Communication ethics in business: Examining the role of ethical communication in building trust and sustainability

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Abstract

Stakeholder confidence in a business is largely determined by how transparent the firm's financial and non-financial information is. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of ethical communication in building trust and sustainability. A cross-sectional survey research design and a quantitative research methodology were used in the study. Data were collected from 360 different owners of businesses in Greece using a questionnaire. The study's findings demonstrate the beneficial impact ethical business communication may have on a company's capacity to survive unpredictable times. Additionally, the findings demonstrate that company viability in uncertain times is positively impacted by external and horizontal corporate communication. Research findings point to the need for a greater understanding of how to evaluate the openness of business information. Opportunities for business information transparency valuation have been revealed. These might be utilized to develop business information transparency evaluation methodologies or to have a different firm evaluate its own business information disclosure. People must successfully communicate both internally and externally using the proper forms of communication in order to plan and, as a result, develop sustainability as well as sustainable plans. Hence, when using ethical communication to improve company continuity during uncertain times, managers in respectable organizations should communicate with the recipient in a clear, direct, and accurate way. The findings have significant implications for the area of business management, most especially with regard to the value of business communication in ensuring the viability of companies in uncertain or crisis-ridden times.

Keywords: Accountability, Business trust, Empathy in business communication, Ethical communication, Sustainability, Transparency.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Business communication ethics is among the most essential topics in the corporate sector. Business communication ethics describes appropriate and formal company communication practices [1]. Losing the trust of clients, partners in business, and employees are a few examples of these detrimental effects, as are potential financial losses from litigation. It is crucial that businesses understand and appropriately implement corporate communication ethics for this reason [2]. According to Fuller et al. [3], it is critical to educate managers on the significance and exigency of putting in place an ethical management system. In terms of systemic vision and strategy, ethical culture, leadership, and initiatives, the health care industry needs greater focus. Dubnick [4] states that two of the most difficult parts of creating a robust compliance program are motivating staff members to act morally and evaluating moral behavior accurately. Hatta et al. [5] highlighted the importance of communication techniques in managing the factual realm of economics as well as the strategic one focused on the social plan's performance. An organization's contact with the outside world earns it credibility, which is one of its constituent values. It has to be supported by the corporate culture's operational values in order to be accomplished.

Torelli [6] noted that communication ethics coexist within the bounds of communication. Certain acts have been found that may perform empathetic communication in a range of professional situations outside of professional communication. According to Afezah and Abdul [7], exhibiting comprehension and care, managing feelings, and highlighting or examining similarities are some of the ways that one could demonstrate empathy. The use of particular gestures and other nonverbal cues, as well as mimicry are example of specific communicative behaviors that are related to this [1]. The relationship between communicative acts and perceived empathy is not always clear-cut; it must be emphasized [3, 8]. The dose and manner in which certain expressive actions are used may determine their consequences. For example, disclosing emotions or experiences might be seen as sympathetic, but when done excessively or incorrectly, it could also have the opposite impact [9, 10]. Making decisions and thinking responsibly need ethical communication. It involves using the knowledge that may be shared with others to build communities, settings, and cultures [11, 12]. One approach for businesses to demonstrate that they appreciate their consumers' requirements is via the use of ethical advertising as a channel of communication. Individuals want to change the world, and buying goods from ethical businesses is an easy way to demonstrate their concern [13]. The ongoing discussion of corporate ethics always brings up difficult questions and is divisive. Some studies emphasize the need of social cohesiveness, but they also discourage independent and creative endeavors that are essential to a person's or organization's commercial activity [14-16]. Because of the needs of business, innovative ideas may not align with the stringent regulations required to function in a given societal context [2]. Therefore, ethics and its professional domains must continue to exist outside of legal jurisdiction and regulatory frameworks [6]. There is limited research on how the element of ethics influences the effectiveness of the overall process of business communication in different industries. Therefore, this study examined the role of ethical communication in building trust and sustainability

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study focused on the aspect of communication ethics in business, with major emphasis on evaluating the role of ethical communication in building trust and sustainability

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the aspect of empathy in business communication and its influence on building trust and sustainability in business
2. To explore the effect of ethical accountability in communication towards enhanced trust and sustainability in business
3. To assess the ethical aspect of transparency and its influence in building trust and sustainability in business
4. To examine the effect of confidentiality in business communication towards enhanced trust and sustainability in business

1.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Table 1.
Alignment of Research Questions with Corresponding Hypotheses.

	Research questions	Hypotheses
1	What is the influence of empathy in business communication in building trust and sustainability in business?	Hypothesis 1: Empathy in business communication has a significant and positive influence in building trust and sustainability in business
2	What is the effect of ethical accountability in communication towards enhanced trust and sustainability in business?	Hypothesis 2: Ethical accountability in communication has a positive and significant effect towards enhanced trust and sustainability in business
3	What is the influence of ethical aspect of transparency in building trust and sustainability in business?	Hypothesis 3: The ethical aspect of Transparency in business communication has a positive and significant influence in building trust and sustainability in business
4	To examine the effect of confidentiality in business communication, building trust and sustainability in business	Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between confidentiality in business communication and enhanced trust and sustainability in business

1.5. Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to the field of business ethics by examining how key ethical communication principles, empathy, accountability, transparency, and confidentiality affect trust and sustainability in organizations. Unlike previous research that focuses on individual factors, this study offers an integrated approach supported by empirical data from Greek businesses. The findings confirm that ethical communication positively influences organizational trust, with empathy emerging as the most significant factor. By applying a multiple regression model, the study offers measurable insights that business leaders can apply to strengthen ethical practices and stakeholder confidence.

Practically, the study provides a useful framework for assessing ethical communication strategies, especially during times of uncertainty. It also supports the development of training and policies that promote openness, responsibility, and long-term organizational credibility.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Empathy in Business Communication

Several studies indicate that expressions of empathy may be identified by detecting verbal and nonverbal acts exhibiting rapport and understanding, despite the fact that it appears implausible to capture all components of expressed empathy in intersubjectively visible behaviors [17]. On a scale from rejecting (low empathy) to sharing thoughts or experiences (high empathy), caregivers' reactions to such possibilities may be graded [18-20]. In the specialized and structured genre of doctor-patient visits, where empathetic possibilities may be relatively straightforward to spot, this technique appears particularly helpful [2, 14, 21]. By making learning by listening, to the vast range of ideas, cultural norms, social performances, and other human differences, a fundamental organizational goal, empathic listening might help us better comprehend the difficulties that organizations have faced throughout history [6].

Organizations and organizational communication research stand to benefit greatly from a more thorough commitment to this dialogue, given the compelling reasons for the value of both empathy and listening in all circumstances [22]. Both listening and empathy are abilities and characteristics that firms may foster in their individual employees as well as within their company cultures. Past studies suggest that executives who actively seek out and use empathetic listening have more successful organizations overall and more favorable corporate cultures [23]. Developing concrete measures to promote desirable corporate cultural norms might result from a better knowledge of how individual communication both reflects and promotes empathetic listening within an organization [24]. Empathic listening may be used differently by various persons and cultures, according to research on intercultural listening abilities [12]. Implementing these results might result in improved multi-organizational cooperation and intercultural organizational connections [10].

Certain activities have been recognized as potentially enacting empathetic communication in a range of professional situations outside of professional communication [21, 25]. According to McGrath and Whitty [24], demonstrating empathy might include addressing feelings, stressing similarities, and demonstrating comprehension and care. According to various research, this has to do with particular communication practices such as verbal expressions of understanding, questioning strategies to uncover underlying emotions, and the use of particular gestures [1, 26, 27]. People's self-reports of empathy might have a number of problems, despite their widespread use. Individuals who believe that empathetic behavior is desirable may be prone to inflating their own ratings [9]. Furthermore, it might be challenging for individuals to evaluate their own empathy, since this requires both critical introspection and an understanding of the nuances involved in empathy [16, 28, 29]. According to McGrath and Whitty [24], it is possible that an inverse or U-shaped curve develops, with those who are very concerned about empathy underestimating it and those who are not very concerned about empathy overestimating it.

A key tool for comprehending other people's subjective experiences is empathy. Emotions are intuitions in and of themselves, vital for directing judgment and enhancing ethical situational analysis [12]. Therefore, empathy a good emotion is crucial for the formation of moral judgments that are grounded and ethical decision-making [30, 31]. The feelings gleaned from others via empathic processes might act as markers for the existence of a morally dubious situation or ethical conundrum [17]. Put differently, empathy serves as a moral indicator that denotes the existence of a morally significant individual level

- Differentiating between affective and cognitive empathy is important at the organizational level.
- Empathy is a prerequisite for moral engagement.
- It serves as a barrier against impersonal, cold, and dehumanizing business practices.
- It is a skill of ethical managers.
- Empathy is an essential component of efficient organizations.

The significance of empathy for business ethics incidents is that it "inspires the person to consider the moral standards that could have jurisdiction over the current circumstance" [32].

2.2. Ethical Accountability in Communication

According to Fuller et al. [33], accountability has many meanings depending on the context in which it is employed. Accepting responsibility for actions you have taken or are obligated to take is the simplest way to define accountability [25]. Accountability is defined as answerability, blameworthiness, culpability, and the expectation that one will provide an explanation for one's acts from an ethical standpoint [4]. As a social and political process, accountability is anticipated to be interpreted differently in various situations. Engelbrecht et al. [9] emphasized the significance of language in forming the concept of responsibility. For instance, a politician sees responsibility as a political problem, whereas an auditor sees it as a financial concern. One may argue that everyone should appreciate accountability, Rheeder [10]. Vrabcová et al. [29] provide

a rationale for the connection between finance and accountability, citing the significance of finance for an organization and a specific domain, as well as the idea that how finances are managed will impact how resources and duties are managed.

According to Bovens [34], good governance and accountability are synonymous. He notes that the phrase has evolved into a catch-all for any method of making influential organizations more receptive to their constituents. Anthonia [21] noted that accountability involves the duty to provide an account or reckoning of those actions for which one is held responsible. According to Arunachalam and McLachlan [35], there has been no discussion of the problems with effective utilization of information and associated power differentials. Arunachalam and McLachlan [35] propose that in order to establish accountability, stakeholders, or accountants, should have the authority to hold the accountor accountable. Hatta et al. [5] contend that empowerment might improve the accountability of stakeholders.

Accountability encourages communication that is transparent, which is necessary to establish trust [12]. People and organizations are more likely to be trusted when they take responsibility for their words and deeds [1, 12]. Building strong connections with stakeholders and facilitating efficient communication are both facilitated by this trust. Individuals must speak with honesty and integrity in order to be held accountable. It entails communicating information accurately and truthfully while avoiding dishonest or deceitful tactics [7]. In order to communicate ethically, people must own up to the veracity and correctness of their communications, making sure that they are fact-based and unaffected by their own prejudices or ulterior motives [2, 36-38]. Making morally sound judgments is a necessary component of accountability in ethical communication. It necessitates that people prioritize ethical issues above self-interest or corporate goals and think about how their communication may affect different stakeholders [14]. People may make sure that their communication is consistent with moral principles and ethical standards by taking responsibility for their actions. Accepting the results of one's communication and, where required, taking appropriate corrective action are also aspects of accountability [17]. Being responsible entails owning up to mistakes made in communication and acting ethically by offering an apology when needed and correcting the issue. This preserves credibility and reputation and shows a dedication to moral communication [32, 39, 40].

2.3. Ethical Aspect of Transparency in Business Communication

Companies and stakeholders still have a lot of relationship inefficiencies that prevent the latter from making the best investment choices [7]. When attempting to provide information to stakeholders, it is critical to recognize the roles that various actors play in the communication process with regard to transparency. This also enables one to comprehend the behavior and interactions of all elements of corporate or business communication, which Asemah et al. [41] defined as the "instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible.

According to Vrabcová et al. [29], transparency is essential to communication and idea transmission because it not only conveys the content but also how the message is presented, structured, and encoded, as well as its volume. Information on the environment, society, and governance (ESG) may be broadly divided into two categories: financial and non-financial. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) corporate governance principles state that information must be disclosed truthfully and on a regular basis, including the barest minimum of information that is necessary, as well as matters pertaining to employees and other social interest groups [1, 42]. Companies that want to reveal this information might start by using indicators created by organizations like the Global Reporting Initiative, which offers a structure for distributing a minimal amount of information [22, 43, 44].

Transparency is recognized as a material's physical ability to conduct light [2, 20]. Things are readily viewable through the indicated material as a result of this property. Transparency in the social sciences, on the other hand, is defined as the public and unambiguous disclosure of important information about goals, financing, activities, and other aspects of an organization, business, or individual's functioning [2, 12, 45]. Information disclosure may thus be used to gauge an entity's dependability and transparency [46]. Nonetheless, different writers have different perspectives on transparency. For example, Vrabcová et al. [29] use three characteristics to describe transparency: timely, relevant, and trustworthy information. Transparency is often associated with an organization's ethics, public relations, and dependence on it. In a similar vein, conscientious communication is sometimes used to characterize transparency as opposed to bias, manipulation, and advertising [47]. Accordingly, it is widely accepted that a company's ability to make both financial and non-financial information available to outside parties constitutes transparency [48]. Therefore, the business information that is, financial and non-financial information, disclosure in financial and social responsibility statements, annual reports, websites, communication channels, information dissemination, etc., determines how transparent the operations of business subjects are [49, 50].

2.4. Trust and Sustainability in Business

Building rapport and trust is a fundamental step in the process of developing empathy [48]. Establishing a connection and fostering trust enables executives to engage in mature conversations with staff members when issues emerge [25]. While listening and understanding one another is important for building trust, leaders and workers do not always have to agree with one another. According to Dahl and Bakalarska [51], a leader's ability to build trust is critical to their long-term success. This is so that connections between leaders and employees may be strengthened and employee morale raised in a company. According to Ghanem and Castelli [15], trust may be defined as a belief, a choice, and an action. Organizational trust is important for successful social skills, loyalty, and effective teamwork. This is due to the fact that employee trust is essential to an organization's success [29, 51]. The existence of trust has the potential to enhance employee performance and facilitate increased communication inside businesses. It is becoming more widely acknowledged that building trust is essential to both

improving organizational performance and doing business. Employee openness and transparency are made possible by trust [1]. Once they have gained the confidence of their staff, leaders in companies may foster a sense of camaraderie by using their knowledge of people [32].

According to [48], frequent meetings and time spent hearing someone's views demonstrate a high degree of trust, which strengthens connections between coworkers. Since trust is a skill that is acquired by ongoing interactions with people, companies may concentrate on fostering an atmosphere of empathy and trust while simultaneously keeping an eye on issues related to organizational performance [52]. Another way to define trust is as networks of connections between individuals, particularly in business activities within the context of company goals and performance [32]. A company cannot function effectively without a strong foundation of trust, particularly in the modern workplace. In order to boost employee morale and improve leader-employee interactions, trust is crucial [41]. According to Nkeobuna and Ugoani [1], trust confers a competitive advantage to firms. In today's more linked world, where globalization is happening at a faster pace, trust is essential as businesses struggle to maintain high production levels and the ability to adapt and evolve in order to thrive. Building wholesome and high-quality connections inside businesses is crucial to addressing these issues. Building a culture of trust among workers in businesses and developing empathy skills helps improve the quality of these interactions [53]. Building trust facilitates the exchange of ideas, information, and communication techniques that boost output and improve worker satisfaction [7]. It is important to realize that an organization's ability to grow and adapt, reassert its identity, and become more cohesive all benefit from a high level of trust. It is critical to comprehend the benefits of trust and apply them to the culture of the firm. This provides businesses a leg up when hard circumstances hit an entire sector, preserving and enhancing the work environment for staff members [5, 54]. Trust may elicit a range of feelings and experiences in social situations for both parties. Similar to relationships, trust requires reciprocity. It is possible to deduce that the foundation of this two-way relationship is the mutual trust that each party builds throughout talks [7]. When a leader places faith and confidence in his or her staff, the leader validates their own deservingness and opens up to others about often suppressed emotions [55].

Furthermore, long-term financial gain may result from company sustainability and CSR communication [16, 48]. Organizations that implement sustainability/CSR practices increase value development, according to recent instrumental empirical research. Reputation and improved financial performance are two ways that this value creation might appear [41]. According to Dospinescu et al. [22], an organization's reputation improves with its level of contribution to social welfare. Additional empirical studies have shown connections among CSR, performance, return on equity, and company image and reputation [32]. Other theoretical investigations, however, have shown negative and neutral relationships between environmental and social performance (ESP) and financial performance (FP). Based on the dates of the later studies, it is likely that corporate sustainability was still in its infancy at the time, and that public awareness of sustainability had not yet grown to a point where stakeholders could effectively utilize it to shape their perception of sustainable businesses [35, 56].

3. Methodology

A cross-sectional survey research design and a quantitative research methodology were used in the study. The cross-sectional research strategy depends on a detailed examination of a group or event in order to unearth the roots of numerous underlying principles related to the research topic or study subject. With regard to the function of ethical communication in fostering sustainability and trust, focusing on distinctive and compelling features of the Greek business sector was made easier by the cross-sectional research technique.

The target audience for the study was different owners of businesses in Greece. From this community, the most appropriate sample was selected for the study in order to comprehend the function of ethical communication in fostering sustainability and trust.

Using the table from Krejcie and Morgan [57], the optimal sample size from the population was calculated. For the purpose of calculating the sample size for a certain demography, Krejcie and Morgan [57] published Table 1. Using Krejcie and Morgan [57], a sample size of 360 owners of various firms in Greece was determined based on the target population of 75,000 participants [57]. Using a purposive selection technique, the research representative sample was selected.

Table 1.
Table for determining sample size from a known population.

N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2800	338
60	52	340	181	3000	341
65	56	360	186	3500	346
70	59	380	191	4000	351
75	63	400	196	4500	354
80	66	420	201	5000	357
85	70	440	205	6000	361
90	73	460	210	7000	364
95	76	480	214	8000	367
100	80	500	217	9000	368
110	86	550	226	10000	370

An online survey questionnaire was sent to a sample of the business community in Greece in order to collect data from them. After obtaining the participants' informed consent and confirming that they were willing to participate in the research, the data collection process started. The information acquired helped address the questions raised by the study and establish whether relationships existed between the variables in the study. A range of inquiry questions about the function of ethical communication in fostering sustainability and trust were included in the questionnaire.

Following the encoding of the quantitative data, SPSS was used to analyze it. The results were compiled into tables, and frequency and percentage breakdowns were crucial in understanding how those tables should be interpreted. Regression analysis was used in this study to assess the overall predictive power of the many independent variables on the dependent variable. To generate a range of anticipated values in this specific circumstance, a multiple regression model is necessary (Equation 1).

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon \qquad (1)$$

Where:

Y = Enhanced trust and sustainability in business

β_0 = constant (coefficient of intercept)

X_1 = Empathy in business communication, X_2 = Ethical accountability in communication, X_3 = ethical aspect of Transparency, X_4 = Confidentiality in business communication

ε = Represents the error term in the multiple regression model

The hypotheses of the study were tested at the 5% (0.05) level of significance throughout the study.

The researcher made sure to get participants' agreement after giving them enough background information to ensure that they were sincere about participating in the study. Privacy and discretion were always respected while handling the data that respondents submitted. Depending on how well they understood the various kinds of opinion questions, respondents were able to respond to questions. This made it easier to get responses to specific questions from a wide range of individuals.

4. Results

Table 2.
Results about demographic characteristics of the 360 study participants.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	211	58.6%
Female	149	41.4%
Age Group		
Below-30 years	80	22.2%
30-40 years	120	33.3%
41-50 years	100	27.8%
Above 50 years	60	16.7%
Education Level		
Bachelor's Degree	100	27.8%
Master's Degree	180	50.0%
PhD/Doctorate	80	22.2%
Years of Experience		
0-5 years	40	11.1%
6-10 years	80	22.2%
11-15 years	100	27.8%
Above 16+ years	140	38.9%
Total	360	100

Results in Table 2 show that in terms of gender distribution, the results show a slight majority of male participants, comprising 58.6% of the total sample, while females represent 41.4%. In regard to the age groups of the respondents, the largest proportion of participants falls within the 30-40 years age group, accounting for 33.3% of the sample, followed closely by the 41-50 years age group at 27.8%. Regarding educational attainment, the majority of respondents hold either a Master's degree (50.0%) or a Bachelor's degree (27.8%), with a smaller proportion having attained a PhD/Doctorate (22.2%). This distribution indicates a highly educated cohort of business owners likely possessing specialized knowledge and skills relevant to the study's focus on communication ethics in business. In regard to years of experience, a notable proportion of respondents (38.9%) report having 16 or more years of experience, indicating a significant presence of seasoned business owners in the sample.

4.1. Descriptive Results

The study assessed the significance of empathy in business communication and its profound influence on building trust and sustainability within organizations and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Results on the aspect of empathy in business communication and its influence on building trust and sustainability in business.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Empathy is irrelevant in business communication and has no impact on building trust and sustainability	7.2	10.4	3.5	72.8	6.1
Understanding the perspectives of others in business communication is essential for fostering trust and sustainability	3.4	2.7	7.8	61.3	24.7
Demonstrating empathy in business communication leads to stronger relationships and long-term partnerships	1.8	10.3	9.4	48.8	21.6
Empathy helps in resolving conflicts effectively, thus contributing to trust and sustainability in business	10.3	4.7	1.5	68.2	15.3
Lack of empathy in business communication results in distrust and negatively affects sustainability efforts	0.0	5.4	3.7	79.8	11.1
Empathetic communication fosters employee loyalty and enhances organizational sustainability	0.0	5.7	7.8	65.7	20.7

Results in Table 3 show that the majority (72.8%) strongly agree that empathy is crucial for building trust and sustainability in business communication. Furthermore, the result highlights the importance of understanding others' perspectives in business communication, with a substantial portion (61.3%) agreeing that it is essential for fostering trust and sustainability. Moreover, the findings indicate that demonstrating empathy in business communication leads to stronger relationships and long-term partnerships, with nearly half of the respondents (48.8%) agreeing with this statement. The results also reflect the role of empathy in conflict resolution, with a significant majority (68.2%) agreeing that empathy helps in

resolving conflicts effectively, thereby contributing to trust and sustainability in business. Additionally, results show a correlation between empathy, employee loyalty, and organizational sustainability, with a considerable proportion (65.7%) agreeing that empathetic communication enhances loyalty and sustainability within the organization.

The results presented in Table 4 are about the role of ethical accountability in communication in fostering trust and sustainability within businesses.

Table 4.
Results on the effect of ethical accountability in communication towards enhanced trust and sustainability in business.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Ethical accountability is not crucial for building trust and sustainability in business communication.	4.7	6.7	5.4	73.6	9.6
Holding individuals accountable for their actions in communication enhances trust within the business environment	7.9	8.6	15.4	55.3	12.8
Organizations that prioritize ethical accountability in communication are more likely to achieve long-term sustainability goals	6.9	6.6	5.2	30.2	51.1
Lack of accountability in business communication erodes trust and undermines sustainability efforts	3.8	4.3	7.9	60.2	23.8
Ethical accountability fosters a culture of responsibility and integrity, thus contributing to sustainability	3.9	6.1	4.7	64.2	21.1
Employees feel more motivated and engaged in organizations that uphold ethical accountability in communication	0.0	5.5	6.8	67.9	19.8

The results in Table 4 showed an overwhelming agreement (73.6%) that ethical accountability is crucial for building trust and sustainability, underscoring its fundamental importance in business communication. This high level of agreement suggests a widespread understanding that ethical conduct is not just desirable but essential for maintaining trust and long-term viability. With over 68% either agreeing or strongly agreeing, it indicates a strong belief that accountability fosters transparency and reliability, which are foundational for trust. Over 81% either agree or strongly agree with this statement, indicating a consensus that ethical communication practices are integral to sustainable business practices. A significant majority (84%) agree or strongly agree that such a lack of accountability erodes trust and undermines sustainability efforts, emphasizing the negative consequences of neglecting ethical responsibilities. A significant majority (85.3%) agree or strongly agree that it fosters a culture of responsibility and integrity, contributing to sustainability.

The results presented in Table 5 are about how the ethical aspect of transparency in business communications impacts trust and sustainability within organizations.

Table 5.
Results on the ethical aspect of transparency in building trust and sustainability in business.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Transparency in business communication is unnecessary for building trust and sustainability	8.1	6.4	7.8	58.3	19.4
Open and transparent communication fosters trust among stakeholders and supports sustainability efforts	3.0	6.2	5.6	63.7	21.5
Organizations that prioritize transparency in communication are perceived as more trustworthy and sustainable	1.9	14.7	6.8	15.6	61.0
Lack of transparency leads to suspicion and distrust, ultimately hindering sustainability initiatives	1.6	8.7	10.8	57.6	21.3
Transparent communication builds credibility and strengthens relationships with customers and partners	0.0	6.4	9.8	64.8	19.0
Transparency promotes accountability and ensures ethical behavior within the organization, leading to sustainability	0.0	0.0	4.5	69.8	25.7

A significant majority of respondents (58.3% Agree, 19.4% Strongly Agree) believe that transparency in business communication is essential for building trust and sustainability. A substantial portion of participants (63.7% Agree, 21.5% Strongly Agree) support the notion that open and transparent communication is pivotal in fostering trust among stakeholders and aiding sustainability. The majority of respondents agreed (15.6% Agree, 61.0% Strongly Agree) that organizations that emphasize transparent communication as more trustworthy and sustainable. It highlights transparency as a key factor in an

organization's perceived integrity and commitment to sustainability. A majority of respondents (57.6% Agree, 21.3% Strongly Agree) agree that the absence of transparency can foster suspicion and distrust, which can impede efforts towards sustainability. The results (64.8% Agree, 19.0% Strongly Agree) reflect a strong consensus that transparent communication is key to building credibility and strengthening relationships with external stakeholders. The results show a high level of agreement (69.8% Agree, 25.7% Strongly Agree) with the notion that a strong belief in transparency is crucial for promoting accountability and ethical behavior, which are essential for achieving sustainability.

The results presented in Table 6 shed light on confidentiality in enhancing trust and sustainability within organizations.

Table 6.
Results on the effect of confidentiality in business communication towards enhanced trust and sustainability in business.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Confidentiality in business communication has no impact on building trust and sustainability	0.0	5.4	6.4	67.3	20.9
Maintaining confidentiality in sensitive business matters is essential for earning trust and ensuring sustainability	0.0	6.8	0.0	78.7	14.5
Organizations that prioritize confidentiality in communication are perceived as more reliable and sustainable	0.0	4.7	5.8	76.6	12.9
Breaching confidentiality damages trust and jeopardizes long-term sustainability goals	1.6	0.0	6.8	14.6	77.0
Confidentiality fosters a culture of respect and integrity within the organization	5.1	6.4	7.8	64.3	16.4

The results in Table 6 show that the majority of respondents (67.3%) strongly agree and 20.9% agree that confidentiality in business communication significantly contributes to building trust and sustainability. The results show a consensus on the necessity of maintaining confidentiality in sensitive business matters, with a striking 78.7% agreement and 14.5% strong agreement. Organizations that prioritize confidentiality are perceived as more reliable and sustainable, as indicated by the substantial agreement scores of 76.6% and 12.9% for the corresponding statement. Furthermore, the results highlight the perceived consequences of breaching confidentiality, with a significant 77% strongly agreeing that it damages trust and jeopardizes long-term sustainability goals. The results suggest that confidentiality fosters a culture of respect and integrity within the organization, with a combined agreement score of 80.7% (64.3% agreeing and 16.4% strongly agreeing). This indicates that confidentiality is not only viewed as a practical necessity but also as an integral component of organizational culture that promotes ethical behavior and values.

The study also identified the different outcomes of trust and sustainability achieved through ethical communication in business and the results are presented in Figure 1.
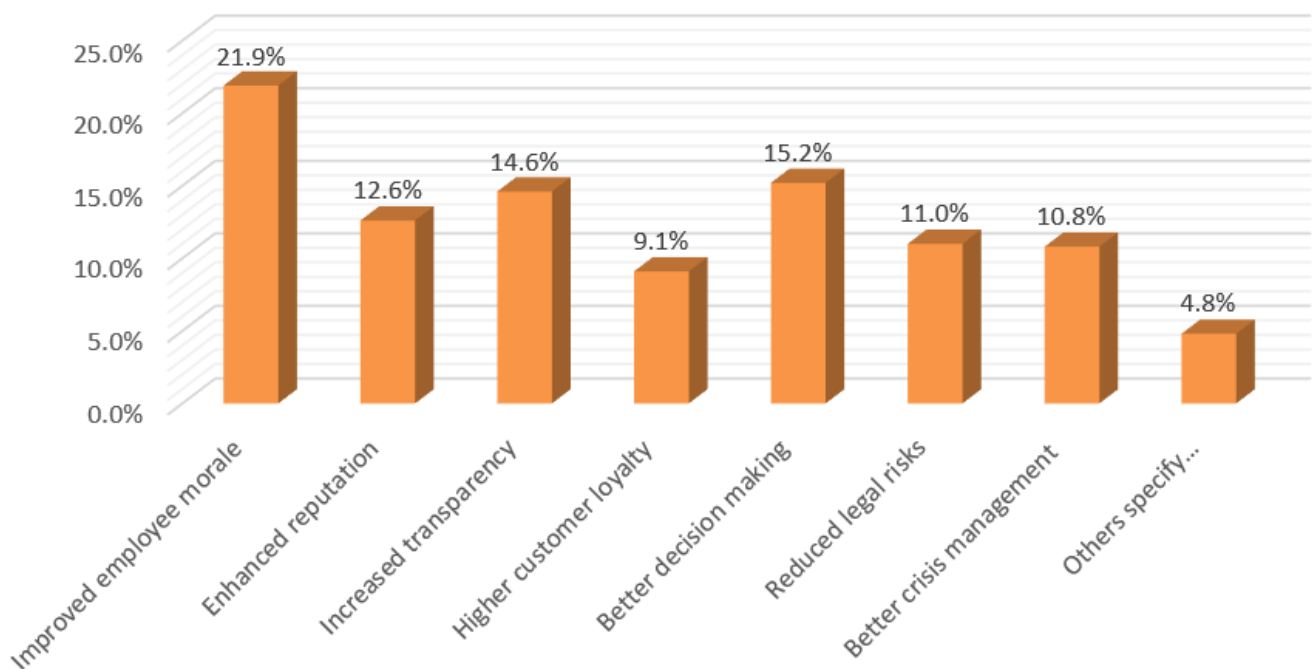

Figure 1.
Results on outcomes of trust and sustainability due to ethical communication in business.

Results in Figure 1 show that improved employee morale (21.9%) stands out as the most significant outcome, indicating that ethical communication plays a critical role in boosting the morale of employees within a business. Better decision making (15.2%) follows as another crucial benefit, showing that ethical communication fosters an environment where decision-making processes are improved. Increased transparency (14.6%) is closely linked with better decision-making, highlighting the value of openness in business operations. Enhanced reputation (12.6%) reflects the external benefits of ethical communication, illustrating how it contributes to a positive perception of the business by the public, customers, and other external stakeholders. Reduced legal risks (11.0%) and better crisis management (10.8%) are closely related, with both emphasizing the protective benefits of ethical communication. By ensuring that communication is honest and respects legal and ethical standards, companies can avoid legal issues that might arise from misinformation, misrepresentation, or failure to disclose important information. Higher customer loyalty (9.1%) underscores the impact of ethical communication on customer relationships. When customers feel that a company communicates honestly and respects their needs and values, they are more likely to remain loyal. This loyalty translates into repeat business, positive word-of-mouth, and a strong customer base that supports the company through various market conditions. The least portion of respondents (4.8%) identified other outcomes such as fostering a culture of integrity, enhancing stakeholder engagement, innovation, and collaboration, though representing the smallest percentage, encapsulate a broad range of additional benefits.

4.2. Diagnostic Tests
4.2.1. Test for Heteroscedasticity

Using the heteroscedasticity test, it was possible to ascertain whether or not the error components that are part of the cross-sectional data had a relationship with one another across observations. The default assumption is that there is no problem with the heteroscedasticity of the data since the p-value is higher than 5%. We call this the null hypothesis. With the p-value threshold set at 0.05, the possibility of the null hypothesis being true was not ruled out since the reported result was greater than 0.05. This directly led to the data not showing heteroscedastic behavior. Given that the null hypothesis of constant variance is supported by a p-value of 0.5182, Table 7's results indicate that it should not be disregarded.

Table 7.
Model Summary

Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg test for heteroscedasticity	
H_0: Constant variance	
Variable: fitted values of trust and sustainability in business	
chi2(1)=	0.510
Prob > chi2=	0.5182

Note: Predictors: (Constant), Empathy in business communication, Ethical accountability in communication, Ethical aspect of Transparency, Confidentiality in business communication.

4.2.2. Test for Autocorrelation

The dependent variable in Table 8 must be independent, which was verified using the Durbin-Watson (d) test [58] where a value of d=2 denotes the absence of autocorrelation. The outcome of the investigation, which was 1.842, suggests that the residuals really aren't autocorrelated. The value of (d) always ranges from 0 to 4, with 0 indicating autocorrelation and values over 1 indicating interdependence.

Table 8.
Durbin-Watson test.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
	0.793	0.693	0.681	0.261	1.842

Note: Predictors: (Constant), Empathy in business communication, Ethical accountability in communication, Ethical aspect of Transparency, Confidentiality in business communication.

4.3. Regression Test
4.3.1. Fitness of Model

The dependent variable (Enhanced trust and sustainability in business) was regressed against all four aspects of the independent variable (Empathy in business communication, Ethical accountability in communication, Ethical aspect of Transparency, Confidentiality in business communication). Table 9 shows the regression model's fitness for the investigated phenomenon. Ethical Communication explained trust and sustainability in business well as shown by the R-squared value of 0.631. The four aspects of ethical communication in business explain 63.1% of the variance in trust and sustainability in business.

Table 9.
Model Fitness.

R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.608	0.631	0.629	0.261

Note: Predictors: (Constant), Empathy in business communication, Ethical accountability in communication, Ethical aspect of Transparency, Confidentiality in business communication.

4.3.2. Regression of Coefficients
    The results in Table 10 represent the coefficients of regression for the independent variables.

Table 10.
Regression Coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.528	0.261		5.186	0.003
Empathy in business communication	0.163	0.041	0.354	4.431	0.000
Ethical accountability in communication	0.252	0.137	0.151	2.596	0.001
Ethical aspect of Transparency	0.204	0.061	0.214	6.013	0.000
Confidentiality in business communication	0.113	0.083	0.158	1.1284	0.002

Note: Dependent Variable: Enhanced trust and sustainability in business.

    The coefficient for empathy in business communication is significant (Sig. = 0.000) with a positive B value of 0.163. This indicates a strong and positive influence of empathy on building trust and sustainability in business. The standardized beta coefficient (Beta = 0.354) and the T-value (4.431) further affirm this significant effect. Therefore, Hypothesis 1, which posits that empathy in business communication has a significant and positive influence on building trust and sustainability, can be accepted. Ethical accountability in communication also shows a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable, with a B value of 0.252 and a significance level of 0.001. The standardized beta value is 0.151, and the T-value is 2.596, supporting the assertion that ethical accountability in communication plays a crucial role in enhancing trust and sustainability. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is accepted. The ethical aspect of transparency in business communication is highly significant (Sig. = 0.000) with a B value of 0.204, indicating a strong positive influence on trust and sustainability. The high T-value of 6.013 and a standardized beta of 0.214 underscore the importance of transparency in ethical business practices. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is accepted, confirming that the ethical aspect of transparency has a significant positive impact on building trust and sustainability. The significance level for confidentiality in business communication is 0.002, with a B value of 0.113, suggesting a positive effect on the dependent variable. Despite a lower T-value (1.1284) compared to other variables, the significance and positive beta (0.158) indicate a meaningful relationship between confidentiality and enhanced trust and sustainability and hence, hypothesis 4 is accepted.

5. Discussion

    This study examined the role of ethical communication in building trust and sustainability. The study shows that in human interactions, empathy is a crucial component of communication ethics. Understanding other people's thoughts and emotions is a necessary component of empathy [41]. Being able to react correctly and provide the necessary assistance is another aspect of empathy. In social interactions, responsibility is a crucial aspect of communication ethics. To be responsible is to take ownership of your words and deeds [2, 21, 33]. Accepting responsibility also entails having the ability to acknowledge and fix one's own errors. Additionally crucial to the field of information technology is communication ethics [48]. Information technology usage has to adhere to moral principles, such as protecting others' privacy, abstaining from behaviors that endanger others, and refraining from copyright infringement [51]. In the field of information technology, communication ethics are equally crucial. Examples of these include protecting customer privacy and refraining from activities that might harm clients [9, 17, 27]. According to some studies, the presence of shared corporate ethics might reduce the competition that is inherent in the industry by positioning them as pro bono, or for the benefit of the public good [3]. Given that business is competitive and depends on exclusivity and competition, this may be a bit of an ambitious move [4, 18]. The expectation of corporate responsibility often masks attempts to defraud them, which then creates a bad business climate [24].
    Accountability serves as the ethical or moral foundation for transparency, as it allows one actor to take responsibility for another's actions [41]. One tool for ensuring accountability is disclosure, which informs information recipients on the state of the business in terms of its finances, social problems, environmental concerns, corporate governance, and other matters [50]. Furthermore, although disclosure does not ensure a corporation is transparent, it is a reality that an index or indicator of disclosure is the primary means of measuring transparency. The truth is that disclosure must meet a number of requirements in order to qualify as transparent [27]. Transparency should be seen as a comprehensive and interdisciplinary notion that can be applied to every business [25, 59]. Most studies place a strong emphasis on responsibility and communication as essential components of effective leadership, successful businesses, and contented workforces. The findings clearly show that different business communication technologies such as email, webinars, video teleconferences and Blackberries have the potential to strengthen bonds between customers and business owners. These communication channels should not be mistaken for actual communication, particularly with workers, whose departure interviews and recurring assessments show that they want in-person, meaningful conversations that provide pertinent performance feedback [14, 60].
    The findings show that behaving with trust may be both rational and affective when ethics are applied in communication, and this further builds sustainability in business. Because trust is the basis for calculating the likelihood of benefit and loss and drawing the conclusion that an employee is likely to act in a certain way based on calculations made using hard performance data, trust makes sense [6, 24]. Because a leader must reveal their weaknesses to others in the hopes that those followers won't take advantage of their candor, building trust is also an emotional endeavor [9, 45]. The foundation of

successful relationships, communication, and understanding is empathy and trust. In order to handle employee grievances and keep talent in the company, empathy and trust are also essential. Effective communicators are essential for successful firms in today's business environment [11, 17]. Strong customer relationships are not fostered by persuasion, salesmanship, or other communication techniques; rather, they are fostered by trust and empathy. Building these connections requires trust and empathy, which makes them essential components of modern business in an age when networking and relationships are becoming more and more crucial in the corporate world [12, 53].

6. Conclusions

This study confirmed that ethical communication plays a vital role in building trust and sustainability. A person with strong business ethics will stand out from the crowd, have a higher probability of success, and be able to secure their ideal career. Moreover, business ethics may foster positive interactions with supervisors, coworkers, and customers. Understanding the standards and principles that are relevant in the corporate environment is necessary for adopting business ethics in communication. Business ethics may be used in a variety of contexts, including social media usage, presentations, and negotiations. Respecting people, abstaining from unethical conduct, and protecting information confidentially are all important components of putting business ethics into practice. From a theological standpoint, business ethics are based on fundamental principles that serve as the foundation for discussions of economic activity. Religious perspectives on business ethics place a strong emphasis on the value of social responsibility, justice, and honesty in company operations. Improved communication and a professional, courteous environment are two benefits of business ethics. In ethical communication, accountability entails following applicable laws, rules, and industry standards. It calls on people and institutions to be aware of and abide by the moral and legal standards that govern communication activities. Individuals may make sure that their communication is moral, stays out of trouble with the law, and maintains the integrity of the company by taking responsibility for compliance. To sum up, accountability is essential to ethical communication because it fosters openness, honesty, trust, and the capacity to make moral decisions, take responsibility for actions, and abide by rules. Individuals and organizations may cultivate an ethical communication culture by accepting responsibility, which is necessary for long-term success and fostering healthy stakeholder relationships. In order to foster an environment of fair and healthy relationships with coworkers and customers, business ethics also constitute a value, standard, and conduct of employees and executives. Understanding the principles and standards that govern the corporate environment, showing respect for others, abstaining from improper conduct, and protecting information confidentiality are all necessary for adopting business ethics.

6.1. Implications of the Study

This research offers managers and marketing professionals specific instructions for integrating moral values into their communication plans. The focus on ethical communication methods draws attention to how important it is to cultivate mutual respect, trust, and honesty in interactions with stakeholders. Businesses may improve their reputation, build trusting relationships with partners and consumers, and advance social progress by putting ethical standards first. It is imperative that managers understand that ethical marketing communication is a long-term plan for sustained success rather than just a way to make quick money. The report also emphasizes how crucial reliable sources and correct scientific facts are to the development of value. It is essential for managers to maintain the integrity of their data gathering and analysis procedures and communicate scientific results in a transparent manner. They will be able to make better decisions, provide higher-quality goods and services, and function better as a firm as a whole.

The study's findings have important implications for decision-makers who oversee marketing communication procedures. The need for regulations that promote ethical marketing conduct is shown by the favorable association found between societal welfare and the establishment of values through ethical communication. Legislators must consider enacting or strengthening rules that support moral behavior in marketing communications, especially regarding topics like child advertising. Policymakers can protect vulnerable consumers and promote beneficial social outcomes by setting guidelines that ensure acceptable, honest, and respectful marketing messages directed towards minors. Furthermore, to foster the spread of reliable scientific information, governments should support programs that enhance source credibility and data quality. Policymakers can encourage the growth of a more socially conscious corporate ecosystem by fostering an environment that rewards ethical marketing communication and discourages unethical behavior.

6.2. Areas for Future Research

Future research could explore the ethical roles of business communication in greater detail, consider interdisciplinary approaches, compare communication practices with other disciplines, or focus on related subjects to further advance the understanding of ethical marketing communication. Additionally, research could explore the impact of communication agencies in providing consumers with better information about sustainability issues and potential solutions.

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