Business, Management and Economics Research
ISSN(e): 2412-1770, ISSN(p): 2413-855X
Vol. 2, No. 2, pp: 24-30, 2016
URL: http://arpgweb.com/?ic=journal&journal=8&info=aims

Influence of Organizational Communication on Public Employees' Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction

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Abstract: In contemporary organizations, human resources are considered to be the most strategic assets. Given that effective organizational communication has been recognized as a crucial factor in enhancing organizational outcomes, it is undoubtedly the most critical dynamic in keeping employees committed to the organization and satisfied in their work. While several researchers have sought to establish an understanding of how the context of the organization influences communication processes, studies in the field of public administration have provided little knowledge about organizational communication and effects. A thorough review of the existing literature in this field revealed a research gap that brought to mind the following research question: What is the impact of organizational communication on organizational commitment and job satisfaction in the Namibian public organizations? An empirical study of 100 public employees from 25 Namibian Government Ministries was conducted to answer this research question.

Keywords: Organizational communication; Organizational commitment; Job satisfaction; Public employees.

1. Introduction

Given that organizational communication is a vehicle for the flow of information, policies, as well as resources, its impacts are considerably vital in the workplace. Scholars have broadly defined organizational communication as communication which takes place between individuals in an organization setting (Eisenberg and Goodall, 1997; Shockley-Zalabak, 2006). Organizational communication is mainly characterized by activities such as conveyance and receipt of messages through different layers of authority and diverse message systems, and discussions about numerous issues that are of interest to the organization. Researchers on organizational communication have mainly focused their studies in the field of business management and the field of communication. However, little research has been conducted about organizational communication and its roles and effects in the field of public administration.

The importance of effective communication in enhancing organizational outcomes has been underlined by several scholars (Garnett *et al.*, 2008; Pandey and Garnett, 2006). How an organization is perceived, and opinions thereabout, can be influenced by communication. As a tool of management, effective communication should ensure appropriate information-sharing, better coordination of activities, reduction of needless processes and rules, and eventually enhanced organizational performance. Although several studies have demonstrated how the organizational setting has an influence on communication processes and how the nature of communication sets it apart from other forms of organizational behaviour, little theoretical and empirical work has been done about organizational communication in public organizations and how it influences organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Thus, the goal of this study is to develop and test an exploratory model of communication and its impact on organizational commitment and job satisfaction in the Namibian public sector.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews literature on different variables emphasized in the study. The section defines and discusses organizational communication, and then discusses the dependent variables, namely organizational commitment, and job satisfaction.

2.1. Defining Organizational Communication

Organizational communication refers to the communication which takes place within an organization, and the core purposes thereof are information-sharing, the establishment of a constant coordination among members of the organization, the conveyance of organizational policies, and the resolution of problems occurring within the

organization (Eisenberg and Goodall, 1997; Shockley-Zalabak, 2006). Several scholars (such as (Foltz, 1981; Greenbaum, 1971; Knapp, 1969; Redding and Sanborn, 1964; Thayer, 1968) have endeavored to conceptualize organizational communication. Depending upon the information flow direction, the person who initiated the communication, and the person to whom it was conveyed, organizational communication has been subdivided into downward, upward, and horizontal directions. The most common communication type in the workplace is the boss-subordinate transaction by way of downward or upward communication.

Downward communication refers to information which flows from superiors to subordinates. Four roles of this type of communication have been recognized by Garnett (1992): conveyance of a vision, motivation of subordinates, provision of feedback about performance of subordinates, and assignment of tasks and conveyance of task-related information. Similarly, Katz and Kahn (1996) identified five purposes of downward communication: providing job-related instructions, explaining job rationale, explaining procedures and practices, providing feedback, and effective indoctrination of goals. Goldhaber (1993) pinpoints two fascinating aspects of downward communication: message overload and filtering. Subordinates can perceive downward organizational communication as causing message overload to them, and this can result in them avoiding the receipt of messages from supervisors. The relationship between information overload and organizational satisfaction and performance has been demonstrated by O'Reilly (1980). According to his research findings, perceived information overload leads to higher job satisfaction but lower performance. The "filtering" aspect of downward organizational communication refers to the probability of messages being distorted or changed during their channeling from top to down due to the number of links in a network, perceptual differences among staff members, and absence of trust in a supervisor.

Upward organizational communication flows from subordinates to superiors and serves to allow subordinates to inform their superiors about how work is processing; what problems and opportunities they perceive; their ideas about performance improvement; their gathered intelligence about what clients and other organizations are doing; and their feeling about the organization, their superiors, and their jobs (Garnett, 1992; Shchermerhorn *et al.*, 2005). Lastly, horizontal organizational communication means information exchange taking place laterally among individuals on the same level within an organization. As underlined by the literature, upward and horizontal communication is crucial for employee satisfaction (Miller, 1999).

Organizational communication can be "open" or "closed". *Open communication* refers to free information flow from superiors to subordinates, and vice-versa, through various channels (Dutton, 1998). On the other hand, communication in which the flow of information is somewhat restricted or directed is referred to as *closed communication.* This type of information is often characterized by a formal tone, and employees are not allowed to actively participate in the communication process (Dutton, 1998). Scholars have emphasized the important role played by open organizational communication for enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Carriere and Bourque (2009) have stressed that employee's satisfaction with organizational communication is an intermediate variable in influencing commitment. Work commitment has been proven to be higher in organizations that have open and constant organizational communication (Chen *et al.*, 2006). However, some researchers (such as (Trombetta and Rogers, 1988)) found no relationship between organizational communication and organizational commitment. Their research indicated that organizational communication influences job satisfaction but has no impact on commitment.

2.2. Organizational Commitment

The literature defines organizational commitment as one's propensity to accept, adopt, and voluntarily strive to achieve objectives, goals and values of the organization; and to feel a strong desire to carry on being a member of the organization (Çakır, 2001; Meyer and Allen, 1991). According to Wiener and Gechman (1977) organizational commitment may also refer to one's inclination to deem organizational interests more important than personal interests thereof. From the literature review (Buchanan, 1974; Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Reichers, 1985), at least three different definitional approaches are identified for commitment.

The first approach considers organizational commitment as a product of inducement/contribution relations between the employee and the organization. This approach is referred to as *the exchange (side-bets) approach*. The second approach views organizational commitment as an attitude or an alignment toward the organization, linking or attaching one's identity to the organization *(psychological approach)*. This orientation entails three elements, namely the employees' identification with the goals and values of the organization; involvement in its work activities; and desire to maintain membership in the organization (Porter *et al.*, 1974; Steers, 1977). The third approach refers to commitment as a binding of the member of the organization to behavioral acts and this happens when members of the organization adopt an attitude of commitment after engaging in explicit, volitional, and unalterable behaviors. This approach is referred to as *the attributions approach* (Reichers, 1985).

Few scholars have so far demonstrated a relationship between organizational commitment and employees' satisfaction with organizational communication (Downs, 1991; Downs *et al.*, 1995; Potvin, 1991; Putti *et al.*, 1990). The study of Putti *et al.* (1990) revealed that there is a positive relationship between communication satisfaction and organizational commitment. Also, a positive relationship between communication satisfaction and organizational commitment was demonstrated in the research of Downs (1991). Organizational communication is believed to also influence job satisfaction, which is discussed in the next section.

2.3. Job Satisfaction

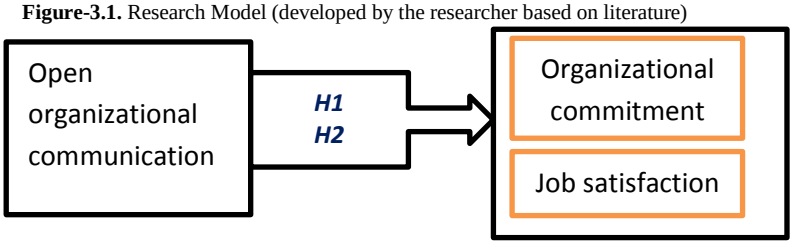
Scholars have defined job satisfaction in many different ways, but the definition by Locke (1976) is the commonly-used one. Locke (1976) defines job satisfaction as a pleasant emotional state which results from an individual's job or job experience consideration. Adding on this theory, Hulin and Judge (2003) posited that job satisfaction comprises multi-dimensional psychosomatic responses to an individual's job, and that these responses consist of evaluative/cognitive, emotional/affective, and behavioral components.

A positive relationship has been proven to exist between job satisfaction and factors such open communication, as well as feedback and constructive criticism (Yüksel, 2005). Also, the research of Halis (2000) demonstrated that job satisfaction increases with the establishment of a considerate and constant superior-subordinate communication, feedback, and active employee participation. (Pettit Jr *et al.*, 1997) also emphasize that open organizational communication positively influences job satisfaction. Taking a different approach, Ayrancı (2011) stresses that superior-subordinate communication is by itself a job satisfaction factor and is considered to be one of the determinants of organizational performance.

3. Research Model and Hypotheses

Given the research question and the literature reviewed, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of organizational communication, organizational commitment and job satisfaction by proposing and testing a model that is made of a set of hypotheses which postulates organizational communication as determinant of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. *Figure 3.1* below presents the research model.

Figure-3.1. Research Model (developed by the researcher based on literature)



As discussed in section 2, employee's satisfaction with organizational communication is an intermediate variable in influencing commitment (Carriere and Bourque, 2009). In her study, Downs (1991) found a positive relationship between communication satisfaction and organizational commitment. Therefore, the first hypothesis is developed:

- H1: *Open organizational communication is likely to be positively associated with organizational commitment*.

The literature reveals a positive relationship between job satisfaction and factors such open communication, as well as feedback and constructive criticism (Yüksel, 2005). Given that job satisfaction increases with the establishment of a considerate and constant superior-subordinate communication, feedback, and active employee participation Halis (2000), the second hypothesis is thus deduced:

- H2: *There is a positive relationship between open organizational communication and job satisfaction*.

4. Methodology

This study was an exploratory study of the impact of organizational communication on organizational commitment and job satisfaction the public sector in Namibia. The population for the study was employees from government ministries in Windhoek (Namibia). The sample was selected by randomly choosing four (4) employees from each of the 25 ministries of the current Namibian Government.

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument, it was essential to accurately and clearly define the key variables. Organizational communication was assessed by the *communication flow* (effectiveness of the communication flow in and around the organization); *coordination/knowledge sharing* (extent to which important information is shared by employees, departments, etc.); *accuracy of shared information; reliability of shared information*, and *timeliness of shared information*.

Organizational commitment was measured by the employee's *identification with the goals and values of the organization; involvement in its work activities; and desire to maintain membership in the organization.*

Job satisfaction was assessed by *task identity* (degree to which one can see one's work from beginning to end); *task significance* (degree to which one's work is seen as important and significant); *skill variety* (extent to which job allows one to do different tasks); autonomy (degree to which one has control and discretion over how to conduct one's job); and *feedback* (degree to which the work itself provides feedback for how one is performing the job).

The measurement instrument used was adapted from previous studies and revised where necessary to ensure reliability and validity of the data.

4.1. Reliability and Validity in this Study

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used as a measure of internal consistency-reliability of the scale used in this study. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal reliability for multi-item summated rating scales. Its values range between 0 and 1, where the higher the score, the more reliable the scale. The minimally acceptable reliability for

exploratory research should be in the range of 0.5 to 0.6 (Nunnally, 1978), while higher values (such as 0.8) generally indicate that the measure is highly reliable (Sekaran, 1992). For the value of alpha to be considered acceptable it has to be related to the purpose of the research: lower scores are acceptable for exploratory research, but even then these scores should be used only as an indication rather than a test of reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Table 4.1 provides the reliability statistics of the scale used in this study.

Table-4.1. Reliability statistics for the scale used in this study

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Organizational communication	0.78	15
Organizational commitment	0.72	10
Job satisfaction	0.73	10

Face validity was used for this study and was achieved through a thorough literature review and by developing and using theoretical definitions and validated measurement instruments.

5. Findings and Discussion of Results

The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Partial Least Squares regression).

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

The perceptions of organizational communication, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction are described in this section. A composite score was obtained for each constructs and dimension by totalling the individual scores of the relevant items and calculating the average. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics of the composite variables.

Table-5.1. Descriptive statistics of the composite variables (n=100)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Average %	Std. Deviation
Organizational communication	100	3.600	5.733	4.660	81.28	0.440
Organizational commitment	100	3.600	5.800	3.691	80.88	0.460
Job satisfaction	100	3.500	5.700	4.681	82.12	0.474

5.2. Correlations

Spearman correlations were used to determine influence of organizational communication on organizational commitment; and the influence of organizational communication on job satisfaction. A summary of Spearman correlation coefficients (ρ) and p-values for the different variables is provided in Table 5.2 below.

Table-5.2. A summary of the Spearman correlation coefficients and p-values (n=100)

Variable 1	Variable 2	Spearman correlation (ρ)	P-value
Organizational communication	Organizational commitment	0.771	<0.01
Organizational communication	Job satisfaction	0.686	<0.01

Table 5.2 shows statistically significant positive correlation between organizational communication and organizational commitment ($\rho = 0.771$); and between organizational communication and job satisfaction ($\rho = 0.686$).

5.3. Partial Least Squares (PLS) Regression Analysis

This study used *Partial Least Squares* (PLS) regression to test the various relationships between the variables. PLS method was preferred because it is more appropriate in the initial phase of developing theories (Fornell and Bookstein, 1982). PLS is also robust in that it does not require a large sample or normally distributed multivariate data (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Partial Least Squares (PLS) is a method for constructing predictive models when the factors are many and highly collinear (Wold, 1981;1985).

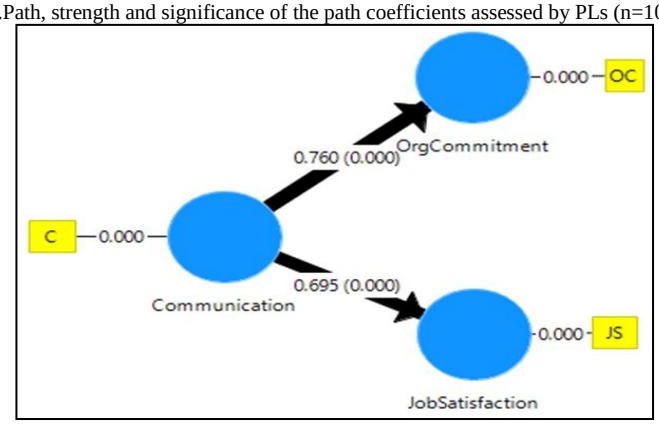
The significance of the paths and path coefficients in the PLS model is assessed using the bootstrap confidence intervals. The bootstrap aims to carry out familiar statistical calculations, such as standard errors, biases, confidence intervals among others, in an unfamiliar way: by purely computation means, rather than through the use of mathematical formulas. A comprehensive base of mathematical theory has grounded the development of bootstrap methods; however that is beyond the scope of this paper. The bootstrap confidence intervals used in the results, assess the significance of the paths and path coefficients in the PLS model. Efron and Tibshirani (1993) recommend that the bootstrap interval's lower and upper limits should not include 0. The bootstrap confidence intervals used to determine the statistical significance for the paths and path coefficients in the PLS model are presented in Table 5.3 below.

Table-5.3. Bootstrap confidence intervals and paths coefficients (PLS, n=100)

Path	Bootstrap lower (2.5%)	Bootstrap mean	Bootstrap upper (97.5%)	Path coefficients
Organizational communication -> Organizational commitment	0.678	0.758	0.845	0.760
Organizational communication -> Job satisfaction	0.598	0.693	0.802	0.695

The path, strength and significance of the path coefficients assessed by Partial Least Squares (PLS) are shown in the figure below.

Figure-5.1.Path, strength and significance of the path coefficients assessed by PLs (n=100)



The first hypothesis, namely that *open organizational communication is likely to be positively associated with organizational commitment*, is confirmed by significant path coefficients ($\gamma = 0.760$).

The hypothesis that there *is a positive relationship between open organizational communication and job satisfaction* is also confirmed by significant path coefficients ($\gamma = 0.695$), as shown in figure 5.1 and Table 5.1.

6. Summary

This study contributes to supplementing organizational communication, organizational commitment and job satisfaction literature in public administration contexts. The managerial value is found in the following recommendations underpinned by the findings of this study.

The findings of this study underline the importance of open organizational communication for enhanced organizational commitment and job satisfaction in public sector organizations. Managers should therefore ensure consistent open organizational communication.

Managerial interventions for effective open communication should mainly focus on the following areas: *communication flow* (effectiveness of the communication flow in and around the organization); *coordination/knowledge sharing* (extent to which important information is shared by employees, departments, etc.); *accuracy of shared information; reliability of shared information*, and *timeliness of shared information*. These aspects can be measured and therefore can be managed.

Communication practitioners, researchers, consultants, policymakers, and other relevant support organizations should use the measurement instrument developed and verified in the study to measure these phenomena in the public administration context. The questionnaire developed and used in this study was shown to be reliable. However, future research should refine the measurement. Improved measures and larger samples for verification could lead to better model specification.

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7. Conclusion

Given that organizational communication is a vehicle for the flow of information, policies, as well as resources, its impacts on organizational commitment and employee job satisfaction are considerably important in the workplace. Known the dearth of empirical knowledge in this regard, this study has enriched the body of knowledge on organizational communication and its effects on commitment and job satisfaction in the field of public organizations. It is known that human resources are the most strategic assets in contemporary organizations. Unless organizational communication strategies are designed in such a way that they enhance organizational commitment and job satisfaction, the objectives and goals of the organization cannot be adequately achieved. Public organizations' managers should therefore ensure open organizational communication, and thus will necessitate unrelenting support from researchers, consultants and other relevant stakeholders.

8. Limitations of the Study and Opportunities for Future Research

Although the present study aimed to make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on organizational communication, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction the public administration context, certain areas still need to be explored or expanded. Based on the outcome of this research, the following limitations are stated and opportunities for future research are outlined:

- Only employees from the Namibian Government Ministries, and therefore the findings cannot be generalised to all public organizations or other sectors in and/or outside Namibia. Future research should cover other organizations and sectors in and/or outside Namibia.
- It would be useful to replicate this study in other countries to verify to what extent organizational communication influences organizational commitment and job satisfaction in these countries and explain the differences between these countries. It would be worth pursuing the question: to what extent does culture, gender, age, and work experience (number of years in the profession) affect organizational communication, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction within these countries?

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