

Multidimensional Communication as a Strategy for Sustaining Employee performance During Covid-19 Pandemic in Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria

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Abstract

In both public and private sectors, one-way communication has been highlighted as one of the reasons of ineffective communication. When internal communication in an organization is only one-way, there is a strong possibility that there will be little or no communication at all. This study was carried out during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria to examine the extent to which multidimensional communication strategy was used to enhance staff performance. Data was obtained using questionnaire administered to selected academic staff using simple random selection technique. A sample of 106 academic employees were selected from a population of 144. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) at a significance level of 0.05, and the hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The finding of the study revealed that there is higher correlation co-efficient of 79.8% which is significant at p-value 0.05 reinforces how multidimensional communication (downward communication, upward communication and horizontal communication) enhance employee performance. The study concludes that the strategy of multidimensional communication greatly enhanced employee's performance during the lockdown that followed the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study recommends that there is need for Al-Hikmah University to continue adopting multidimensional communication in order to enhance staff performance.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Employee Performance, Multidimensional Communication, Strategy and Sustaining.

Introduction

Due to the turbulent business climate and severe competition, businesses must satisfy specific standards by improving their performance in order to meet such high demands; otherwise, a plethora of problems may develop, including the prospect of the firm being shut down. Human resources are the most significant factor in fulfilling the organization's goals, and their success is assessed in terms of time or individual performance. Indeed, without the assistance of skilled human resources, a multitude of resources, such as infrastructures or physical facilities, are made worthless, which may have an instant impact on corporate operations. Effective employee performance within the professional framework displays the capacity to contribute throughout time, with work resulting in behavioural success that is in accordance with the company's goals.

Meanwhile, the efficacy of human resource management determines the profitability of enterprises.

To perform means to carry out a sequence of complicated activities that integrates abilities and knowledge in order to produce a desirable result. In certain instances, the performance is one-of-a-kind. A group of persons, such as an academic department, a research team, a group of related students, or a university, may perform in other circumstances. Performance is a "journey, not a destination," as the cliché goes, with "degree of performance" showing where you are on that trip. The efficacy or quality of a performance is described at each stage. Communication is required for the transfer of ideas and thoughts, the formation of plans, the execution of decisions, the sending and fulfilment of requests, and the conclusion of negotiations. When effective communication is lost, non-coordinated activities return to an organization.

One of a company's most precious assets is its employees. As a result, the more an employee's commitment, the better their performance, this benefits the company. One factor that leads to employees feeling valued by their employers is effective communication. A number of studies have discovered a relationship between corporate communication and a number of performance outcomes, including employee performance. Clear communication and continuous feedback, according to Himdsteinas, referenced in Taylor (2015), are the keys to success. Employees will only behave as expected if the message they have received is clear. Furthermore, Taylor (2015) claimed that having an open, honest two-way communication with managers will help them get to the bottom of any poor performance, no matter how trivial or transitory.

The global Covid-19 (Corona virus) pandemic has wreaked havoc on a wide spectrum of business and socioeconomic operations, including higher education institutions. Covid-19 is a one-of-a-kind of Corona virus infection that causes severe acute respiratory illness. Corona virus 2 (SARS – Cov-2; formerly known as 2019-nCov) caused a respiratory illness outbreak when it was discovered in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

The World Health Organization received the first notification on December 31, 2019 (WHO, 2019). On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the Covid-19 outbreak a global health emergency, and on March 11, 2020, it declared outbreak a worldwide pandemic, the first time since the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2019. The objective of this study is to examine how multi-dimensional communication helped maintained staff performance during the first wave of Covid-19 lockdown at Al-Hikmah University Ilorin, Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Communication

Communication is widely regarded as the lifeblood of an organization because it is required for exchanging information, exchanging opinions, formulating plans and proposals, reaching agreements, carrying out decisions, sending and fulfilling orders, and coordinating sales (Asamu, 2014). In reality, when communication fails, planned operations go by the wayside,

and individual coordinated efforts in an organization deteriorate. As a result, business communication is as vital as life itself.

According to Daft and Marcia (2010), communication is "the process through which information is conveyed and interpreted by two or more individuals, generally with the purpose of motivating or influencing behaviour." The exchange of information between a sender (source) and a receiver (destination) such that it is received, interpreted, and translated into action is referred to as communication (Obamiro, 2011). Hills (2015) defines communication as "any mechanism through which a notion is communicated from one person to another". Communication is the process by which one person, or a group distributes and impacts information with or to another person (or group) in order for both persons (and groups) to understand each other effectively (Bhatia & Balani, 2015). It is not only the imparting of information, but also the receipt of intelligible information and, as a result, the passing of a message to another party so that it may be understood and acted upon (Asamu, 2014).

Multi-Dimensionality of Communication

Communication should not be a one-way street if it is to be productive. As they issue commands, instructions and directions, top managers should listen to complaints, recommendations, and reports from personnel lower down the hierarchy. Consequently, upward communication is equally as important as downward communication. Inter-departmental interaction is also required for effective organizational coordination. Horizontal communication is the term for this. As a result, there are three (3) different types of communication, which includes:

- **Downward Communication:** This is the information flow from senior management to lower management levels. Downward communication is the most significant type of organizational coordination since it is via it that management gives orders and instructions on how to conduct work and what should be done at any given moment. It is the most significant form of communication in a business since it outlines what must be done and how it should be accomplished (Shonubi & Akintaro, 2016).
- **Upward Communication:** When information is transferred up the chain of command in the form of reports, comments, complaints, suggestions, or instructions, it is referred to as upward communication. It is just as important as downward communication for successful organization, peace, and harmony, which are all necessary for a fantastic working environment in which employees can give their all (Shonubi & Akintaro, 2016).
- **Horizontal/lateral Communication:** Inter-departmental connections among workers from various departments are essential for a smooth flow of activities inside the organization due to the iterative nature of management functions (Shonubi & Akintaro, 2016).

Multi-Dimensional Communication in an Organization

Al-Hikmah University employs multi-dimensional communication to achieve high organizational effectiveness, reaping the advantages in terms of improved staff performance, as seen by improved outcomes across the board. According to both analytics and communication experts, internal communication has an impact on how effective, fruitful, and performance-oriented a company is in the twenty-first century. A review of the literature on internal communication reveals a consistent, primary focus on paper communication's control and coordination difficulties.

In Al-Hikmah University, downward communication occurs from the governing council to the principal officers; Upward communication occurs from subordinates such as Senior Assistant Registrar (SAR), Principal Assistant Registrar (PAR), Deputy Registrars (DR) inform of reports, suggestions, or recommendations. Horizontal communication also takes place between different sections of the University.

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to how an employee acts while completing a job or activity (El-Zeiny, 2012). It is the sum of the work performed by the organization's personnel (Adewale, Abodunde & Folorunso, 2014). Employee performance is the evaluation of each employee's accomplishments in relation to the organization's rules, criteria, and expectations. It is the outcome of employees' ability, effort, and perspective of the assignment (Hee, Cheng, Yaw, Gee, Kamaludin & Prabhagaram, 2016). It contributes to the organization's production by increasing work efficiency and effectiveness. Employee performance that is adequate produces results such as excellent quality and productivity among employees in the organization (Hee, Ibrahim, Kowang & Fei, 2018). When the employees around them are doing their jobs well, the morale and energy of the bosses will be improved (El-zeiny, 2012). The organization's degree of communication with its workers reflects the performance of those individuals. Employees at a company can become more productive and efficient if they communicate effectively (Otoo, 2015).

Communication is essential for moving/sending, receiving, and using information in the organization. Individual employee actions that are linked to business goals and within their control are referred to as employee performance in general. This implies that an employee's behaviour has a substantial influence on achieving goals through their work

A performance is an event in which a group of people behaves in a certain way for the benefit of another group of people. Al-Hikmah University's mission is to create a common workforce and develop knowledge about what has to be done at the organizational level. Organizational goals must be in line with agreed-upon metrics, skills, and competency standards, as well as development plans and delivery of outcomes. Employee performance is assessed not only once a year or once a quarter, but anytime it is deemed necessary to aid employees in identifying and digesting areas for improvement.

Theoretical framework

According to Tayo and Olamigoke (2006), several social psychology theories have helped us grasp the sorts and a level of influence communication has on employees.

Theory of Selective Processes

In 1957, Festinger proposed the groundbreaking theory of cognitive dissonance that has become the foundation of selective process. People select messages and media that agree with their present views, values, and ideas over messages and media that contradict their current beliefs, values, and ideas, according to the concept. Festinger's notion of cognitive distance, which became the foundation of the based on their needs and the rewards they hope to gain from that exposure. When it comes to perception, people tend to perceive messages differently depending on their current attitudes, predispositions, and prejudices. Because not all of the messages received by a receiver are recalled, receivers selectively return information or messages that they expect to utilize at a later time. People preserve components of the significant in the future in their memory, according to Tayo and Olamigoke (2006). Even among the knowledge stored in the human brain, not all of it can be retrieved and used when necessary. We for example, can't remember or reconstruct every aspect of tales we read in newspapers or magazines.

Social Relationship Theory

Social connection theory is a mass communication theory that proposes that individuals' informal social interactions, particularly with significant persons, have a considerable impact on their responses to the media. The idea, which was first proposed by Fiske in 1992, assumes that other humans are conceived of as alive things. As a result, people consider the advantages and disadvantages of social interactions. People will end or quit a relationship when the hazards outweigh the benefits.

Finally, in this analysis, the theory of Akbar and Jahanzaibe (2012) was adopted. According to Akbar and Jahanzaibe (2012), workers need to know and coordinate their work activities, but if messages are not well transmitted to them or they do not interact with one another, they will be unable to understand the assignments, resulting in confusion and the job not being done or completed well. As a result of the influence, it has on overall organizational performance, insufficient information decreases employee performance.

Establishing clearly defined goals and standards, as well as offering appropriate resources, guidance, and assistance from individual managers, helps to achieve this (Edwina, 2006). In this studies, social relationship theory was adopted. This is because people socially relate to one another through communication, and it is through people's social interaction that employees get work done. Multidimensional communication – downwards, upwards, and horizontally is what is meant by effective communication as used in social relationship communication.

Empirical Review

Pincus (1986), as quoted by Bhatia & Balani (2015), used a reformed version of Dums and Hazen's Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) to survey 327 hospital nurses in the United States. The goal of the study was to determine whether there was a link between employee happiness and corporate communication, as well as work satisfaction and performance. Pincus looked at nine (9) communication characteristics that fell into three (3) categories: informational, relational, and informational/relational. Job satisfaction and performance were shown to be substantially connected to employee views of organizational communication satisfaction. On the other hand, the communication satisfaction-job action association was shown to be stronger than the communication satisfaction-job performance link. Supervisory communication, feedback mechanisms, communication environment, and top management communication were all shown to be important factors in the relationship. It was exciting to find that informational/relational discussion accounted for three (3) of the four (4) contributing factors, which Pincus (1986) characterized as "dual emphasis on both informative and relational components of communication." Upper management communication, the fourth (4th) component, was a relationship dimension. However, the study failed to consider the importance of multidimensional communication, and this is the gap this study seeks to fill.

Another study by Asamu (2014), which was mentioned by Bhatia and Balani (2015), looked at the link between communication and worker performance in few firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. According to the findings, good communication fosters mutual understanding between management and employees. Jain (1973) explored the relationship between hospital supervisory personnel's communication effectiveness and their subordinates' opinions of their performance, as mentioned by Bhatia and Balani. A questionnaire interview method was used to study this link. Frequency of communication between supervisors and subordinates' communication patterns, employee comprehension of rules and procedures, employee satisfaction with the system, and communication channels used were among the parameters used in the study. According to the data, there were positive links between communication effectiveness and work success. Mention was however never made of multidimensional communication which is the addition this study is making.

Several recent studies have looked at the link between communication and performance, as noted by Bhatia and Balani (2015). Pedro, Neves and Robert Eisenberger (2012) investigated the relationship between management communication and organizational support, as well as the consequences for performance. The study found strong evidence that several aspects of managerial communication are positively linked to employee performance. However, this present study has shown the importance of multidimensional communication for the needed good employee performance to move the firm forward.

Methodology

For this study, the descriptive survey technique was adopted as the research method. For this purpose, a survey questionnaire was used to collect data from academic staff at the case-studied

university. A total of 106 academic staff members were selected at random from a total population of 144 using Taro Yamane's formula. Mean and frequency tables were employed for inferential analysis, with Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) technique was employed to show the relationship between multidimensional communication and sustainable employee performance. There are multiple formulae that can be used to compute Pearson's r. The Pearson's r was calculated using:

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n(\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2] [n(\sum y^2) - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where:

r = Pearson's correlation coefficient (Calculated r value)

n = number of paired scores (Degree of freedom)

X = score of the first variable (Multidimensional Communication)

Y = score of the second variable (Employee Performance)

XY = the product of the two paired scores (Decision rule)

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis of this study is stated as:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between multidimensional communication and employee performance at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Result of the Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Male	75	71.9	71.9	71.9
Female	31	28.1	28.1	100.0
Total	106	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, (2021).

Table 1 indicates that, 75 representing 71.9% were male and 31 representing 28.1% are female. This implies that, there is more male academic staff than female in Al-Himah University. This implies that male academic staff contributes more to employee performance.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Years	Frequency	Percent
25-30	18	16.7
36-40	27	26.0
41-45	36	35.4
46-50	21	19.8
51-55	4	2.1
Total	106	100.0

Source: Author’s Fieldwork, (2021).

The above table shows that 18 representing 16.7% are 25-30years, 27 representing 26% are 36-40years, 36 representing 35.4% are 41-45years, 21 representing 19.8% are 46-50years while 4 representing 2.1% are 51-55years of age. 41-45years is the highest population. The implication is that Al-Hikmah University staff within the age of 41-45years are the working age group among the academic staff. Moreso 41-45years of academic staff are the ingredient used by the university to achieve organizational performance.

Table 3: Years of experience

Years	Frequency	Percent
1-5	33	11.5
6-10	30	21.9
11-15	23	29.2
16-20	13	32.3
21-25	7	5.2
Total	106	100.0

Source: Author’s Fieldwork, (2021).

Table 3 above shows staff between 1-5 years of teaching experience to be most populous. This implies that lecturers with fresh knowledge acquired enter the University to imbue students with their sharp and newly acquired knowledge.

Table 4: PPMC Table Showing Relationship Between Multidimensional Communication and Sustainable Employee Performance.

Variable	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	Cal. r-value	Cal. p-value	Decision
Malcomave	106	3.6844	.5891	94			
Sepave	106	3.8210	.4899	94	0.798	0.000	Significant

P-value: 0.05, malcomave: Multidimensional Communication, sepave: Sustainable Employee Performance, \bar{x} : mean, SD: standard deviation, df: degree of freedom.

For 94 degrees of freedom, the P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 of significance, as shown in Table 4. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected, which stated that there is no significant link between Multidimensional Communication (malcomave) and Sustainable Employee Performance (sepave). This implies that downward communication, upward communication and horizontal communication which are all variables of multidimensional communication were all employed at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria, as a strategy that were used to sustain employee performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in line with Otoo, (2015) who stated that employees of a company can become more productive and efficient if they communicate effectively.

Discussion of Findings

According to the analyzed data, the correlation is significant at p-value less than 5% level of significance chosen that is p-value <0.05. The higher correlation co-efficient of 79.8% which is significant at p-value 0.05 reinforces how multidimensional communication (downward communication, upward communication, and horizontal communication) enhance employee performance. The study is in line with Neves and Eisenberger (2012), which found strong evidence that several aspects of managerial communication are positively linked to employee performance. The implication is that during Covid-19 Pandemic, there was a substantial link between multidimensional communication and long-term employee performance at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. This means that increasing multidimensional communication among the university's academic staff will have a favorable influence (strong relationship of 79.8%) on the level of long-term employee performance, not just during the Covid-19 Pandemic, but always in the University.

Conclusion

Multidimensional communication has been shown to have a significant influence on staff performance in terms of increased students' enrolment, enhanced graduating students results, more academic programs addition, and University program continuity. Multidimensional communication strategies such as downward communication, upward communication and horizontal communication are the driving force behind Al-Hikmah University's sustained staff performance during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. That the University places a high focus on internal communication in order to guarantee that her parts and sections run smoothly.
- ii. That multidimensional communication should be emphasized even more in the future, as it has shown to be helpful for the University, even during the COVID-19 lockdown.

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