Informal Communication & its Relation to Employees, Managers, & Job Satisfaction

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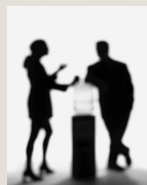❖ Department of Communication & Journalism ❖ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

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Abstract

Past research has shown that informal communication in the workplace is associated with job satisfaction (Nielson, Jex, & Adams, 2000). There are significant gaps in research regarding how managers perceive informal communication among employees in the workplace. Furthermore, little to no research has been conducted from an employee's point of view regarding informal communication and how it affects their job satisfaction. Systems Theory, as explained by Katz and Kahn, addresses how many parts of an organization are interdependent, and depend on interaction with each other (Amagoh, 2008). This helped guide our study, as employees can be seen as interdependent parts which rely on interaction as a means for creating job satisfaction. This study focuses on how employee's job satisfaction relates to their comfort communicating informally with co-workers and with managers, and if they perceive their managers to encourage friendships within the workplace.

Informal communication can be defined as "real-time, unplanned and interpersonal interaction that is likely to occur when people actually 'bump' into each other" (Andrea, Arnaldo, & Romano, 2011).

Review of Literature

❖ Job satisfaction is linked with variables such as lower turnover rates (Nielson, Adams, & Jex, 2000), and increased organizational commitment (Riordan & Griffeth, 1995).

❖ Most research is on formal communication, however much of the actual work is accomplished through the informal structure of friends, contacts, and accidental communication (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988).

❖ Although informal communication is such a crucial part of an organization, most companies have no policy in place to deal with the informal communication, and management usually takes no action toward managing or controlling informal communication networks (Crampton , Hodge, & Mishra 1998).

❖ How employees perceive their managers views on informal communication, and how that perception, in turn, affects job satisfaction is an underexplored area of research.
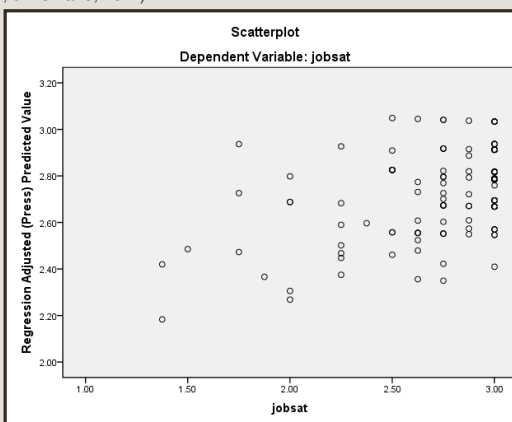
Methods

❖ **Job Satisfaction Scale:**

❖ In order to determine job satisfaction, an 8 item scale was implemented asking participants to accurately describe their feelings toward their job.

- ❖ Adjectives such as good, enjoyable, poor, and undesirable were presented to participants in order to describe their current job using the answers "yes", "no", or "unsure".
- ❖ The scale was determined to be reliable at .77 (SD= 2.84; N= 2.84).

❖ **Survey:**

❖ 35-question survey distributed electronically to over 400 individuals

❖ Of the 137 who participated in the survey, 90 were female, 44 were male, and 3 identified as other

❖ Ages ranged from 17 years to over 45 years. The two most common cohorts were the 18-25 year range (highest) and the 45 years and older (second highest)

❖ 70% of respondents had some college experience; 46% having attained their Bachelor's degree.

References

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❖Andrea, F., Arnaldo, C., Romano, P. (2011). Understanding how formal and informal communication affect purchasing, manufacturing, and logistics integration. Advances in Management, 4 (7), 22-32.
❖Crampton, S., Hodge, J., & Mishra, J. (1998). The informal communication network: Factors inciancing grapevine activity. Public Personnel Management 27 (4), 569-584.
❖Krackhardt, D., Stern, R.N. (1988). Informal networks and organizational networks: An experimental simulation. Social Psychology Quarterly, 51 (2), 123-140.
❖Nielson, I. K., Adams, G. A., Jex, S. M., (2000). Development and validation of scores on a two-dimensional workplace friendship scale. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 60 (4), 628-643.
❖Riordan, C., Griffeth, R. (1995). The opportunity for friendship in the workplace: An underexplored construct. Journal of Business and Psychology, 10 (2), 141-154.

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: jobsat

Research Questions

❖ **Question 1:**

a) Is employee job satisfaction related to employee perception that managers want friendships to develop in the work place?
Result: Pearson Correlation results showed a significant positive correlation, $r=.38$, $p< .001$.

b) Is employee job satisfaction related to employees feeling comfortable communicating informally with their manager while at work?
Result: Pearson Correlation results showed a significant positive correlation, $r=.38$, $p<.001$.

c) Is employee job satisfaction related to employees feeling comfortable communicating informally with their co-workers while at work?
Result: Pearson Correlation results showed a significant positive correlation, $r=.35$, $p<.001$.

❖ **Question 2:**

What combined effect do the following variables have on job satisfaction?:

a) Employee perception of whether or not they believe their managers want friendships to develop at work.
b) Employee comfort communicating informally with their manager while at work.
c) Employee comfort communicating informally with their co-workers while at work.

To determine the combined effect of all the variables we conducted a Stepwise regression:

Step 1: We entered job satisfaction as the dependent variable compared to employee perception that managers want friendships to develop in the work place.
Step 2: We then included the second two variables: employee comfort communicating with their manager while at work and employee comfort communicating informally with their co-workers while at work.

The regression was significant, $F(1,128)= 21.12$, $p<.001$.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B			
1	(Constant)	3.105		35.085	.000
	I feel my manager wants friendships to develop within my work place between employees.- Choose the most appropriate response.	-.169		-4.595	.000
2	(Constant)	3.391		31.420	.000
	I feel my manager wants friendships to develop within my work place between employees.- Choose the most appropriate response.	-.118		-3.252	.001
	We define informal communication as: Communication that occurs within the workplace, through severa…-Choose the most appropriate response.	-.146		-2.348	.020
	I feel comfortable communicating informally with my boss and/or manager during the course of a norma…- Choose the most appropriate response.	-.094		-2.573	.011

a. Dependent Variable: jobsat

Implications

❖ Managers should encourage informal communication with and among employees as a way to increase job satisfaction, which may also increase organizational commitment (Riordan & Griffeth, 1995) and decrease turnover rates (Nielson, Adams, & Jex, 2000).

❖ Limitations: Demographics could have been more diverse.

❖ Future research on this topic could include looking into how formal policies regarding informal communication could affect job satisfaction.