

EXPLORING COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS AT A FOOD MANUFACTURING COMPANY: AN INTERVIEW-BASED STUDY

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ABSTRACT

In this day and age, the world has slowly been shifting to the widespread use of technology in almost all aspects, including employment. This is proven by the continuous growth in the number of remote jobs globally, which allows people to work from home through the use of technology anytime and anywhere. Naturally, challenges and dilemmas, especially when it comes to communication, arise in the workplace. However, the challenges experienced in the face-to-face setup may differ from what is experienced in a remote or online setup.

That being said, this research aims to discover the organizational culture being practiced in a remote work setup, specifically its organizational culture, communication flow, and practices, as well as the communication model being observed in the workplace through the conduction of an interview between two engineers.

The findings reveal that the organization has both linguistic diversity and cultural pluralism. Moreover, their primary communication channels are digital tools, which is an indication that the interactive model of communication is observed in their company. In addition, employees, irrespective of their positions, are also given the chance to participate and talk during meetings, which signifies that the company's communication flows are both vertical and horizontal. Lastly, technological barriers like internet connectivity impact project development, which may lead to miscommunications in the workplace.

Overall, the research sheds light on communication challenges and practices in remote work environments while also highlighting the healthy work atmosphere the selected organization has cultivated.

Keywords: Remote Work, Communication, Engineering, And Workplace.

1. INTRODUCTION

A renowned food manufacturing company located in Guiguinto, Bulacan, Philippines, operates under the umbrella of a parent company that is known for its rich history as a pioneer in noodle manufacturing in the Philippines. These companies have evolved into a leading manufacturer and distributor of noodle and food products in Asia. Their flagship noodle brand, DELICIOUS Special Noodles, has garnered significant recognition for its quality and affordability, establishing itself as a major player in the market. They also serve as the exclusive distributor of Malaysia's popular canned milk products, Doreen condensed and evaporated milks.

Given its stature in the industry and its commitment to delivering high-quality food products, the food manufacturing company presents an ideal opportunity to explore communication dynamics within an organization. This study aims to delve into the unique communication culture, flow, models, and practices within the organization, aligning with the key objectives outlined below.

This research aims to understand the unique communication culture within this organization, including its values, norms, and shared beliefs that influence how people communicate. The analysis will focus on how communication flows within the company, examining important channels, hierarchies, and feedback loops that contribute to effective communication. Both formal and informal communication models used within the selected food manufacturing company will be explored, along with their impact on everyday interactions among employees. Specific instances or events within the company will be documented to examine their impact on communication and to connect theoretical concepts to real-world situations. Through interviews and observations within the company, this study seeks to shed light on organizational communication, contributing to a deeper understanding of how it functions in a practical setting.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers the pieces of related literature that are found relevant to the study.

An organization has to recognize and adapt good communication ethics and culture into daily operations. In the context of communication dynamics, a study by LaGree et al.[1] delved into respect and how it affects younger employees in the institution. When the employees felt their autonomy was valued, they became more resilient. Consequently, their engagement, loyalty, and job satisfaction were influenced by this resilience. In connection with this, Alyammahi et al.[2] also discussed the importance of communication ethics in attaining success in the

workplace. Effective and ethical communication strategies increase productivity by giving management and employees the information they need for decision-making.

Verčić & Špoljarić[3] emphasized that when choosing internal communication channels, organizations should take their employees' preferences into account. Companies were advised to seek employee input or feedback on current communication practices actively. Given that communication channels can significantly impact employee satisfaction, adopting a balanced strategy that integrates new technologies while retaining conventional media for specific informational purposes is advisable. As stated, there are conventional and new methods for communicating at work. A conventional communication approach adheres to formal structures and hierarchical channels, while the new approach emphasizes flexibility, collaboration, and adaptability, which are not required to follow formal structures. According to Shahid[4], conventional communication techniques are being replaced by a new trend in business communication technology. This new form of communication reaches every employee in the organization, resulting in smooth communication within the workplace and maintaining balanced and effective communication between departments. In connection with this, Kwayu et al.[5] investigated how informal social media practices affect knowledge exchange and work processes in a telecommunications company. It is found that these daily practices play a crucial role in how work gets done in the organization. The findings highlight the importance of balancing day-to-day organizational processes between official employee communication and the growing informal communication patterns.

Communication across teams, departments, and individuals within an organization is referred to as horizontal workplace communication. Despite the communication barriers faced by employees from varied ethnic backgrounds, the study conducted by Maharani et al.[6] found that employers could generally resolve communication conflicts by using compromise. Therefore, it

may be concluded that cross-cultural diversity in the workplace is well managed when ethnic diversity does not directly impact the continuity of horizontal communication. With this, Sapungan et al.[7] highlighted the role of communication in helping organizations bridge cultural gaps. They emphasized that effective communication involving speaking, listening, and feedback can increase employee motivation and engagement. Moreover, organizations were suggested to provide the employees with the resources and instructions they need to function in a multicultural workplace. Educating employees can enhance their understanding of intercultural differences, proper conduct, and dispute resolution, fostering a positive work environment.

Work engagement was shown to be positively related to work outcomes. Gameda and Lee[8] examined the effects of several leadership styles on technical professionals' job satisfaction and performance. Transactional leadership is more about maintaining the status quo and using rewards for employees to achieve goals, while transformational leadership is about inspiring and motivating them to innovate and create change toward the future success of the company. In addition, laissez-faire leadership style refers to when employers take a hands-off approach and allow the employees to make decisions regarding the output. According to their study, transactional leadership was positively linked with task performance, but transformational leadership positively impacted work engagement and innovative behavior. On the other hand, laissez-faire leadership negatively affected task performance.

Maneerutt[9] aimed to determine the main causes of miscommunication in the workplace and provided solutions for improving internal communication. Miscommunication was stated to be caused mainly by the sender, followed by the channel, receiver, and message. The sender and receiver's attitude, readiness, and relationship influenced the company setting and culture. Additionally, to improve communication, senders should prepare their messages carefully, ensure they are straightforward to understand, and show consideration for the opinions of others. A study conducted by Cabanias[10] on the communication barriers among workers in a manufacturing company indicated barriers such as the credibility of the sender, information overload, emotions, language, and lack of feedback. There is no significant difference in assessing communication barriers based on the respondents' profiles, except for gender and company position. In another perspective, Jamadi et al.[11] showed that the size of an organization can lead to miscommunication and hinder efficient communication if there is not a clear system in place for managing the exchange of messages. Moreover, a study conducted by Cakula and Pratt[12] indicated that increasing communication effectiveness and preventing miscommunication at work depends on the system and the competence of the department heads in terms of management and proper instruction.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Method

To gather comprehensive data for this study, researchers utilized a qualitative method. Qualitative research is a type of research methodology that focuses on exploring and understanding people's beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data[13]. Virtual interviews have been conducted in which participants were asked open-ended questions about their experiences, perceptions, and observations regarding communication within the organization.

3.2. Informants

The researchers employed a purposive sampling method to select interviewees who could offer valuable insights into organizational communication practices inside the company. According to Campbell et al.[14], the reason for purposive sampling is the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the rigor of the study and the trustworthiness of the data and results. This method ensured a focused approach to data collection, resulting in precise and insightful findings relevant to the objectives.

3.3. Data Analysis

The thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. According to Majumdar[15], thematic analysis, an often-used method of qualitative research, provides concise description and interpretation in terms of themes and patterns from a data set. It aims to identify patterns, themes, and dynamics related to communication within the organization.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Prior to the interviews, informed consent was obtained from all participants, indicating their voluntary participation and understanding of the study's purpose. This process was overseen and approved by the College of Engineering department heads and the research adviser. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and had the flexibility to withdraw from the study if desired.

Measures were taken to minimize potential harm, including conducting interviews online via Google Meet to ensure safety and convenience. Questions were non-sensitive to avoid social and psychological harm, and anonymity was maintained for participants' responses. Data was securely stored and anonymized to protect participants' privacy.

Furthermore, the research team upheld academic integrity by ensuring the study's credibility, transparency, and accuracy of results. Overall, ethical guidelines were strictly followed to prioritize participants' well-being and confidentiality while obtaining valuable insights into organizational communication practices within the company.

4. RESULTS

Communication plays a crucial role in every aspect of business operations. Effective communication leads to organizational success in areas ranging from leadership to team dynamics and technology to cross-cultural interactions[16]. The results gathered from the transcribed interview answers of the participants explore the workplace communication dynamics, involving communication practices, team dynamics, leadership, technology, cross-cultural communication, and the feedback system concerning continuous improvement in communication.

Documenting Communication Practices. Miscommunication is common in any organization and can arise from different parts of the workplace. As Campbell et al.[14] stated, some managers think they can handle everything alone. Most managers often struggle with effective communication, which makes it difficult for them to communicate with or receive communication from their staff members. Participant 1 considered verbal communication as one of the crucial ways to resolve arising conflicts instead of doing it in a written way, and his statement supports this, "But in my opinion, what is lacking in management today is the conversation among managers because I noticed that they only talk through papers, through reports. They do not talk personally about why they have problems. I think they lack verbal communication; they are used

to letting the paper do the talking.” Participant 2 believes that setting a meeting is the only proper way to settle a problem. “There is no other way to address or solve conflicts other than setting up meetings, having proper communication, and proper instruction from the head on how to fix the problems.”, he mentioned.

Team Dynamics and Communication. According to Bucăța and Rizescu[17], communication is one of the most important things an organization could implement to achieve high-quality performance. Participant 2 mentioned that projects were distributed to the employees face-to-face. He also stated that “...but the detailed plan is given through e-mail or written memo. But of course, the explanation must be discussed face-to-face.” There is an interaction between different departments, according to Participant 1, which helps promote better communication among teams inside the organization. He stated, “For example, I am now with Engr. Emil, who is an electrical engineer on a project where we installed 78 CCTVs at the plant.”

Tasks Outside of Work. According to Zoonen et al.[18], regular connectivity encourages work beyond regular business hours and boosts communication about work; however, separating work from personal life makes it more difficult. As stated by Participant 1, “In our company, it is not applicable to everyone, but there are others who do receive tasks beyond working hours. Our work is 24/7, so there is a night shift, so some of us take home our phones, but they are not obligated to monitor their phone; they are just sent home in case the one on duty at night would not be able to accommodate it.”

Leadership and Communication. A leader should know how to communicate effectively with their employees toward the same objectives for the organization. A leader’s most potent tool for empowering those around them is communication[19]. The statement of Participant 2 supports this, “But if you encounter a leader, they are not just looking for output. As a leader, they also lead you on the right path, considering the safety of the employees.” On the other hand, Participant 1 considers physical presence an essential thing that leaders should keep in mind. “I think physical presence also matters. Sometimes, when they hand down work or complaints, they do not show up; it is like only papers arrive. It is still better to have a physical presence where they interact with their workers.”, he mentioned.

Technology and Communication. Today, technology has an enormous influence on communication. It makes transmitting messages, information, and ideas quick and effortless. Turakhia[20] points out that communication in the workplace has evolved a great deal, and technologies have contributed to expanding possibilities at work. Participant 1 mentioned that they use some applications to communicate with one another at work: “Google Meet, Zoom, and WhatsApp through group calls. But usually, group calls on WhatsApp are only done by managers, and not video calls since the boss prefers voice calls.” Similarly, Participant 2 stated that, “We use apps like Viber and WeChat,

which help you send a message quickly to the person you need. We used Zoom meetings, WeChat, and Viber for communication.”

Cross-Cultural Communication. “Cross-cultural communication is not just for those who have positions in management; Each individual in an organization has to learn the basic skills needed to improve their communication skills, especially when working with people who do not share the same background as them”[21]. As stated by Participant 1, “When it comes to different beliefs, there are different strategies.... we are open to that.” Moreover, religion is a common workplace conflict source as businesses diversify. Conflicts between corporate rules and employees' religious beliefs typically result in problems[22]. Participant 2 mentioned that the company handles the differences through classification: “... it is just proper communication. As a supervisor, you need to know what they can and cannot do. In hiring, HR will already know your religion and your skills as to where you should be placed and when those are put together.”

Understanding Organizational Culture. Rogers claimed that “respect within the workplace is uncommon, but a culture of respect is needed for the organization to succeed”[1]. Participant 2 mentioned, “With respect, we need to earn the respect of other people. So when you show others that you respect them, they will also respect you.”

Continuous Improvement in Communication. “In the psychology of work and organizational psychology, it is essential to understand where performance feedback conversations are going wrong so they can be improved.”[23]. Participant 1 mentioned that the organization collects employee feedback through Red Box; “In our case, we have something called red box where you can write [suggestions]. No one else can touch it except for the management assistants or those who have direct contact with the boss.” Participant 2 also mentioned, “In our case, we have something called an Employee’s Concern box, where you can write suggestions. You just need a half sheet of paper. Write your name, and write who you are giving it to.”

In conclusion, effective communication involves understanding and navigating the complexities of team dynamics, leadership styles, technological advancements, cultural differences, and more. The insights shared by the participants also underscored the importance of continuous improvement in communication practices, respect within the workplace, and the need for balance between work and personal life. As organizations continue to evolve and diversify, fostering a culture of open, respectful, and effective communication remains to be significant in achieving organizational success.

5. DISCUSSION

Through existing literature and empirical findings, researchers have examined the various dimensions of workplace communication dynamics in this research paper. The results are analyzed and interpreted to reveal how communication practices affect organizational culture, team dynamics, leadership effectiveness, technology integration, cross cultural interaction, continuous improvement initiatives or conflict resolution strategies.

The existing literature on communication in the workplace is supported in this study. The importance of respect at work has been highlighted by LaGree et al.[1], as reflected by the results on the need for verbal communication in resolving conflicts and promoting mutual understanding between employees. The emphasis of Alyammahi et al.[2] and Verčić & Špoljarić[3] on the importance of ethical communication practices, as well as the need for organizations to take

employee preferences into considerations in assessing communications channels are consistent with these findings when it comes to use of technology and interaction at work.

The findings of the study have a wide range of implications for communication practices within the institutions. To support a culture of openness, trust and cooperation, the emphasis on verbal communication and face-to-face interactions would appear to suggest that organizations should focus their efforts on developing opportunities for direct dialogue between workers and managers.

The use of technology in communication processes emphasizes how critical it is to take a balanced approach that makes use of digital tools and guarantees accessibility and inclusivity for all employees. The findings into cross-cultural communication highlight how important it is for organizations to encourage culture sensitivity and offer training to employees so they can communicate more effectively across cultural boundaries. To promote productive communication and reduce conflict, this entails acknowledging and appreciating the varied viewpoints, preferences, and experiences of others.

Furthermore, the findings related to conflict resolution strategies emphasize the need for structured feedback mechanisms, such as employee suggestion programs or feedback channels, to encourage employee engagement and contribute to continuous improvement in communication practices.

Significant findings emerged from the analysis of results. The role of physical presence and face-to-face communication in leadership effectiveness was emphasized by participants, highlighting that personal interaction remains important in a digital age. The results pertaining to the assignment of tasks beyond regular working hours and the influence of religion on workplace dynamics highlight the intricate interactions among communication practices, individual beliefs, and organizational policies.

Moreover, the identification of miscommunication as a common occurrence in the workplace, along with the recognition of technology as both an enabler and a potential barrier to effective communication, highlights the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of communication strategies to meet evolving organizational needs.

6. CONCLUSION

In the course of the investigation into the communication practices of this food manufacturing company, a number of important findings have been identified which provide useful information on the dynamic and culture of the company. Firstly, the emphasis on communication by means of words emphasizes the importance of interpersonal interaction to effectively resolve workplace problems. The potential barriers to open dialogue and rapid resolution of conflicts are highlighted by the fact that managers, in most cases, use written communications such as reports or memos. This study highlights the significance of encouraging face-to-face interactions between employer and employees in order to cultivate increased cooperation and openness in the workplace.

Secondly, team dynamics play a significant role in communication, particularly through face-to-face project distribution and interdepartmental interactions. These practices enhance coordination and collaboration among teams, ultimately improving organizational productivity.

Leadership communication is also crucial, with effective leaders characterized by clear communication and physical presence. Encouraging leadership engagement and communication skills development can create a supportive work culture.

Technology is noted for its role in facilitating communication, although preferences for communication methods vary among hierarchical levels within the organization. Integrating technology while considering diverse employee needs is essential.

Cross-cultural communication is emphasized as vital for understanding and accommodating differences in beliefs and backgrounds among diverse teams, thereby fostering inclusivity and teamwork.

Finally, continuous improvement in communication is highlighted through feedback mechanisms and regular meetings. This commitment to transparency and learning contributes to organizational growth and employee satisfaction.

Based on the analysis of communication dynamics and implications for organizational practices presented in the research paper, here are the recommendations for improving communication within the institution:

1. Promote Open and Transparent Communication Channels. An open communication culture in which encourages employees to feel comfortable sharing their ideas, concerns and suggestions. This aligns with the findings of LaGree et al.[1], who stated the importance of workplace respect and how it affects employee satisfaction and engagement. When employees experience a sense of autonomy and respect, they tend to be more resilient, which leads to higher job satisfaction, loyalty and engagement. Creating a workplace environment where employees feel valued and respected can be achieved through conducting regular town hall meetings, having feedback sessions, or suggestion boxes; this is emphasized by Alyammahi et al.[2], who stated the role of ethical communication practices in boosting productivity.

2. Foster Face-to-Face Interaction. Utilizing the significant use of face-to-face interactions for important meetings, discussions and conflict resolution, as they have the potential to strengthen the relationships among employees. This statement is supported by Maharani et al.[6], who discovered that despite the communication being a barrier among ethnically diverse employees, having face-to-face communication promotes effectiveness in enhancing the understanding and resolving conflicts. Furthermore, Verčić & Špoljarić[3] highlighted the importance for organizations to consider the employees preferences in communication channels, suggesting for organizations to seek feedback from employees on current communication practices for beneficial results.

3. Provide Training on Intercultural Communication. The organizations offer training programs to their employees focusing on intercultural communication to enhance their understanding of cultural differences and promote inclusive communication practices. This recommendation is aligned with the discovery of Sapungan et al.[7], who highlights the role of communication in bridging cultural gaps within organizations. Correspondingly, Baker[21] emphasized the significance of individuals within organizations to learn basic skills to improve their communication with people from diverse backgrounds.

4. Utilize Digital Tools Effectively. Having training programs that focus on how to effectively use the digital communication tools and platforms will enable the employees to grasp the technology and help enhance their productivity and collaboration. This is aligned with Shahid's[4] observation of the trend of replacing the traditional way of communicating towards more advanced digital

technologies. Moreover, Maneerutt[9] states that the role of technology is important in improving internal communication of the employees within specific organizations.

5. Empower Leaders with Communication Skills. Providing leadership development programs that focus on communication skills, including active listening, conflict resolution, and delivering constructive feedback. This strategy is aligned with the findings of Gameda & Lee[8], who explores the impact of different leadership styles on work engagement and outcomes. Prioritizing communication skills, enables the organizations to empower leaders to effectively motivate and engage their teams, as suggested by Landry[19], who emphasized the importance of communication in empowering those around them.

7. LIMITATIONS

The study encountered limitations with respect to sample size, which were primarily due to the limitation of time and resources. This restriction has led to a limited number of interviews, which may have reduced the representation of the entire workforce within the company. In addition, face-to-face observations alone, supplemented by online interviews, were required by the company's policy prohibiting the use of mobile phones inside the premises.

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