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Organizational Communication and Employees Differences: An Organizational Ethnography

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative organizational ethnography aimed to determine the common issues or concerns in a state university. Respondents were chosen through convenience sampling. A researcher-made survey form was made to determine the common issues and concerns of the State University. The gathered data were coded and analyzed through content analysis. Results showed that organizational communication and employee individual differences were the most common issues or concerns encountered by the University. The researchers concluded that these issues or concerns affected the University in many forms. Thus, it is very important to look into and address such issues and concerns to avoid serious problems in the future. Researchers ultimately add value through interpersonal interactions. Current organizational communication procedures can benefit greatly from simple yet effective changes. Individual differences are the characteristics that set humans apart from one another. Each individual within a group has a unique manner of acting. Understanding individual variations are crucial because they affect how employees feel, think, and behave.

INTRODUCTION

In today's environment, doing business is quite difficult. All production components, including people, machines, and materials, should be controlled carefully if a company is to remain profitable in the fiercely competitive and challenging global market economy. Human resource poses the most demanding challenge among the production elements since, in contrast to other inputs, personnel management necessitates expert control of thoughts, sentiments, and emotions to ensure maximum efficiency. In this challenge, organizational communication is crucial. Historically, managers have spent most of their time communicating in some way (meetings, face-to-face discussions, memos, letters, e-mails, reports, etc.).

However, it is now an essential component of their work. Greater cooperation and coordination between employees in various functional groups are necessary to manage production operations successfully. Therefore, effective communication practices have become more crucial in all organizations to control the staff's current performance and inspire them to higher performance.

To have effective communication, the organization will face problems in achieving the ideal communication flow in the institution. Psychological individual differences, which include personality, affectivity, and general mental ability of a person have been shown to predict numerous work-related behaviors. Although substantial research demonstrates relationships between psychological individual differences and behaviors such as lateness, absenteeism, and turnover, there is no integrative framework providing scholars and practitioners a guide for conceptualizing how, why, and under what circumstances we observe such relationships. No two employees in an organization are alike, according to organizational reality. The knowledge, efficacy, talents,

requirements, and demographic traits (such as age, gender, and ethnicity) that each individual brings to the workplace vary greatly. These distinctions are precisely what can help organizations succeed. For instance, theory and research indicate that diverse teams perform better overall and are more creative when coming up with ideas and solving problems (e.g. in terms of functional competence, education, tenure, age, gender, and ethnicity) (Horwitz, 2005; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007).

However, individual employee differences are not a guarantee of success in and of themselves because they can also lead to conflicts and disagreements due to divergent views and viewpoints (Jehn *et al.*, 1999). Studies have shown that organizations' ability to take advantage of individual differences among members of groups or teams depends on the support of HR management and supervisors, specifically in terms of team-oriented HR practices (such as team autonomy and performance reward systems), encouraging positive social interactions (such as turn-taking behavior), and task-oriented leadership (Chi *et al.*, 2009; Klein *et al.*, 2011; Woolley *et al.*, 2010).

Due to these issues within an organization, the researchers aim to discover the common organizational problems within the university. This paper seeks to identify the organizational communication flow, the issues, and employees' recommendations that could improve the flow of communication. This paper also aims to know how employee differences could affect the university's teamwork, job performance, and organizational communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Communication

Internal/external and formal/informal communication

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are generally divided along dividing lines in definitions of organizational communication (c.f. Kreps 1990, Heide, Johansson & Simonsson 2005). A thorough examination of the definition of organizational communication and its connection to public relations is provided by Dalfelt, Heide, and Simonsson (2001; cf. Cheney & Christensen 2001a, 2001b).

There is a clear distinction between the two research traditions in many countries. According to Botan and Taylor (2004: 646), public relations has established its specialized journals, professional and scholarly associations, and publications. Organizational communication researchers focus on internal formal communication, while public relations researchers focus on external formal communication. One of the reasons for the divide may be this phenomenon.

Leader-coworker communication is the most popular subject in the study of internal communication problems. Studies also focus on communication efficiency, sensemaking, and communication and learning.

Leader-coworker communication is the first topic discussed when discussing internal communication at the micro level, or as I prefer to call it, leader-coworker communication. These studies vary in that some have a macro-perspective while others concentrate on interpersonal communication. A number of them are related to the academic discipline of linguistics, such as Lindgren's study on performance reviews and Adelswärd's study on employment interviews from 1988. (2001). A few research concentrate on meetings. Gunnarsson (1995) examined gender and interaction in research seminars at a university, and Milles (2003) examined interaction and gender differences in meetings at work.

Simonsson (2002) investigated meeting interactions between department managers and staff members in a case study at Volvo Cars. Simonsson concludes that the managers she observed at Volvo are largely engaged in the role of informational and distributive communication. Examples show how managers provide information without contextualizing or connecting it to employees' jobs.

Despite organizational shifts toward greater decentralization and self-managed groups, communication between managers and employees has not changed. The importance of sensemaking is emphasized in new leadership theories, and managers and employees alike stress the need for communication. Simonsson says, "However, this rhetoric is not put into practice" (2002). Instead, the transmission paradigm of communication permeates leadership in this organization.

Technical and structural definitions are used to describe communication issues. Rarely do respondents discuss ideas like meaning, comprehension, and interpretation when they discuss their opinions on communication and their roles in it? Nobody asserts that managers should establish a shared understanding and a shared foundation for principles. In other words, crucial leadership aspects are neglected.

Both are case studies with ethnographic influences,

including observations and interviews, and in the Johansson research, discourse analysis. They both focus on the communication of a company's purpose statement from group-level management to individual employees. In all research, the fieldwork lasted a rather lengthy time—one and a half years. Theories on sensemaking and dialogue are conspicuous and analyses depart from an interpretive framework. In the Johansson study, managers also showed their shortcomings in communication. In general, their views on communication processes were old-fashioned and simplistic. Even in this organization, the transmission view of communication predominated. In interviews, managers stated that they repeated the message to improve communication.

Modern elements were present in the mission statement's speech, though. The communication method involved workshops with smaller groups, with a significant amount of debate and discussion. In all cases, managers at various levels of the hierarchy lacked sufficient knowledge of coworkers' or other managers' working circumstances, conditions, and opportunities. Managers were the key actors in both investigations. Practitioners of public relations did not actively participate in the communication processes. Several managers simultaneously required assistance and education in communication-related matters (Simonsson, 2002: 247; Johansson, 2003: 338).

Within a municipal police agency, research focuses on internal communication (Ekman 1999). The findings from this study and the previously stated studies have a lot in common. Ekman breaks from the idea that texts regulate and direct behavior in organizations and examines how they operate as a technique of reining in daily practice, which is loaded with multiple and frequently incompatible demands. The value of informal leaders and small conversations to daily work is evident from the findings.

Ekman concludes that leaders must participate actively in small chats, even when doing so presents challenges. Engaging in small chats assumes that people have a high level of trust in one another. The sanction powers inherent in leadership, however, provide leaders and managers with a position of authority (1999 : 207).

In a healthcare organization, Alström and Sjöblom-Nordgren (1999) evaluated the effectiveness of internal communication techniques related to the mission statement and goals. The study's experimental methodology made it possible to compare various tactics. Four groups were made aware of: 1. a top-down, one-way communication style that is characteristic of a leader-centered strategy, 2. A strategy that is focused on the coworkers, where the coworkers themselves identify the communication needs, 3. A time management method that scheduled time for 4. a control group in which there were no communications.

The authors conclude that diverse tactics had a substantial impact on the motivation and participation of coworkers. While motivation fell in the control group, it increased as a result of the leader-centered and coworker-centered strategies.

Individual Differences

Gender Diversity

Gender was first used to characterize characteristics of women and men in 1970, taking the role of sex (Unger, 1979). Gender relates to one's self-identity, or how closely one identifies with the masculine or the feminine as defined by society. Similar to this, some views about what kinds of behavior, attitudes, cognitive abilities, or interests appeal more to one sex than the other, as well as inborn dispositions and natural affiliations, are related to male or female. These gender disparities have an impact on how people react in the workplace. Sometimes gender diversity harms attitudes and actions including bias, discrimination, and stereotyping. Such an attitude eventually harms workplace productivity.

The aptitude, talents, and talent of women are not completely appreciated and are therefore underutilized, according to Singh & Vinnicombe (2004). Typically, businesses favored hiring men over women because they believed men could perform better in managerial roles. According to Carr-2003 Ruffino's analysis, the lack of management of gender issues has rendered workforce diversity in the organization obsolete. Similarly to this, Kochan, Bezukova, and Thomas (2002) noted that it is essential to include female employees at all levels to improve the enterprise's overall productivity. According to Connel (2002), gender diversity is favorably correlated with employee performance. Williams and O'Reilly (1998), on the other hand, made the argument that gender heterogeneity is a cause of limitations in total team performance.

Age Diversity

There are both positive and negative age stereotypes for both older and younger workers. F. Kunze. Age diversity is a difficulty for companies in 2009 since people naturally gravitate toward their groups at the expense of other groups. According to him, other age groups experience emotional instability and discrimination within institutions if an employee's age is used as a significant criterion for differentiation.

According to Gelner (2009), age diversity can harm a worker's productivity because different age groups have different beliefs, attitudes, and interests. In general, generational differences are the cause of low productivity, disagreements, and clashes. Each generation believed that its capabilities were unmatched, so there was no reason to be concerned about differences emerging due to generational differences (Rowe, 2010).

Ethnic Diversity

According to Sayers (2012), ethnicity refers to the group of people who have a common culture, tradition, customs, routine practice, dress, beliefs, and values. According to Makokolo (2005), an ethnic group is a collection of tribes that share a shared origin narrative and sense of destiny. According to Timmermans, Ostergaard, and Kristinsson (2011), ethnicity can be used as a stand-in or alternative

for cultural background. The members' ability to perform innovatively and creatively can be influenced by disparities in ethnicity. According to Pitts (2010), institutions are growing increasingly diverse from a racial perspective, so it makes sense to pay close attention to how different ethnic groups interact at work.

Ethnicity is a two-edged sword with benefits and drawbacks (Opstal, 2009). Conflicts over traditions may have an impact on an organization's quality, performance, and financial results, according to Kiglai (2006). According to Dahlin, Weingart, and Hinds (2005), social categorization and ethnic variety were the primary causes of conflicts, clashes, and collisions. According to Benshop (2001), inequality is a disadvantage of ethnic variety. Additionally, Van Esbroek (2008) highlighted that effective management of a diverse workforce is essential to safeguard institutional benefits and get rid of any ethnic diversity weaknesses that can harm workers' performance.

Experience Diversity

Workplace experience is defined as the skills, knowledge, and abilities a person has obtained while pursuing a career in a certain subject (Carr *et al.*, 2006). According to Pinder (2014), experienced workers in any company are in charge of producing organizational profitability rather than output. The key to success is hiring employees that have the necessary knowledge and are aware of the objectives, problems, and requirements of their work (Morgan, 2015).

According to research done by the World Bank Group in 2012, experienced personnel is crucial to the institution's efficacy since they have already gone through several pieces of training that have an impact on people's performance. Employee experience demonstrates their seriousness, consistency, and growth in professional expertise, all of which have an impact on the performance of the organization.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter represents the research methods utilized in the study to carry out its purpose. This includes a discussion on research design, selection of participants, data gathering method, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing a content analysis approach. To find trends in recorded dialogue, researchers utilize content analysis. The texts' words, topics, and concepts were categorized or coded, and the results were then examined. Convenience sampling was utilized in this research. This method was used since researchers collected market research data from a conveniently available pool of respondents. It is also incredibly prompt, uncomplicated, and economical. The participants were the 30 personnel of the State University. Consent was obtained from the participants. To gather the data needed, a researcher-made survey form was used that contains study questions to be answered

by the participants. A quick follow-up interview was also conducted to elaborate on the questions for a more detailed and comprehensive response. The gathered data were coded and analyzed through content analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The study used a process for ethical consideration. Respondent's involvement in this study is entirely voluntary, and they are not required to take part in doing so would be detrimental to their interests. The respondents were also made aware that the study was only done for academic purposes and that the information collected from them would only be used for those purposes.

The researchers made sure that the information they collected about the respondents to this study was kept confidential and wouldn't ever be made public. The names of the respondents will be replaced with codes, the name sheet will be removed, kept, or destroyed when it is no longer required for the research, the researchers will have exclusive access to the master list of codes, and the files containing research data will be password protected and encrypted to protect the data.

Republic Act 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, protects the interests of the respondents. As a result, any relevant data or information about the respondents of this study may not be accessed, transported, or copied without the permission and consent of the researchers and respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The State University supports the creation of elite and moral human capital for long-term growth in Bohol and the nation. It is dedicated to providing top-notch higher education in the arts, sciences, professional disciplines, and technological fields; it also engages in research, development, and extension services.

Organizational Communication

As answers were analyzed, organizational communication came out as the top common issue in the organization. Any organization's management strategy must include effective communication. Effective communication is a key component of effective management, regardless of whether the goal is to inform employees of new policies, plan for a weather disaster, maintain safety throughout the company, or pay attention to employee attitudes. Organizations need detailed rules and plans for communicating with their constituencies, employees, stakeholders, and the general public if they want to succeed.

According to the respondents, some forms of communication, such as oral, written, and body language, are not as precise and efficient as they should be. There are times when there is a lack of feedback among colleagues or other departments. Giving poor feedback to subordinates, such as indirectly saying the primary concern to the person involved, could provide misunderstanding in the workplace. It is suggested to provide constructive

criticism, so the recipient understands that the criticism is ultimately for their benefit. Excellent teamwork requires effective communication.

They also added that effective collaboration requires effective communication. This implies that communication, whether oral, written or through body language, must be effective and efficient. It must also be able to flow from all sides. At the same time, feedback is just as important as communication. Feedback will help members of the organization become more motivated and productive.

Respondents have also shared that companies or organizations are looking for employees who can follow instructions, give clear instructions, accurately listen, give helpful feedback, *get along* with coworkers and customers, network, provide useful information, work well in teams, and creatively and critically solve problems and communicate ideas. There is more to good organizational communication than only having know-how or knowledge. Being able to develop and exchange information, collaborate with many groups or individuals, communicate in challenging and ever-changing situations, and have the ability or willingness to speak appropriately are all necessary for effective organizational communication. Thus, respondents firmly believe in the importance of communication in an organization.

Employee's Differences

Differences such as personality, values, and work ethics are other related among employees is the second thing that brings concern among the respondents in their organization.

Employee diversity in terms of knowledge, skills, performance, talents, needs, and demographic traits is becoming more common in organizations and is important for giving them a competitive edge. People differ in many ways, bringing their personalities, values, emotions, and moods to the workplace. When new employees join an organization, their permanent or erratic qualities have an impact on how they act and function. Additionally, when hiring new employees, businesses anticipate that they will possess a particular set of talents, prowess, personality, and values. Therefore, it's critical to comprehend the unique traits that influence employee conduct at work.

After answers were evaluated and analyzed, the respondents believe that blending multiple personalities can be a big challenge. People have very different personalities, and the diversity of backgrounds, opinions, views, and experiences can pose challenges for teams. This creates many potential problems and opportunities. Teams may have diverse human personalities, making group dynamics difficult. A team could have differences in work ethics and principles, making it difficult to understand one another, especially because some employees have low self-awareness of themselves and others. Sometimes, the team fails in a particular activity, or there could be delays in producing the work output. The human resource department is working on various

tools and evaluations in creating effective team-building activities for the employees to know more about the person's personality and behaviors, and at the same time, increase the respect and understanding of one another for a more harmonious relationship among the employees. This is also to aid in successful collaboration and promote open communication. The respondents also highlight turning those differences into assets to work harmoniously in the organization. Respondents also added that although it is the HR department's concern to see to it the harmonious relationship that runs in the organization, it is still the responsibility of the employee to assess oneself on how his/her weaknesses and differences can be turned into not just to an organization's asset but also to one's advantage of growing holistically while meeting the organization's goals. Thus, respondents believe that individual differences may be a factor in how an organization may look but respondents do also agree that those differences can still be turned into an instrument for the betterment of the organization as a whole.

Other organizational issues/concerns that were noted from the respondents' answers were:

Process Management Issues

Accordingly, some organizational procedures imposed by the management make the task delayed or ineffective. They set rules and regulations that result in poor management processes for the employees. It is sometimes complex, confusing, and takes too much time to accomplish such a procedure. The higher-ups must provide employee feedback regarding this matter. They must comprehend their demands and take action to develop policies that complete the task quickly and effectively.

Role Assignment

Role specification is the process of selecting the best candidate for the position and delegating tasks to the most qualified employees. Workflows can be disrupted, efficiency can be reduced, and communication between team members can be affected by a lack of quality. For this reason, organizations need to enlist the help of recruiters who are good at finding suitable candidates for specific roles.

There must be a proper way to select employees to do the assigned job/task. First, this must be in line with their job description. Second, the person assigned must be knowledgeable about the task assigned to them. This is essential for the task to be more productive and cut off unnecessary corrections and failures of the work. Immediate office heads must not treat others unfairly or be biased among people in assigning job assignments. They must be familiar with the talents and interests of their team members.

CONCLUSION

From the conducted research, 2 major issues or concerns of the University emerged which are organizational

communication and employee differences.

A healthy relationship is built on honest and open communication, just like in so many other areas of life. Things might start to fall apart quickly if a business doesn't communicate effectively with its clients or with itself. Every employee in the company should be informed of the organization's goals and objectives thanks to a sound organizational communication plan. Relationships between staff members, the administration, and clients are strengthened and maintained as a result. And by enabling the orderly flow of information between the employees who have important knowledge and the employees who need it, it can serve to increase the general efficiency of the business.

Both the employer and the employee value having content employees. It is important for both the lifespan of the employee and the overall well-being of the company. Stress at work is on the rise, even though it has been shown that happiness leads to a more productive workplace. Rising workplace stress is a global issue that both the employer and the employee should own up to. Organizations may be tense environments. They do not have to be. By encouraging improved organizational cultures that capitalize on each employee's special skill set and so help to minimize workplace stress structurally, businesses can improve the well-being of their employees. Realizing that each employee is a unique individual with a unique composition of personality traits, life experiences, and characteristics is especially beneficial for those in charge of businesses. The well-being of the workplace can be significantly influenced by individual characteristics. Therefore, the respondents firmly believe in the importance of having good and effective organizational communication and the importance of building techniques on how to turn individual differences into an organization's assets.

Lastly, this study is only focused on the responses submitted by the participants through the researcher-made survey form on what are the issues and concerns that they have encountered in the university. This study did not cover factors that may cause the arousal of the different issues or concerns presented.

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