

**EXPLORING COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS AT AN INTERNATIONAL
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY: AN INTERVIEW-BASED STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the communication culture within this corporation through interviews to elucidate its communication style, challenges, and mitigation strategies. Participants emphasized the importance of verbal communication for relationship-building and feedback solicitation, alongside acknowledging the impact of cultural diversity on communication dynamics. The study observes the utilization of various communication channels, including face-to-face interactions, emails, and virtual meetings, with differing levels of effectiveness. Challenges identified encompass hierarchical dynamics, hindering open communication across different levels of authority, and cultural misunderstandings from diverse backgrounds, leading to occasional communication breakdowns. Understanding these complexities provides insights for addressing communication challenges within organizations. The implications of this research extend to the development of frameworks for fostering inclusive and productive communication cultures, facilitating interactions and enhanced collaboration within the company and similar organizations. This research underscores the importance of proactive communication strategies tailored to the specific needs and contexts of this engineering corporation. By implementing targeted interventions, such as cultural sensitivity training and establishing clear communication protocols, organizations foster a culture of open dialogue and mutual respect. Additionally, leveraging technology to enhance communication effectiveness, such as through the implementation of collaboration platforms and virtual communication tools, can facilitate seamless interactions across diverse teams and geographical locations. Ultimately, the findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on organizational communication, offering practical insights for navigating the complexities of communication within diverse workplace environments. Through continuous evaluation and adaptation of communication practices, organizations can cultivate an inclusive and resilient communication culture, driving innovation, productivity, and long-term success.

Keywords: Communication Culture, Mitigation Strategies, Cultural Diversity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Within the dynamic landscape of the Philippine construction industry, this international company stands tall as a beacon of excellence and innovation. Renowned as one of the leading construction companies in the Philippines, it boasts a rich legacy of delivering exceptional engineering and construction services across diverse sectors. With a comprehensive portfolio encompassing infrastructure, buildings, and industrial and electromechanical facilities, this construction company has firmly established itself as a critical player in construction and engineering.

Drawing from years of experience and expertise, the corporation has forged solid partnerships and collaborations with global contractors, notably across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific regions. They have honed its project management capabilities to world-class standards through these endeavors, acquiring competencies that span every facet of construction and engineering disciplines.

Emis.com (n.d.) states that Central to the company's ethos is a commitment to excellence and adherence to the highest industry standards. Furthermore, they hold ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and ISO 45001 certifications, underscoring its unwavering commitment to quality, environmental stewardship, and occupational health and safety standards.

Beyond accolades, its reputation precedes itself, with global recognition for the quality of its artistry and its impeccable safety record. Embracing technological advancements and embracing innovation, it remains at the industry's frontline, continuously integrating the most recent developments in materials engineering, technology, and construction methodologies into its application.

Communication is a vital part of life as it is a way to interact and share information. According to Rymanowicz (2016), communication is the core of every human relationship. It is utilized as a tool for sharing with others, understanding and resolving issues, association, and creating trusting relationships with others. As the researchers explore the communication process of the corporation, it is fundamental to know the essentiality of effective workplace communication in an organization. Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang (2014) discussed the importance of effective workplace communication. It creates satisfaction on the job because an organization experiences less turnover of employees when it promotes open correspondence between employees with higher ranks and their subordinates. Open communication also prevents and resolves issues in the workplace, increases productivity as it progresses to more excellent delivery of work, and forms relationships between administrators and employees that result in better personal and professional relationships in an organization.

This research explores the communication dynamics within the corporation, a company emblematic of excellence and innovation in the construction industry. Through an interview-based study, we seek to unravel the intricacies of communication culture, identify prevalent challenges, and elucidate the flow of information within the organization. By delving into the communication dynamics, we aim to offer valuable insights that not only

contribute to enhancing organizational efficiency and productivity but also inform best practices in the broader field of organizational communication.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Mikkola and Valo (2019) emphasize that workplace culture emerges from the interactions among organizational members, comprising values, assumptions, and artifacts. They highlight the significance of workplace communication in shaping organizational culture, as it fosters collaboration and interpersonal relationships crucial for task performance and goal achievement.

This study underscores the role of interpersonal relationships as a fundamental means of communication, forming groups, teams, and organizations within the workplace.

Tenopir and King (2004) highlighted the communication patterns specific to engineers, noting their preference for interpersonal and informal communication over formal channels. Engineers exhibit a learning style characterized by discussion and listening, reflecting their reliance on oral communication rather than written or observational methods. The study highlights engineers' tendency toward self-sufficiency and straightforwardness in their work approach, favoring easily accessible sources of information.

Workplace culture significantly shapes communication patterns within organizations. Cultural norms, values, and beliefs influence how communication is perceived and enacted. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory can provide a framework for understanding how cultural differences impact communication styles, emphasizing power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance. Organizations operating across diverse cultural contexts face challenges in effective communication due to differences in language, nonverbal cues, and communication norms. Misinterpretation, misunderstandings, and conflicts may arise when individuals from different cultural backgrounds communicate, highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Cultural Communication Theory provides valuable insights into how cultural factors influence organizational communication dynamics. Edward T. Hall's high-context vs. low-context communication theory is particularly relevant. High-context cultures, characterized by implicit communication and reliance on context and relationships, contrast with low-context cultures, which favor explicit and direct communication (Hall, 1976).

Additionally, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing how cultural values impact communication behaviors and patterns. According to Hofstede (1980), cultural dimensions such as individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs. femininity shape organizational communication norms and preferences.

Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory offers insights into how individuals' identification with organizational culture influences their communication behaviors. Employees' social identities are crucial in shaping their communication patterns and dynamics. By identifying with the organization's values, norms, and group memberships, individuals are likely to align their communication styles accordingly.

Understanding employees' social identities within the organization can provide valuable insights into how cultural factors influence communication dynamics. Organizations can better understand and address communication challenges by examining how individuals perceive themselves about the organization and their social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Pumble's study in 2023 underscores the critical role of effective communication in managing employee engagement and driving organizational success. Three key findings are highlighted:

Leadership Communication Gap: The study identifies a significant issue with leadership needing to effectively communicate the company's internal values and business strategy to employees, leading to clarity and disengagement.

Disengagement Among Younger Workers: Younger employees, particularly those in remote or hybrid work settings, exhibit higher levels of disengagement than their older counterparts. Opening communication channels is recommended to retain young talent.

Managerial Awareness of Employee Challenges: It emphasizes the importance of managers being well-informed about their team members' ongoing challenges through regular, meaningful one-on-one conversations.

Karacapilidis and Papadias (2021) discuss communication dynamics in virtual organizations where fluidity in roles and voluntary communication across hierarchical boundaries are prominent. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) facilitate dynamic organizational communication processes.

Kuhn (2006) provides a comprehensive classification of communication within modern business management structures relevant to engineering workplaces:

Vertical and Horizontal Communication: Communication can be vertical (asymmetric) or horizontal (symmetric), influencing information flow within organizational hierarchies.

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication: Understanding the nuances of verbal and nonverbal communication is crucial, with a significant portion of communication occurring nonverbally.

Small Group and Large Group Communication: Communication dynamics differ based on group size, impacting communication requirements in engineering teams.

Categorizing communication based on timing and position components sheds light on the diverse modes of communication used in engineering workplaces.

The Indeed Editorial Team (2023) suggests attending motivational seminars to improve communication skills. Observing positive language, nonverbal cues, and message consistency in presentations can enhance communication effectiveness in engineering workplaces.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research applied a mixed-methods approach to investigating the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to styles of communication within the workplace that focus on the viewpoints of individuals with disabilities. Drawing upon Byrd and Zhang's (2023) examination

of interability communication styles, the research framework was structured to explore the nuanced reactions and adaptations observed in diverse workplace environments.

Following the precedent set by Dasgupta, Suar, and Singh (2012), who emphasized the significant impact of managerial communication styles on employee attitudes and behaviors, this study aimed to extend the understanding of communication dynamics beyond traditional managerial roles. A comprehensive analysis of workplace communication is pursued by considering a broader range of communication interactions and stakeholders, including peers and subordinates.

Additionally, exploring leadership styles, as Kelly and MacDonald (2019) discussed, provided valuable insights into the interconnectedness between leadership practices and workplace solidarity communication. Incorporating this perspective enriched the conceptual framework guiding the investigation, facilitating a more holistic understanding of communication dynamics within organizational contexts.

The quantitative aspect of this study involved survey instruments adapted from previous research (Byrd & Zhang, 2023; Dasgupta et al., 2012; Kelly & MacDonald, 2019), tailored to capture nuanced responses to communication styles across diverse demographic groups within the workplace. Furthermore, qualitative interviews were conducted to delve deeper into the lived experiences and perceptions of communication among individuals with disabilities, aligning with the qualitative methodologies outlined by Byrd and Zhang (2023).

In this manner, the citations are integrated into the methodology section to support the research approach and justify the chosen methods within the broader scholarly context.

Effective communication is paramount for organizational success, particularly in institutions like this corporation, which operate within diverse cultural contexts and engage in foreign and local projects in the Philippines. This research aims to delve into the communication culture, challenges, and flow within the company, leveraging the insights of a seasoned professional with over a decade of experience within the company.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach that involves data analysis directly from fieldwork observations, open-ended interviews, and written documents (Patton, 2005), employing semi-structured interviews to gather rich insights into communication practices and experiences within the corporation. The focus is exploring the impact of cultural diversity, hierarchical structures, and project contexts on communication dynamics.

3.2 Data Analysis

Drawing on Rabiee's (2004) insights into focus-group interviews and data analysis methodologies, this study employs a robust qualitative approach to delve into the complexities of communication. The qualitative data analysis framework, informed by Rabiee's work, centers on the thematic coding of interview transcripts to discern recurring patterns and themes about communication styles, challenges, and flow within the organization. Specifically, the analysis aims

to elucidate the interplay between cultural diversity, hierarchical dynamics, and communication effectiveness at the said corporation—shedding light on the nuanced factors shaping communication practices within the organizational context.

3.3 Interview Process

Utilizing Klein, Snell, and Wexley's (1987) framework, the interview process in this study adopts a systematic approach inspired by a model of the performance appraisal interview derived from open systems theory. This model, as proposed, offers a comprehensive examination of the linkages within the interview process, providing a structured framework for analysis. By integrating past models and research, the open systems framework facilitates a multivariate perspective, allowing for a nuanced exploration of communication dynamics within the corporation. Moreover, the model generates hypotheses and insights for future research endeavors, underscoring its utility in understanding the intricacies of the interview process and its implications for organizational communication effectiveness.

3.4 Participant Selection

The participant selected for this study possesses a wealth of experience, spanning over a decade, within the institution, actively participating in a diverse array of domestic and international projects within the Philippines. Their extensive tenure within the company offers a profound understanding of the company's intricate culture, operational intricacies, and communication dynamics. Albuquerque and de Freitas (2014) advocate for such thoughtful participant selection in ethnobiological and ethnoecological research, emphasizing the importance of selecting individuals with deep knowledge and experience relevant to the study context. Given the selected participant's comprehensive understanding of the corporation's internal workings, the participant provides invaluable insights crucial for elucidating the communication culture within the organization.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

In adherence to ethical guidelines outlined by Arifin (2018) in considerations for qualitative studies, this research prioritizes ethical principles throughout its execution. The meticulous attention to ethical standards encompasses several key aspects, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity of responses, and upholding the participant's autonomy by respecting their right to withdraw from the study at any juncture. By integrating these ethical considerations into the research framework, the study ensures the protection of participants' rights and well-being, fostering a trustworthy and respectful environment conducive to open and honest communication.

Interview Question

Interview Questions Designed to Explore Communication Culture, Challenges, and Flow:

- Can you share examples of successful communication practices you have observed within the corporation, particularly in the context of foreign and local projects?
- How have you noticed cultural differences impacting communication within the corporation, especially between employees from different backgrounds?

- Could you provide examples of challenges or obstacles you've encountered in communicating with colleagues with different positions or authority levels?
- Considering the diverse backgrounds of employees at the institution, what cultural differences have you observed affecting communication within the organization?
- Can you recall instances where cultural diversity led to challenges or misunderstandings in workplace communication? How were these situations typically addressed?
- Reflecting on your experiences, what are your most significant challenges when communicating with your coworkers? Are these challenges primarily verbal or non-verbal?

4. RESULTS

A. Communication Culture:

The participant provided insights into various aspects of communication culture within the corporation:

- **Emphasis on Verbal Communication:** The participant highlighted the importance of verbal communication in building relationships and soliciting feedback within the organization. Clear instructions and effective feedback mechanisms were emphasized for productive communication.
- **Cultural Diversity:** The participant acknowledged the presence of cultural differences within the corporation and how they impact communication. While some viewed cultural diversity as enriching, others noted challenges in bridging cultural gaps and adapting communication styles accordingly.

B. Challenges Identified:

The participant identified several challenges in communication at the corporation:

- **Hierarchical Dynamics:** Challenges in communicating with colleagues with different positions or authority levels were highlighted. Examples included difficulties expressing opinions or providing feedback to superiors without fear of reprisal.
- **Cultural Misunderstandings:** The participant noted instances where cultural diversity led to misunderstandings in workplace communication. Differences in attitudes, habits, and communication styles among employees from various cultural backgrounds occasionally lead to communication breakdowns and barriers.

C. Flow of Communication:

Specific communication models may influence observations on the flow of communication at the institution.

- **Media Ecology Model:** The impact of communication technology on human perception is evident in corporation's adoption of digital communication tools and platforms to facilitate information sharing and collaboration across project teams.
- **Varied Channels:** The participant mentioned using various communication channels within the institution, including face-to-face interactions, emails, and virtual meetings.

However, the effectiveness of these channels varied depending on the context and the individuals involved.

4.1 Discussion

This study comprehensively evaluates the communication practices at the company, a prominent engineering and construction company. The study delves into the organization's communication culture, challenges, and flow through semi-structured interviews with an experienced employee.

The researchers highlighted the importance of effective workplace communication, emphasizing its role in fostering the satisfaction of employees, resolving conflicts, increasing productivity, and building relationships. Within the context of this institution, understanding communication dynamics becomes fundamental for the success and effective communication of the organization.

The participant's insights into the communication culture of the company highlight the interpersonal nature of communication within the organization and provide insightful viewpoints and perspectives on verbal communication as a foundation for relationship-building and feedback mechanisms. Clear instructions and effective feedback mechanisms are essential for promoting productive organizational communication, aligning with established principles of effective workplace communication.

Furthermore, this corporation embraces cultural diversity, underscoring the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptability in communication practices. While some employees view cultural diversity as enriching, others know the difficulties in bridging cultural gaps and modifying communication styles accordingly.

The communication patterns in the corporation indicate the organization's reliance on various channels, such as emails, virtual meetings, and personal interactions. However, the effectiveness of these channels is noted to differ depending on the context and the individuals involved.

Communication challenges also arise when dealing with hierarchical dynamics and situations that affect how employees express their ideas and feedback to superiors, indicating disparities in power that may impede open communication. Another significant challenge often encountered is miscommunication due to cultural variations in attitudes, habits, and communication styles that cause challenges and breakdowns in communication. These difficulties highlight how crucial it is to encourage a culture of open communication and cultural sensitivity within the company.

Overall, the participant's insights into communication culture, challenges, and flow at the said corporation provides valuable considerations for organizations seeking to enhance their communication practices.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study illuminates the communication dynamics within the construction corporation, emphasizing the pivotal role of effective workplace communication for organizational success. Verbal communication is crucial for relationship-building and feedback solicitation, while cultural diversity influences communication dynamics. Various channels, including face-to-face interactions and virtual meetings, are utilized. In addition, organizational challenges persist due to hierarchical dynamics and cultural misunderstandings.

Furthermore, targeted interventions like cultural sensitivity training and clear communication protocols are recommended to address and solve these challenges. By fostering a

culture of open dialogue and mutual respect, organizations can enhance efficiency and drive innovation, contributing to long-term success and growth.

6. LIMITATIONS

This section outlines the inherent limitations within the research design, data collection methods, and sample characteristics, offering transparency in our study's scope and implications.

Our study focuses on understanding the communication dynamics perceived by a single employee at this construction company. While this approach offers valuable insights, it inherently limits our ability to apprehend the full spectrum and range of communication practices prevalent across the organization. The absence of multiple perspectives may limit the generalizability of our findings.

One of the primary limitations lies in our reliance on interviews as the sole method of data collection, drawing insights solely from the perspective of one employee. While interviews allow for in-depth exploration, they are susceptible to social desirability and memory recall bias. Additionally, the researcher's interpretation of the responses may introduce subjectivity, influencing the analysis and conclusions.

Our data is exclusively derived from the perceptions and experiences of a single employee, posing potential limitations regarding representativeness and objectivity. Despite efforts to ensure accuracy, the subjective nature of self-reporting may diverge from objective realities within the organizational context. Furthermore, the lack of diverse viewpoints may constrain the richness and depth of our dataset.

Our study's sample size is confined to a solitary participant, limiting how our findings can be generalized to the broader employee population at the corporation. Moreover, the participant's unique characteristics, such as tenure and job role, may influence their communication experiences in ways that may not fully represent the organization as a whole, thereby impacting the external validity of our study.

In acknowledging these limitations, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the communication dynamics within the corporation. By transparently delineating these constraints, we encourage critical appraisal of our findings within the context of our methodological approach. Future research endeavors should aim to mitigate these limitations by adopting diverse methodological strategies, expanding sample sizes, and incorporating multiple perspectives to enhance the richness and robustness of our understanding of organizational communication dynamics.

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