

The Role of Communication on Employee Performance in Non Government Organizations: A Case of Save the Children

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Abstract: *This study was aimed at investigating the role of communication on employee performance at Save the Children. The objectives of study included; to determine the extent to which forms of communication affect employee performance at Save the Children, to establish how language affect employee performance at Save the Children, to determine the influence of organization structure on employee performance at Save the Children and to determine how the communication process affect employee performance at Save the Children, as the major factors of communication that eventually affects employee performance. The study adopted a descriptive research design as well as stratified sampling as its sampling design to ensure all the departments in the organizations were represented. The target population was the 239 employees of Save the Children and a sample size of 72 employees representing 30% of the total population. The sample size comprised of 8 staff members in the management, 36 programme staff, 17 finance staff and 11 support staff. The researcher used self administered questionnaires to collect primary data and which used a Likert scale. Secondary data was collected from the already documented sources such as journals, publications and reliable links in the internet. Primary data was tabulated, coded and processed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the data. Secondary data was analyzed using the conceptual content analysis. Quantitative data was presented using statistical tools such as tables, pie charts, bar graphs and simple histograms while secondary data was presented descriptively. The study found that forms of communication influences the employee performance at Save the Children mostly followed by information on organization structure, information on communication process and language. The study also established that information flow is relatively slow to reach the other party in Save the Children. Additionally, the study found that information shared is usually clear and understood well in Save the Children. It was also established that confidential information conveyed did not remain confidential in Save the Children. It was also revealed that the speed in decision making affects the performance of staff inappropriate form of communication demotivates staff and lack of trust on keeping information confidential affects the performance of staff. In relation to language, the study found that native language was not commonly language used in the organization and in its place the national language was the most commonly language. Further, the study found that the language used by the management to communicate official and important matters is effective and professional in Save the Children. Further, the study found that the existing structure ensures that information is received in good time among the different parties, allows information to be received in the right format from the time it is sent to the time it is delivered. This study recommends that the organization should improve the flow of information to other parties. It was also established that confidential information conveyed did not remain confidential in Save the Children. The study therefore recommends that the organization should ensure the form of communication used maintains the secrecy of the confidential information conveyed.*

Keywords: employee performance, Communication Process, Language, Organizational Structure, Forms of Communication

1. Introduction

Every organization has a formal communication network, in which ideas and information flow along the lines of command in the company's organization structure [1]. Every organization also has an informal communication network that operates anywhere two or more employees are in contact, from lunchroom to the golf course to the company's email and instant messaging. Effective communication strengthens the connections between a company and all of its stakeholders, those groups affected in some way by the way. Some characteristics of effective communication include; providing practical information that give recipients useful information; give facts rather than vague impressions by use of concrete language, specific detail and information that is clear, convincing, accurate and ethical; present information in a concise, efficient manner by highlighting the most important information, rather than dumping everything on the reader [2]. Ensuring that

information is clarified and summarized effectively; clarify expectations and responsibilities by writing messages to generate a specific response from a specific audience; offer compelling, persuasive arguments and recommendations by showing the readers and listeners precisely how they will benefit from responding to the messages sent to them [3].

Effective communication is critical to the success of an organization because; organizations are becoming more complex, both in structure and technology, Economic and Market conditions are forcing greater efficiency and quality in manufacturing and services, government legislation requires managers to interpret the changing implications for policies and practices in their own organizations and employees are expecting more from their employers, not just wages, but also greater personal and job satisfaction [4]. Communication would therefore lead to greater effectiveness, keep people in the picture of what the organization is doing, get people involved in the

organization activities, form better relationships in an organization as well as help people understand the need for change and how to manage it thus avoiding resistance to change.

There has been people's ignorance, lack of proper skills, poor communication methods, inadequate organizational structure, and people's attitude, among other issues [5]. The North American Blackout back in 2003 is a good example when one plant failed to accurately communicate the status of the power grid, causing more than one hundred power plants to go off line, forty million people to lose power and an estimated six billion dollars in losses to business. Just recently, a major communication breakdown at the Federal Aviation Administration caused Nation-wide delays. The Federation Aviation Administration said there were no safety issues and that air traffic controllers were able to communicate with pilots on planes both in the air and on the ground. Some airlines that did not file a flight plan yet were not allowed to take off, some planes that had already filed their flight plans were being allowed into the air. At some airports, officials were even entering that information by hand, in an effort to speed things up [6]. Communication problems in airplane cockpits and between flying crews and air traffic controllers are very common, most of the time with deadly consequences. In the late 1970's two jets collided in Tenerife, a Canary Islands, because of miscommunication between a pilot and the control tower, killing 600 people. The tower radioed to the pilot that the runway was not clear but the pilot misinterpreted the message that he was cleared for takeoff [7].

Save the Children being an international organization is faced with various communication challenges. In the year 2012, four of its senior international staff had to be evacuated from one of the country office they were working after serious disagreements on the language used to communicate with the national staff who issued serious threats to them. Increased complaints to the Human Resource department over staff quarrel have increased in the past two years resulting to the organization establishing weekly staff meetings to try and solve some of the issues. The organization has introduced a mentorship programme for all staff, aimed at creating a forum of discussing both official and personal issues. Introduction of a suggestion box which employees can post issues they need addressed, weekly staff meetings on staff issues, introduction of confidential surveys to collect staff views on various issues as well as peer group discussions among staff are some of other measures the organization has put in place to enhance communication. The organization is facing the reality of deterioration employee performance leading to reduced donor funding. Concern has been raised whether employee communication needs are met and whether the organization employ all the fundamental levels of communication. There have been speculations that employees are hardly consulted, not properly informed and involved on issues affecting them

and that a good communication system appears not to have been embraced by the organization. This study therefore sought to investigate the role of communication on employee performance at Save the Children.

1.1 Research Objectives

The overall objective of this study was to evaluate the role of communication on employee performance at Save the Children. The specific objectives of this study were;

1. To determine the extent to which Forms of Communication affect employee performance at Save the Children
2. To establish the extent to which Language affect employee performance at Save the Children
3. To determine the influence of the Organizational Structure on employee performance at Save the Children
4. To determine the extent to which Communication Process affect employee performance at Save the Children

2. Theoretical Background

Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance). Cognitive dissonance refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors. This produces a feeling of discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance etc. Cognitive Dissonance Theory argues that the experience of dissonance (or incompatible beliefs and actions) is aversive and people are highly motivated to avoid it. In their efforts to avoid feelings of dissonance, people will avoid hearing views that oppose their own, change their beliefs to match their actions, and seek reassurance after making a difficult decision. When someone is forced to do something publicly that they privately really don't want to do, dissonance is created between their cognition that they didn't want to do it and their behavior that they have done it. Forced compliance occurs when an individual performs an action that is inconsistent with his or her beliefs. The behavior can't be changed, since it is already in the past, so dissonance will need to be reduced by re-evaluating their attitude to what they have done [8].

On the other hand, constructivism theory is based on the idea that people who are able to form a greater, more detailed perception of others are more successful communicators. The theory tries to explain the reason behind why some people are better at conveying specific messages when they communicate and achieving their desired outcomes. These people are able to deliver their messages in a more, clear and direct manner than others can [9]. People who are cognitively complex in their perceptions of others have a greater capacity for sophisticated communication that will achieve positive outcomes. They

can employ a rhetorical message design logic that creates person-centered message that simultaneously pursues multiple communication goals.

Further, expectancy violation theory sees communication as the exchange of information which is high in relational content and can be used to violate the expectations of another which will be perceived as either positively or negatively depending on the liking between the two people. When our expectations are violated, we will respond in specific ways. If an act is unexpected and is assigned favorable interpretation, and it is evaluated positively, it will produce more favorable outcomes than an expected act with the same interpretation and evaluation [5].

The expectancy violations theory defines communication as the exchange of information that is high in relational content and can be used to violate the expectations of another. The perception of exchanging can be accepted either negatively or positively depending on the level of mutual likeliness between the two parties, and can also influence the outcome of communication. If negative it hinders future communication and if positive it will enhance the communication. It also explains people's reaction to unexpected behavior because expectancies are based on the communicator's social norms and their specific characteristics. Violations of expectancies cause arousal and compel the recipient to invite a series of cognitive appraisals of the violation, as well as causing uncertainty in people's behavior [6].

3. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a figure that shows the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables [10]. It formed the basis of the research problem and includes all the theories that have been put forward to explain the relationship between the fertility and mortality [11]. The Conceptual Framework of the study included the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable. In this study, the dependent variable was employee performance while the independent variables include communication channels, language, organizational structure and communication process.

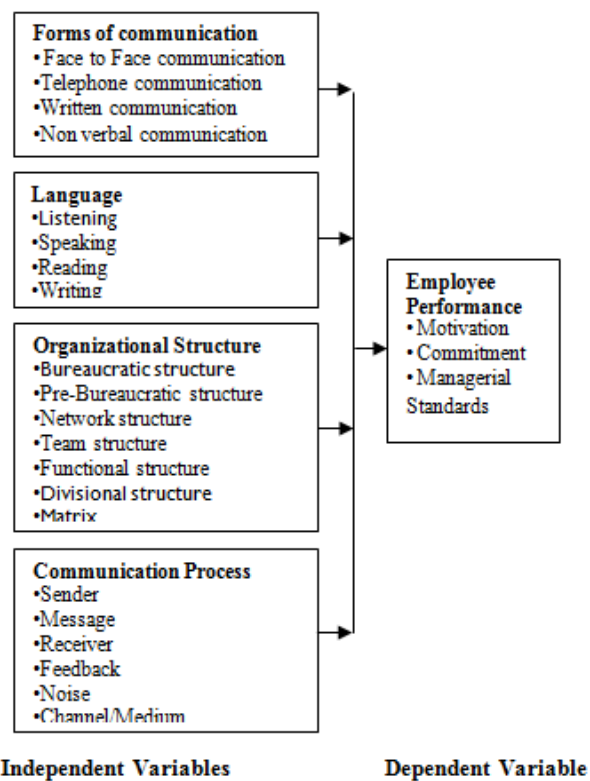


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. Research Gaps

Based on the literature that was available, a gap does exist in the proposed area of study. This research study assessed the role of communication in employees' performance. The researcher considered work done by other individuals. The factors that affect employee performance has underscored the role of communication in employee performance [12]. The various tools of measuring employees performance but has not established how communication as a tool can be used to enhance employee performance [13]. Understanding the role and characteristics of communication gives an understanding of why communication should not be ignored if an organization intends to succeed.

Various research studies explain the communication process and highlight the various forms of communication used in organizations. Although there is great emphasis on the importance of communication, the studies lack any explanation of how communication as a process can affect employee performance. In addition, the importance of each form of communication and how they affect communication. These studies however failed to relate how the forms of communication as well as the various players in affecting communication also affect employee performance.

5. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design because it describes the state of affairs as it exists. The study population was Save the Children office in Nairobi with a total number of staff of 239. The staff members comprised of 25 management staff, 120 programme staff, 56 finance staff and 38 support staff. This study adopted Stratified Sampling technique in order to ensure there is good representation from the various departments of the organization. In addition, the study used structured questionnaires for primary data collection and will be administered depending on the respondent category. A letter explaining the purpose of the study accompanied every questionnaire to help respondents understand the importance of the study. The researcher briefed the respondents in each department on how to go about the exercise in order to ensure they are clear on how to answer the questions as well as agree on a convenient drop off point where the respondents dropped the questionnaires after filling them.

Responses on the questionnaires were tabulated, coded and processed by use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, means and standard deviation while the qualitative data was analyzed using the conceptual content analysis. This helped in generalizing the findings of the study. Regression analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variables. Quantitative data was presented using statistical tools such as tables, pie charts, bar graphs and simple histograms to establish comparison. Qualitative data was presented descriptively.

6. Results and Discussion

This study established that managerial standards, staff motivation, staff commitment, proper managerial standards, communication factors influence employees performance. In addition, the study revealed that job security, continuous staff development, staff welfare, good working conditions, good remuneration, fair and clear management systems and clear reporting lines were affecting the performance of staff at Save the Children.

6.1 Forms of Communication

The study established that face to Face communication was the most commonly used form of communication in the organization, followed by written communication, telephone conversation and non-verbal communication. The study also found that face to face communication would be more suitable / effective for confidential information followed by written communication, telephone communication and non-verbal communication would be the fourth more suitable / effective for confidential information. Further, the study

found that written communication would be the most suitable / effective for important information, followed by face to face communication, telephone communication and non-verbal communication. Additionally, the study found that face to face communication would be more suitable / effective for day to day information followed by written communication, telephone communication and non-verbal communication.

The study also established that information flow is relatively slow to reach the other party in Save the Children. In addition, the study established that information flow is fast and efficient to reach the other party in Save the Children. Additionally, the study found that information shared is usually clear and understood well in Save the Children. It was also established that confidential information conveyed did not remain confidential in Save the Children.

The study established that speed in decision making affects the performance of staff; inappropriate form of communication demotivates staff; and lack of trust on keeping information confidential affects the performance of staff.

6.2 Language

The study found that native language was not commonly language used in the organization and in its place the national language was the most commonly language. The study further established that the language used in the organization affects employee performance in the organization. It was also established that there is urgent need for management and staff to improve the language currently being used as it largely contributes to poor staff performance. Further, the study found that the language used by the management to communicate official and important matters is effective and professional. Additionally, the study found that the written language used to communicate is respectful and appropriate to staff. Further, the study established that the language used by the management is motivating enough for staff to perform effectively. Lastly, the study found that the language commonly used in Save the Children is understood by everyone. It was also found that the use of appropriate language in Save the Children ensures respect and clarity of message affects performance staff.

6.3 Information on Organizational Structure

The study also revealed that office administration and control in the organization are centralized. In addition, the study found that there is both vertical and horizontal flow of all processes in the organization. Further, the study established that organization's tasks, processes and procedures are all standardized in Save then Children. In addition, the management maintains and coordinate

business/professional with other parties. Lastly, each portion of the organization is grouped according to its purpose.

Further, the study found that the existing structure ensures that information is received in good time among the different parties. The study also found that the existing structure allows information to be received in the right format from the time it is sent to the time it is delivered. Further, the existing structure allows good flow of information from the top management to the lowest staff in the organization. Additionally, the existing organizational structure is appropriate to enhance employee performance. Further, the existing structure does not allow for effective communication between staff and management. Additionally, the existing current organization structure needs to be changed to enhance employee performance. Further, the existing structure is appropriate and enhances good staff performance. However, the current structure does not ensure involvement by all staff in terms of communication.

6.4 Information on Communication Process

The study found that the sender, message, feedback, receiver, noise and channel/medium affect the flow of information in their organization. The study also established that informal communication was the most commonly used channel of communication in Save the Children, followed by formal communication and unofficial communication.

The study also found that the channels of communication used are suitable for information flow in the organization. However, there is no well established method of providing feedback in the organization. Additionally, messages are not formulated in a way they are well understood by everyone. Lastly, enough measures have not been put in place to ensure messages are delivered to the desired parties without distortion. The study also established Save the Children was often offering training on the communication process.

6.5 Regression Analysis

The researcher conducted a multiple linear regression analysis so as to determine the relationship between the employee performance at Save the Children and the four independent namely: forms of communication, language, organizational structure and communication process.

The regression model, thus, become:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Whereby: β_0 is the regression intercept; $\beta_1 - \beta_4$ are the regression coefficients; Y is the dependent variable (Employee performance at Save the Children); X_1 is forms of communication; X_2 is language; X_3 is organizational structure; and, X_4 is communication process.

The four independent variables that were studied, explain 98.1% of the employee performance at Save the Children as represented by the adjusted R^2 . This therefore means that other factors not studied in this research contribute 1.9% of the employee performance at Save the Children.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.991 ^a	.982	.981	.10788

The significance value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 thus the model is statistically significant in predicting how forms of communication, language, organizational structure and communication process influence employee performance at Save the Children. The F calculated at 5% level of significance was 827.401, which shows that the overall model was significant.

Table 2: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	38.518	4	9.629	827.401	.000 ^a
	Residual	.698	61	.012		
	Total	39.216	65			

The regression equation was;

$$Y = 0.416 + X_1 0.779 + X_2 0.171 + X_3 0.609 + X_4 0.590$$

The regression equation above has established that taking all factors into account (forms of communication, language, organizational structure and communication process) constant at zero employee performance at Save the Children will be 0.416. The findings presented also show that there is a significant relationship between forms of communication and employee performance at Save the Children as shown by a coefficient of 0.779 as shown by a p-value of 0.000. In addition, there is a significant relationship between language and employee performance at Save the Children as shown by a coefficient of 0.171 and a p-value of 0.016. Further, the findings show that there is a significant relationship between information on organization structure and employee performance at Save the Children as shown by a coefficient of 0.609 and a p-value of 0.000. Lastly, the findings show that there is a positive relationship between information on communication process and employee performance at Save the Children as shown by a coefficient of 0.590 and a p-value of 0.000. This infers that forms of communication influence the employee performance at Save the Children most followed by information on organization structure, information on communication process and language.

Table 3: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.416	.111		3.742	.000
Forms of Communication	.779	.185	.625	4.213	.000
Language	.171	.120	.344	1.423	.016
Information on Organisation Structure	.609	.086	.680	7.104	.000
Information on Communication process	.590	.057	.501	10.367	.000

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that there is a significant relationship between forms of communication and employee performance at Save the Children as shown by a coefficient of 0.779 as shown by a p-value of 0.000. The study also established that information flow is relatively slow to reach the other party in Save the Children. Additionally, the study found that information shared is usually clear and understood well in Save the Children. It was also established that confidential information conveyed did not remain confidential in Save the Children. It was also revealed that the speed in decision making affects the performance of staff inappropriate form of communication demotivates staff and lack of trust on keeping information confidential affects the performance of staff.

The study also concludes that there is a significant relationship between language and employee performance at Save the Children as shown by a coefficient of 0.171 and a p-value of 0.016. The study found that native language was not commonly language used in the organization and in its place the national language was the most commonly language. Further, the study found that the language used by the management to communicate official and important matters is effective and professional in Save the Children.

The study further concludes that there is a significant relationship between information on organizational structure and employee performance at Save the Children as shown by a coefficient of 0.609 and a p-value of 0.000. Further, the study found that the existing structure ensures that information is received in good time among the different parties, allows information to be received in the right format from the time it is sent to the time it is delivered, allows good flow of information from the top management to the lowest staff in the organization, is appropriate to enhance employee performance. Further, the existing structure does not allow for effective communication between staff and management. Additionally, the existing current organization

structure needs to be changed to enhance employee performance. Further, the existing structure is appropriate and enhances good staff performance.

Lastly, the study concludes that there is a positive relationship between information on communication process and employee performance at Save the Children as shown by a coefficient of 0.590 and a p-value of 0.000. The study also found that the sender, message, feedback, receiver, noise and channel/medium affect the flow of information in their organization. The study also established that informal communication was the most commonly used channel of communication in Save the Children, followed by formal communication and unofficial communication.

8. Recommendations

The study also established that information flow is relatively slow to reach the other party in Save the Children. This study recommends that the organization should improve the flow of information to other parties. It was also established that confidential information conveyed did not remain confidential in Save the Children. The study therefore recommends that the organization should ensure the form of communication used maintains the secrecy of the confidential information conveyed.

The study established that the language used in the organization affects employee performance in the organization. The study therefore concludes that there is urgent need for management and staff to improve the language currently being used as it largely contributes to poor staff performance.

The study also established that the existing structure does not allow for effective communication between staff and management. The study there recommends that the organization should adjust its structure so as ensure effective communication between staff and management and to ensure involvement by all staff in terms of communication.

The study also found that there was no well established method of providing feedback in the organization and messages were not formulated in a way they are well understood by everyone. Additionally, enough measures have not been put in place to ensure messages are delivered to the desired parties without distortion. This study therefore recommends that the organization should ensure that the communication process offers an option of providing feedback. In addition they should ensure that enough measures are put in place to ensure that messages are formulated in a way that they are well understood by everyone and messages are delivered to the desired parties without distortion.

9. Future Scope of the Study

From the study and related conclusions, the researcher recommends further research in the area of factors affecting communication in non-governmental organizations in Kenya. The study also recommends a comparative study of communication in public institutions, private institutions and non-governmental organizations.

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