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STRATEGIC INTERNAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION AND ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effect of strategic internal business communication on the organisational identity of private hospitals in Delta State, Nigeria. The research adopted a cross-sectional survey research design method. A total of 139 employees of the selected private hospitals formed the target population of the study and 103 employees were chosen as the sample size. The researcher used a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale format. Descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression analysis were used as the statistical techniques to analyze the data collected. Findings showed that downward communication has a positive significant effect on organisational identity ($\beta = 0.453, 0.000 < 0.05$). Upward communication has a positive significant effect on organisational identity ($\beta = 0.330, 0.000 < 0.05$). 49% of the change in organisational identity was brought about by the variables of strategic internal business communication. It was concluded that strategic internal business communication has a significant positive effect on the organisational identity of Private Hospitals in Delta State. The study recommended amongst others that upward communication should be effectively managed to aid in monitoring effective employee and organizational performance.

KEY WORDS

Business communication, internal communication, downward communication, upward communication, organizational identity.



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Introduction

Communications started at the same time as the universe. There was never a beginning that lacked dialogue. Thus, communication makes it easier for human society to change. A multifaceted phenomenon, communication can mean different things to different people. It is a procedure for gaining access to another person's thoughts or mind (Asamu 2014). Modern management strategies focus heavily on using the power of communication to improve employee performance (Onifade, Opele, & Okafor, 2018). Whether it has benefits or drawbacks, communication is a necessary component of life and plays a crucial part in all actions taken to achieve corporate goals (Aka & Juliet, 2018). Effective communication is seen in the corporate sector as a crucial component of a successful organization

Internal communication, such as cooperation between departments, among employees, and between managers and employees, and external communication, such as with suppliers, shareholders, agencies, and customers, should both be present in an organization to have efficient communication. Poor communication will be very expensive because it will have detrimental effects that lower organizational performance (Osaiga & Eleazar, 2020). Organizations are investing in the function and giving internal communication more attention. Internal communication's purpose is to increase corporate value by efficiently communicating with staff members, serving as "a valuable asset to the organization," and cultivating a feeling of community.

The internal audience is the most crucial for the communicator, and effective internal communication can eliminate ambiguity and rumours as well as act as a catalyst for change. Additionally, it helps to improve interpersonal relationships and raise awareness of environmental change (Verghese, 2017). Organizations with poor communication do not perform as well as those with effective communication (Thomaz, 2010).

Contrary to what was stated above, organizational identity is one of the most crucial elements in improving organizational performance (Atambo & Momanyi 2016). Psychologists and sociologists have historically paid more attention to the topic of identity among scientific sources. Additionally, managers and economists are paying increasing attention to the identification issue. Identity has recently emerged as a common topic among intellectuals (Asamu 2014). Ethnic identification, group identity, social identity, and organizational identity are among the identity categories investigated. The development of the organizational identity and attempts to strengthen it is crucial for managers since it tends to reduce staff service abandonment, promote consistent and goal-aligned behaviour and ultimately result in the accomplishment of organizational objectives (Suharto, Silitonga, & Kusumandari, 2018).

Numerous studies have been conducted on internal communication as a key topic, including those by Kusumandari, Suharti, and Silitonga (2018), Aka and Juliet (2018), and Atambo and Momanyi (2018). (2016). But the potential connection between internal corporate communication and organizational identity has been disregarded or ignored. To do this, this study primarily focused on a private hospital in Delta State while taking into account the relationship between organizational identity and strategic internal business communication.

Concept of business communication

Because internal business communication is a subset of communication, it is necessary to first explain the idea of corporate communication. Every action a person does to affect a change in another person's thinking is considered communication. This serves as a conceptual link between a person or people and an organization. The process of communication includes speaking, listening, and

understanding (Banerji & Dayal, 2005). A process that strives to maintain positive relationships between groups and organizations is communication that participates based on social life and serves as the substance of organizational structure (Dogan, 2005). Organizational communication, as described by Price in Asamu (2014), refers to how well an organization shares job-related information with its members and among its ranks. Communication is essential for establishing and disseminating the enterprise's goals, according to Ayatse (2005). This is because they will be able to demonstrate work behaviours that are suitable and relevant to the performance of the job and appraise the competence abilities they already possess.

Organizational communication is crucial; in fact, Orpen in Asamu (2014) suggested that it plays a crucial part in the success or failure of any company. It is used to address inconsistencies in work organizations so that the organization can advance. Togetherness is required, as is cooperation in thought, action, learning, and advancement. Man can create new boundaries and explore new possibilities through interaction with other people. As a result, when they encounter new individuals, they may speak their language. Depending on the type of organization, the kind and range of workers that best suit the management, as well as the workplace's location, different communication aids and tactics, are utilized.

Ince and Gül (2001) defined communication as the interchange of thoughts, feelings, and opinions between two or more individuals using words, letters, and symbols. This, according to him, can be described as a technical fact. However, it is unclear whether symbols are genuinely sent, to what extent symbols correspond to the message transmitted, and how effectively transmitted information reaches the recipient (Kalla, 2005; Baltas & Baltas, 2002). As a result, without communication via reading, listening, speaking, and writing (the productive abilities), mankind would find it challenging to solve some of life's riddles. We can better understand things through communication if we are informed about them or if we have questions about them. According to Altinöz (2008), communication is the process by which superiors convey to subordinates the task, the resources required to complete an assignment, the roles and responsibilities, and the expected results. Thus, information (or a message) is sent from one person to another through communication. Therefore, the transfer of a message followed by feedback from the recipient to the sender, indicating an understanding of the message, constitutes effective communication. The concept of communication is multifaceted, and assessments of it from various angles have an impact on how it is defined. Communication is necessary to review, conceive, and guide interaction in an organization (Asamu, 2014).

The efficient operation of practically all organizations depends heavily on communication. Any business or group that wants to succeed needs to have effective communication (Mutuku & Mathoko, 2014). It eliminates time wastage and gives both consumers and staff the resources they need to be successful and happy. An increase in manufacturing time and a drop in revenue are the results of ineffective communication. There must be adequate communication in place to prevent this scenario (Joey, 2002). Therefore, the transmission of information between a sender and a receiver and the inference (perception) of meaning between the parties involved constitute communication (Mutuku & Mathoko, 2014).

Practically all companies rely substantially on communication to operate effectively. Effective communication is essential for any organization or group to succeed (Mutuku & Mathoko, 2014). It saves time wastage and provides the tools customers and employees need to succeed and be content. Ineffective communication leads to an increase in production time and a decrease in revenue. To avoid this scenario, effective communication must be in place (Joey, 2002). Therefore, communication is the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver as well as the

inference (perception) of meaning between the parties (Mutuku & Mathoko, 2014). To keep the lines of communication open between the organization's stakeholders, it is crucial to implement the management functions of planning, organizing, motivating, leading, and controlling. It is crucial to have effective communication skills because they allow managers to create and maintain the relationships with staff members that are necessary for them to carry out their daily jobs effectively. Coordination of relationships between organizational bodies is known as organizational communication. Information should be transferred more quickly than ever in today's enterprises (Darmawanty, Lumbanraja, & Lubis 2018).

Internal Business Communication

The importance of internal communications is being recognized by more organizations. With shifting attitudes and diverse demographics, modern firms have "become more focused on retaining a happy workforce; they have inevitably had to think more carefully about how they communicate with employees," according to Chege & Ombui (2014). These days, management must offer both internal and external audiences the same amount of attention (Wrench, Punyanunt-Carter, & Ward, 2015), and "communications professionals must understand the necessity of integrating the internal message with those messages presented externally" (Hee, Qin, Kowang, Husin, & Ping, 2019).

Internal communication is defined by Kulachai, Narkwatchara, Siripool, and Vilailert (2018) as the process through which people exchange information to comprehend one another. Additionally, social connection occurs through messages during internal communication. In their study, Pongton and Suntrayuth (2019) outline four key goals that internal communication can achieve inside an organization: informing, control, social, and expressive goals. Additionally, internal communication provides a fundamental motivation in firms that supports and helps workers to efficiently complete their jobs (Suntrayuth & Pongton, 2019). Another definition of internal communication by Bücken, Furrer, Poutsma and Buyens (2014) describes it as a process by which a company distributes information, develops commitments, and manages changes. Communication is crucial to the competitiveness of the firm because it is the primary driver of employee motivation and performance. Internal communication is seen in organizational practice as a component of the leadership role.

An organization's ability to effectively communicate internally is a key determinant of its financial performance. One such process is internal communication, which allows a business to share information, create commitments, and manage change (Rukmana, Sopiah, & Nora, 2018). The study also found that the success or failure of a business depends on the relationships it has with the people who make up its workforce. Winska (2010) highlights the value of internal communication and how it affects organizational stability and financial outcomes. Additionally, Oladele & Akeke's (2010) study demonstrated a connection between internal communication and business productivity. Anwar and Shukur (2015), who refer to internal communication as the essence of an organization, examine the significance of internal communication, the flow of information, and the transfer of meaning. The ability of communication to both uncover and solve issues explains the significance of communication (Atambo, & Momanyi, 2016). The nature of communication and how it operates inside an organization were defined by several communication models. Strategic internal communication can have downward and upward communication components, (Vergheze 2017).

Downward Communication

When messages travel from a higher-level employee to a lower-level employee inside a company, the communication is said to be downward. This happens if the information is sent down through the formal hierarchy of an organization. In other words, communication within an organization begins at

the top levels and descends to the lower levels (Tubbs & Moss, 2008). Downward communication aims to hypothesize instructions and directions, assign tasks, and postulate tasks. Additionally, it aims to provide information about job practices and policies, identify issues that require attention at different levels, and provide feedback on previous the performance of employees (Robbins, Judge & Campbell, 2010). To meet employees' basic needs, it is they must receive satisfactory information about the company and the tasks they must complete, as well as immediate feedback on how they are performing (Greenberg & Baron, 2008).

Upward Communication

In an organizational hierarchy, upward communication is the process through which information moves from the lower levels to the higher levels. This style of communication has grown in popularity within organizations while the formal style has declined. It is stated that upward communication informs managers of their subordinates' intended behaviours while they carry out their jobs. It is emphasized that through upward communication, superiors have the opportunity to learn about their subordinates' attitudes on their jobs, their coworkers, and the institution as a whole. So, this aids in monitoring effective employee and organizational performance (Greenberg & Baron, 2008; Robbins, Judge & Campbell, 2010). The success of an organization is seen to depend heavily on upward communication. Lack of communication at the top might prevent a business from achieving its aims and objectives. Information from the grassroots can make or break an organization's ability to survive (Tubbs & Moss, 2008).

Organizational Identity

Using organizational identity strategically can help achieve goals and vision. The experiences and perspectives that members commonly have about the organization are related to organizational identity. Employees do experience, feel, and think about the company, and they are expected to share this understanding regularly because the organization has specific values and characteristics (Nabi, Foysool, & Adnan, 2017). Improvements in self-perception at all levels of groups and an increase in employee collaboration can be attributed to organizational identity (Atambo, & Momanyi, 2016). According to Hee, Kowang, Husin, and Ping (2019), identity is a grouping of elements, outcomes, and indications that does make one individual stand out from another (including political, historical, cultural, social, personal, religious, etc.). One of the existing definitions was that offered by Mutuku and Mathooko (2014). One of the most palatable definitions of identity is that it is the most unique, stable, and distinctive trait that sets one organization apart from another.

An organization's identity is a collection of claims that its members believe to be essential, distinctive, and enduring. Three important characteristics are made clear by the definition: centrality, distinctiveness, and durability. Being central means that the statement must have elements that are significant and crucial to the company. What is significant and crucial to the organization is defined by its primary actors' identity (Iravo & Njue, 2013). According to the definition, an identity statement is something that organization members collectively and cognitively hold to respond to inquiries like, "Who are we?" Are we in the right business, and what do we want to do? Within an organization, organizational identity has an impact on both leaders and employees. Organizational leaders' decision-making processes inside an organization are influenced by organizational identity. When management is unable to come up with simpler, more precise, and quantifiable answers to certain organizational problems, identity questions frequently arise and come to their notice (Pongton & Suntrayuth 2019).

Organizational leaders create a fundamental foundation for themselves to use as a guide when making decisions by defining the organization's identity (Rukmana, Sopiah & Nora 2018). Organizational

identity gives management and members of the organization a crucial lens for their interpretation and sense-making of events that take place in the context of their organizational existence. Members' behaviours and activities are controlled by the outcomes of their interpretation and sense-making within the organization (Rukmana, Sopiah & Nora 2018). The distinctiveness criterion highlights that the identity statement must be able to set the organization apart from competitors. Organizational ideology, management philosophy, and culture are typically included in a distinctive identity statement. It aids the organization in placing itself into a particular category. The quality of durability draws attention to how persistent organizational identity is. It suggests that initiating organizational change is challenging since the organization would be severely impacted by the loss of its identity (Rukmana, Sopiah, & Nora, 2018).

Empirical Review of Literature

In a Malaysian property development company, Hee, Qin, Kowang, Husin, and Ping (2019) investigated the effect of communication on employee performance. This study used a survey questionnaire approach to get its data. 120 people in all took part in the study. According to the findings, both horizontal and downward communication has a considerable favourable impact on employee performance. The research's findings can help property development companies better comprehend the value of inter-employee communication in boosting worker performance by offering insights and crucial information. It proposed that for this to occur, management might concentrate on the improvement of soft skills to improve employee expression and communication. To foster strong relationships between managers and employees, more events like departmental meetings should be planned. To achieve successful communication within the organization, a proper training and development strategy needs to be designed.

In higher education institutions in Thailand, Pongton and Suntrayuth (2019) looked into the connections and effects of communication satisfaction, employee engagement, work satisfaction, and job performance. 400 academic staff members from Thailand's public and private institutions participated in the survey, providing information. According to the findings of using both simple and multiple regression analyses, communication satisfaction positively affects work satisfaction, employee engagement, and job performance. Job satisfaction positively affects employee engagement and job performance. There isn't any proof, nevertheless, that effective communication and job performance are significantly correlated.

The impact of effective communication on employee performance in the Ugandan Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development was studied by Jacqueline, Sebyala, and Michael (2018). A sample of 194 people from the study's target group of 208 Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development employees was selected using stratified random selection techniques. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data and perform descriptive and inferential statistics on the data obtained from 194 employees to assess the effects of the variables, namely effective communication and employee performance. According to the study's findings, organizational and job qualities are positively correlated with effective communication, with a correlation coefficient of 0.667 and a p-value of 0.000.

The correlation coefficient of 0.596 with a p-value of 0.000 demonstrates that organizational and job factors have a favourable and statistically significant association with employee performance. Additionally, it showed that the predictors had a large and favourable impact on the response variable, with an adjusted R² of 54%. Therefore, the recommendations made for this study are that in addition to improving face-to-face communication, the Ministry should also emphasize open and honest

communication while also making better use of email and internet communication. This will ensure effective communication and improve organizational performance.

In Thailand, the relationships between internal communication, employee involvement, work satisfaction, and employee performance were examined by Kulachai, Narkwatchara, Siripool, and Vilailert (2018). 489 state officials from 10 Chonburi city municipals served as the study's sample population (Thailand). The primary data were gathered via a structured questionnaire, and structural equation modelling was then used to evaluate them. The findings showed that employee engagement and job satisfaction were positively impacted by internal communication. Job satisfaction was positively impacted by employee participation as well. However, it did not affect how well the staff performed their jobs. Additionally, the relationship between internal communication and employee job performance was mediated by employee participation and job satisfaction.

At Pt. Putri Panda Unit II Tulungagung, East Jawa, Indonesia, Rukmana, Copiah, and Nora (2018) investigated the effects of organizational communication on worker performance via the lens of employee work motivation. The 72 employees of PT Putri Panda Unit II Tulungagung make up the study's population. The study employed route analysis to analyze the data and discovered that organizational communication had a beneficial impact on employee performance, either directly or indirectly, through employee motivation. According to the study's findings, it is necessary to arrange recreational and outbound events to hold collaborative activities outside of working hours to boost or strengthen organizational communication. Additionally, PT Putri Panda Unit II Tulungagung staff are required to voluntarily enhance feedback mechanisms while speaking with their superiors.

In Nigeria, the relationship between effective communication and employee performance was examined by Onifade, Opele, and Okafor (2018). The study's population consisted of 142 respondents and used a descriptive survey research technique. The participants were chosen using a straightforward random selection procedure. Utilizing Pearson Product Moment Correlation, data were analyzed (PPMC). The analysis's findings showed a strong correlation between productive communication and worker performance. Therefore, it was determined that businesses should make efficient communication a priority in their efforts to boost staff productivity. Consequently, it is hypothesized that:

H1: downward communication significantly affects the organisational identity of Private Hospitals in Delta State;

H2: upward communication significantly affects the organisational identity of Private Hospitals in Delta State.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design method. In Asaba, Delta State, there were fifty-eight (58) private hospitals that made up the study's target population. Out of the 58 private hospitals in Asaba, the researchers chose nine (9) as the accessible population for this study. The 139 employees from the chosen (9) hospitals are the population elements of the study. These hospitals were selected based on staff size and proximity to the researchers. Since these hospitals engage in comparable activities, characteristics and work attitudes can also be applied to hospitals that were not surveyed. Using the sample size calculation formula from Yamane (1968), the sample unit of the employees of the chosen hospitals was calculated. Below is the model for the calculation of the said sample unit.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Sample size to be tested

N = Total population size

e = acceptable error term (0.05)

Therefore, the total sample size is calculated thus:

$$n = \frac{139}{1 + 139(0.05)^2}$$

Sample = 103

Members of the sample frame were chosen using the stratified sampling methodology. Kumaran's (1976) stratified sampling model was utilized for a proportionate sample of the population. The model is presented below:

$$n = \frac{n_s N_i}{N}$$

N

The researcher used a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, uncertain, strongly disagree, and disagree to gather the necessary data. The validity and reliability of the research tool were examined. Descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression analysis using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) software version are the statistical techniques used for data processing and testing of hypotheses in this study. Correlation is appropriate for evaluating relationships between variables, whereas regression is appropriate for predicting outcomes and the degree of relationships, which is why these two types of analysis were chosen (Arogundade & Asaolu, 2021)

Results of the Analyzed Data

Table 1 Correlations Coefficients for Study Variables

S/N	Study Variables	N	M	SD	1	2
1	Downward communication	103	18.223	1.3056	1	
2	Upward communication	103	18.583	0.7986	.579**	1
3	Organisational identity	103	18.359	1.1277	.644**	.593**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Table 2: Regression Analysis of strategic internal business communication and organisational identity

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Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.561	1.881		1.362	.176
Downward communication	.391	.076	.453	5.155	.000
Upward communication	.467	.124	.330	3.763	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational identity

Table 3 Analysis of Variance

ANOVA^{afficients}

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	63.239	2	31.619	47.569	.000 ^b
Residual	66.470	100	.665		
Total	129.709	102			

a. Dependent Variable: Organisational identity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Upward communication, Downward communication

Table 4 Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error in the Estimate
1	.698 ^a	.488	.477	.8153

a. Predictors: (Constant), Upward communication, Downward communication

Discussion of Results

The respondents were asked to rate how much of the following assertions about how downward communication affects organizational identity in particular private hospitals in Asaba, Delta State, agreed with replies were rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the strongly agree to 1 (strongly disagree). The level of satisfaction with the test variables is often measured as having a mean value above 3.00. If the mean is greater than the cutoff value of 3.00, it is considered satisfactory; otherwise, it is considered unsatisfactory.

Table 1 showed that downward communication has a strong positive correlation coefficient with organisational identity (0.644** p < 0.01). Table 4 showed that downward communication has a positive significant effect on organisational identity ($\beta = 0.453$, $P=0.000<0.05$). Test of hypothesis one (H1) showed that downward communication significantly affects the organisational identity of Private Hospitals in Delta State. The result is in agreement with Robbins, et al (2010) assertion that downward communication aims to provide information about job practices and policies, identify issues that require attention at different levels, and provide feedback on the previous performance of employees.

Table 1 showed that upward communication has a strong positive correlation coefficient with organisational identity (0.593** p < 0.01). Table 2 showed that upward communication has a positive significant effect on organisational identity ($\beta = 0.330$, $P=0.000<0.05$). Test of hypothesis two (H2) showed upward communication significantly affects the organisational identity of Private Hospitals in Delta State. The result is in agreement with Tubbs and Moss's (2008) finding that information from the grassroots can make or break an organization's ability to survive. This implies that upward communication informs managers of their subordinates' intended behaviours while they carry out their jobs.

The F -ratio in table 3 indicated that the dimensions of strategic internal business communication significantly predict organisational identity, $F = 47.569$, $0.000 < 0.05$. The implication of this is that the regression model is a good fit and significant for the study.

Table 4 showed that 49% of the change in organisational identity was brought about by the variables of strategic internal business communication.

Conclusion

The study concluded that strategic internal business communication has a significant positive effect on organisational identity. Downward communication and upward communication significantly affect the organisational identity of Private Hospitals in Delta State. Lack of communication at the top might prevent a business from achieving its aims and objectives. It is emphasized that through upward communication, superiors have the opportunity to learn about their subordinates' attitudes toward their jobs, their coworkers, and the institution as a whole.

Recommendations

To meet employees' basic needs, managers should ensure that they receive satisfactory information about the company and the tasks they must complete, as well as immediate feedback on how they are performing. Upward communication should be effectively managed to aid in monitoring effective employee and organizational performance.

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