.487	8.271	<0.001	-
Office (ref.: home office)					4.03 (0.76)
Foreign office	-0.038	0.608	-0.062	0.950	4.04 (0.51)
Role (ref.: leader)					4.58 (0.34)
Employee	-0.494	0.387	-1.276	0.206	3.99 (0.72)
Age (group[a])	0.169 *	0.075	2.257	0.027	16-24: 3.98 (0.74) 25-34: 3.86 (0.77) 35-44: 4.21 (0.51) 45-54: 4.38 (0.61) 55-64: 4.54 (0.44) > 65: - (-)

Gender (ref.: male)					3.99 (0.72)
Female	0.243	0.159	1.525	0.131	4.1 (0.7)
Years in service (group[b])	-0.011	0.055	-0.194	0.847	0-1: 3.99 (0.7) 1-2: 4 (0.65) 2-3: 4.02 (0.82) 3-4: 4.35 (0.45) 4-5: 3.9 (0.89) 5+: 4.63 (0.43)
Foreign office * employee	-0.028	0.635	-0.044	0.965	Foreign employee: 3.97 (0.49) Foreign leader: 4.63 (0.18) Home employee: 4 (0.77) Home leader: 4.56 (0.43)
Observations (df)		87 (80)			
R^2 / R^2 adjusted		0.119 / 0.053			

**: p<0.05. **: p<0.01. ***: p<0.001. a: Age was a continuous variable divided in six groups, 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. b: Time in service was a continuous variable divided in six groups: 0-1 year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, 4-5 years, and 5+ years.*