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ANALYZING COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS IN AN ENGINEERING INSTITUTION: AN INTERVIEW-BASED STUDY

Carlos, Sofia Elaine B, Delos Santos, Roselyn A. ; Gaspar, Romeo Jr DG. ; Javier, Jennylyn C.

Bulacan State University, Maguinhawa, Malolos City, Bulacan

ABSTRACT:

Institutional success is dependent on effective communication, which affects different aspects of workplace dynamics. This study explores the communication patterns within an engineering institution and the cultural attitudes as well as problems encountered by the management therein. We collect data on communication patterns, models, and practices by conducting qualitative interviews with key personnel of a Bulacan Province-based institution. Therefore, the results indicate that a combination of traditional and digital approaches towards communication allows for respect, equality and efficiency to thrive. The institution has a hierarchical communication process in place that aids in the smooth flow of information between different levels. In addition, employing modern technology, such as social media and video conferencing, enhances access and the dissemination of information. However, employee responsiveness and miscommunication remain a concern; the institution deals with these by using direct communication channels and resolution strategies. In a positive working environment, professional regard also exists alongside casual conversation. Employees' sense of togetherness, as well as comprehensibility, is shaped by gestures. This communication culture at the institution, which encourages open-mindedness and change, contributes to collaboration that is effective and prosperous for the institution at large. Some recommendations to boost communication strategies are new employee orientation programs and feedback forums. Further inquiry can focus on communication dynamics using a larger sample size.

Introduction

Communication holds a pivotal role in human life; it creates a massive impact, good or bad, in many aspects. Communication happens when the sender transfers ideas or information to the receiver through any channel (Genc, 2017). Studying communication in a workplace can be examined by observing their verbal and non-verbal interactions with one another.

Many fragmentations happen as time passes. It involves the confluence of social media and traditional communication. Communication grows as digital tools evolve, and social media platforms are accessible to be used even in formal or informal settings (Molini et al., 2022). Those changes in communication have a positive and negative effect on the system.

They are a well-known engineering institution in Bulacan that aims to build infrastructure in order to improve the lives of specific communities. Their priority is always the safety of the public.

The purpose of the study was to dig deeper into what communication processes happen in the actual field of civil engineering. The researchers want to have a background of their existing communication culture, the challenges they experience day-by-day, and the sequence of action they have taken to improve it. In order to accumulate that information, the researchers visit a company and interview with the two engineers who obtain a higher position.

Review of Related Literature

Organizational communication has grown significantly more complicated and diversified in today's organizations, and it is now crucial to the general success and functioning of the organization (Rajhans, 2009). The communication style of the organization plays a part in employee morale, motivation, and performance. Workplace communication can take many different forms and affect employee motivation in a long-term way. Employee engagement with the company, job happiness, and a rise in workplace trust can all result from successful management communication.

A workplace with effective communication benefits employees' organizational productivity in maintaining the quality of working relationships, job satisfaction, and well being (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014). The workplace is where all the communication takes place in an institution. Having a comfortable and calm working atmosphere creates a harmonious relationship between employees. It leads to open and conductive communication which allows growth of efficiency.

In an organization, ineffective communication hinders the goal of the institution. According to Greenberg and Baron (2008), Several organizations have confusion and insufficient planning because of a lack of effective communication. Communication gaps lead to dysfunction due to mistakes. The head of an organization uses communication in decision-making, which affects the efficiency and productivity of the organization.

According to Ramadanty and Martinus (2016), as organizational communication develops, one of the key functions of the organization and as having the power to inspire workers. It indicates that nonverbal cues, interpersonal communication styles, leadership, and communication environments largely influence employee motivation. Through nonverbal communication, the development of the employee's motivation somewhat increases. The degree of information satisfaction between management and employees is the basis of interpersonal communication leadership. Management and transparency in downward communication in the form of information from superiors ensure that communication between supervisors and employees runs smoothly.

Workplaces today are filled with digital communication platforms because of the advancement of technology. After the pandemic struck, the communication tools of the institution varied between remote, on-site, and hybrid. According to Hoory (2023), mobile phones, landlines, Zoom, Google Chat, and Google Meet are the most effective methods of communication for workers. In this way, institutions keep up their surveillance on the implementation of projects on reaching deadlines and inform their clientele about the progress of a project.

Sometimes, communication barriers, such as unresponsiveness, unwillingness to communicate, and unclear instructions, affect the progress of a project. The relationship between employees and employers becomes crucial because of the hierarchical levels. Nevertheless, communication is open through different paths where ideas, emotions, thoughts, and comprehension are produced or shared (Guo & Sanchez, 2005).

Methodology

The researchers employed the qualitative approach to bring out the communication practices in the institution. This study adopted the qualitative method to gain insight into the communication culture.

The only data-gathering instrument used in the paper was through personal interviews. The questions were based on patterns of communication within the institution, communication models adopted by the institution, and unique communication culture that influences communication practices. The selected informants were the institution heads of the Planning, Programming, and Designing Division. The main focus of the discussion was the point of view and experiences of the engineers regarding the communication that happens in their workforce.

The face-to-face interview was the primary process used to gather information regarding the communication flow, models, practices, and organizational culture being studied. The interview question guide was used to gain insight into the respondents and share their perceptions on issues about communication in an institution. To ensure that no part of the interview would be omitted, the researchers first asked for the respondents' permission to have an audio record throughout the interview.

Results

Upon observing the institution's workplace, the researchers noticed how comfortable they were with one another. They casually talk, but they still have respect and honor. Their hierarchy works only in the professional aspect, but how they treat everyone will show how they promote equality. They showed that higher-ups or lower branches of their institution have the same treatment, and no one will be left behind. The institution's communication culture was already established even in the previous time, even though there are some changes where technology has already taken its part to improve and make it easier for every member.

Communication plays a vital role in their institution, enabling them to work according to their respective functions. They utilize communication in transmitting information, cooperating with the client, and giving instructions. They are also aware of the changes in the communication process nowadays, and in order to put up with that innovation, they must adapt because it will eventually improve the current one. They stated that in order to have a healthy workplace, you should communicate with the utmost respect, no matter what position you hold.

The two department heads agreed that, in order to keep in line with the other branch of their institution, they use social media platforms; they stated that it is more convenient for them because, most of the time, some are on different parts of the projects. They use Zoom, Viber, and Messenger to communicate with one another to discuss and clarify the given set of instructions. They used this communication medium for the institution to maintain the communication process.

The institution only has one communication process: sending information from the higher-ups to the department heads, then transmitting it to the divisions, and lastly to the employees or persons concerned. On the other hand, the employee's response to the division will be relayed back to the department head, and they will relay it to the higher-ups. They elaborated that no level will be bypassed, as every piece of information will walk through its respective level.

They established different modes of communication, which are verbal and nonverbal. In observing their working environment, non-verbal communication is commonly used casually, for example, by tapping someone on the shoulder, making an expression, or using hand signage. While verbal communication was established in both written and spoken form, they utilized Zoom and personal meetings to give instructions and inform the members involved in the project. They also used memorandum and messaging applications to connect each member. They say that in resolving an issue, they usually call the person involved, and if it is unsolved, they will now release a memorandum to that person. They implement different modes of communication to be more efficient and avoid miscommunication.

In their institution, they also have hindrances and strengths in their communication process. Their statements are congruent, as they stated that the impediment to their communication is the person's availability and miscommunication. They say they have difficulty transmitting communication if members are active, especially on social media, or when someone misunderstands the given instructions or information. They recognized their usage of blended modes of communication as their strength, as it is impactful for them to communicate whether they are designated in an isolated location.

As time passes, and with the aid of technology integration, their communication processes undergo some changes. They learned to fit the current trends, like using the internet, and mix them up with their implemented culture, which helps them disseminate information quickly. They adapt to the changes conclusively, which enables them to follow the trends that lead them to positive changes in their communication processes.

Discussion

The institution uses modern technology supported by various household items for its communication, which involves meetings, instructions, and memorandum; these include social media, video conferencing, and messaging applications. This multi modal communication approach by the school facilitates access, caters to different communication preferences, and enhances information distribution across diverse localities. Therefore, the requirement to maintain and improve it will increase.

Within the institution, respectful relationships foster a culture characterized by equity and open communication. An optimistic and respectful culture at the institution aids in boosting the morale and job satisfaction of its staff. The institution's horizontal communication between employees builds empathy and joint effort as well as allows open communication to give it an impetus as a means of preserving the culture.

The general hindrances to employee responsiveness and miscommunication were noted to be common problems. However, by using telephone calls and official memorandum to resolve issues directly, the institution displays recognition of these difficulties. Hence, this approach merges into techniques for overcoming communication blockages. This action could lead to increased effectiveness and lessen encountered problems.

The institution did not have significant challenges related to communication-based on one's position, although it had a hierarchical structure. A culture exists within the institution such that informal communication can exist side by side with professional respect, thereby making it conducive for working with each other efficiently. Nonverbal communication plays a role in casual interactions, which, when observed, can foster camaraderie and mutual understanding within an institution. Because the primary point is about the motivation of employees then thereby underscores the significance of considering non-verbal cues alongside verbal communication for promoting positive dynamics in the workplace.

Overall, the institution's existing mode of communication, embracing many means of interaction at the same time, along with its policy of apparent communication and peaceful resolution of contradictions, account for its beneficial work setting that might serve as a guarantee of fruitful cooperation in the future. With regard to workers' attention, interaction, and work in the institution in general, it is necessary to continue practicing and improving these methods of communication.

Conclusion

This was conducted to further acquire knowledge about the significance of communication with how the members of an institution build connections and cooperation, which in turn could result in greater efficiency when it comes to their work in the institution.

To summarize, this study found that this institution only has one communication process, going from the high to low positions, and its modes of communication are verbal and non-verbal. They often utilize online meetings, face-to-face interactions, memoranda, message platforms, and calls for the matters that they will talk about. This has proved that modern technology has been an influence on their current communication culture. However, it is essential to note that they already have existing practices in their institution even before they have conformed with modernity.

The researchers recommend that the institution conducts programs or orientations for the newly hired employees to educate them about the values, culture, and practices of the current institution so that they can easily blend in with them. Furthermore, it is recommended to make sessions about the feedback of employees which is like a forum for them to express their concerns about the improvement of the institution to make sure that open communication is being maintained. Future researchers are suggested to enhance the study by getting more members to be interviewed in order to get more insights and information that could be beneficial in finding more solutions to the queries.

Limitations

This study examines the communication processes within civil engineering institutions or workplaces. It explores their communication methods, current culture, common communication issues, and the steps taken to address them.

Most of the information for the study was gathered by the researcher through interviews. In the interviews guide, there were 11 questions that covered communication models, communication patterns, and different communication cultures that defined communication practices. The number of questions was limited due to time limits imposed by the two engineers in higher positions.

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