

The Role of Communication Channels and Communication Strategies in Malaysian Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Most organizations seek to present and represent their climate and culture through organizational communication to ensure all stakeholders can comprehend and practice mutual values and attitudes towards common goals. The relevance of this study rests on the insights it provides in exploring the dynamics of communication channels, specifically in the workplace, through the lens of the media richness theory. This study aims to investigate the effects of communication channels and the role of communication strategies in improving communication effectiveness in organizational communication. The qualitative approach was employed using semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data. The interviews were conducted in person. The data obtained from the interviews was analyzed using NVivo to conduct thematic analysis. The findings revealed multiple interpretations of how communication channels affect organizational communication from the respondents' perspectives, which included employee morale, information delivery, organizational productivity, positive communication, and timeliness. The results also demonstrated that communication strategies were functional for effective communication by promoting personal growth, promoting organizational success, facilitating problem solving, and promoting diversity and inclusivity. It can be concluded that organizational communication entails various communication channels through which information exchange can take place. The impacts of both physical and virtual communication channels on organizational communication are associated with organizational and employee performance.

Keywords: Organizational communication; Media richness theory; Communication channels; Communication strategies

INTRODUCTION

Organizational communication is a very significant and crucial element in an organization as it plays a pivotal role in the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational processes. According to Musheke and Phiri (2021), the purpose of communication is to transfer information to the audience on the organization's goals and objectives, its policies, vision and procedures, tasks and duties and other activities within the organization. Effective organizational communication ensures the information exchange process runs smoothly, creates collaboration, enhances engagement between teams and facilitates decision-making. Meanwhile, the mediums through which information and messages are transmitted or communication channels can have significant impacts on the efficacy of organizational communication. A whole range of communication channels can be utilized by organizations, from traditional, face-to-face communication to printed publications, electronic media and digital platforms such as emails and social media (Vercic & Spoljaric, 2020). According to Van Ruler (2020), organizational communication examines the various processes in which employees communicate and interact in complex organizations. It covers a broad scope, including everything on what organizations say and do, and how employees are affected by the organization's action and activities. Frandsen et al. (2013) posited that the function of organizational communication is essential in companies for the managers and executives to achieve organizational goals. This directs communication channels, whereby it is used to disseminate relevant information to the entire organization. According to Siano et al. (2013), the use of communication channels is viewed as a management strategy and is recognized to instill values, regulate behaviors and contribute to corporate identity of the employees. An organization with effective communication channels available ensures

employees can receive information regarding the company to remain informed (Murphy, 2017).

There are two types of communication channels found in organizations. One-way communication channels, like emails, are suitable for awareness purposes such as informing employees about final decisions made by management. Meanwhile, two-way channels are considered a powerful tool as they require participation of multiple employees in order to gain collective knowledge and understanding (Konate et al., 2020). Crittenden et al. (2019) stated that with digitalization, business evolves to be more collaborative in which digital communication is used in business models. However, physical communication channels, such as meetings and face-to-face discussions, are of similar importance and should be maintained (Kovaite et al., 2020). Physical communication also contributes to employee engagement and emotional connection (Cho et al., 2017).

The role of communication strategies is equally important in an organization. Kibe (2014) claims that communication strategies encompass structured approaches that are designed to achieve specific organizational objectives and determine what kind of information to share with individuals within an organization and how the information should be presented. A well-defined strategy that aligns with the organization's goals can lead to improved employee engagement and effective conflict resolution and consequently, ensure organizational success. Communication strategies enable dialogues and enhance communication with different groups within organizations (Sewestianiuk & Voitovici, 2013). Organizations utilize a vast range of communication strategies to influence their employees' behavior, knowledge and performance. Men (2014) states that communication channels are one of the most effective communication strategies. Communication channels, which are seen as a strategic communication method, cultivates creativity within employees (Lee & Kim, 2021). The communication strategies implemented in organizations are also known as strategic communication, which is defined as an informational resource that builds relational and expansive communication (Sewestianiuk & Voitovoci, 2013). Thus, by incorporating communication strategies and effective communication, it enhances the employees' performance and satisfaction (Vuori, 2012).

Despite the increasing integration of digital communication tools in organizational settings, many organizations struggle to effectively balance digital and physical communication channels. This imbalance can hinder employee to communicate effectively in terms of engagement, emotional connection, and knowledge sharing. Additionally, without a clearly defined communication strategy aligned with organizational goals, communication efforts may fail to influence employee performance. There is a need to explore how strategic use of both communication channels and strategies can enhance communication effectiveness in the workplace. Thus, the research objectives for this study are as follows.

RO1: To investigate different communication channels that affect organizational communication.

RO2: To explore the roles of communication strategies in improving communication effectiveness in the workplace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is the media richness theory by Daft and Lengel (1986). According to Kralik (2015), this theory is used to rank and assess the richness of various communication channels by analyzing their ability to replicate information transmitted across them without loss or distortion. For example, phone calls cannot reproduce cues like gestures and body language and therefore, it is seen to be a less rich communication medium. On the other hand, communication channels such as video conferencing permit users to express gestures and motions to some extent, making it a richer communication medium than phone calls. This theory also suggests that richer communication channels are required for more ambiguous and uncertain tasks to ensure the right information can be communicated (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Moreover, Poo-Caamano et al. (2017) argue that communication channels in organizational communication are crucial to understand how organizations process and handle information to reduce ambiguity and uncertainty. The ability of the communication channels to deliver more or less information varies. Rich communication

channels such as in-person and video conferencing allow for real-time feedback, information cross-checking and the provision of extra indicators like tone and body language. Meanwhile, nonverbal cues cannot be communicated and conveyed through leaner communication channels such as phone calls, text messaging and email. Therefore, feedback is limited and restricted.

The media richness theory is based on two core assumptions: that individuals aim to reduce ambiguity and uncertainty, and that certain communication media are more suitable than others for achieving this goal (Mammadov, 2022). Kralik (2015) claims that task ambiguity arises from multiple or conflicting interpretations of data, while task uncertainty stems from a lack of sufficient information. According to Daft and Lengel (1986, as cited in Mammadov, 2022), media richness is based on four key criteria that are sorted from high to low degree of richness: (1) availability of feedback, (2) capacity of channels to convey multiple cues such as tone and gestures, (3) use of natural language, and (4) personal focus of the medium. These factors help determine how effectively a communication channel can support information processing within organizations.

Communication Channels in Organizational Communication

According to Van Ruler (2020), organizational communication examines how employees communicate and interact within complex organizational structures. It encompasses a broad range of activities, including what organizations communicate internally and externally, and how these communications impact employees. Frandsen et al. (2013) posits that the function of organizational communication is essential in companies for the managers and executives to achieve organizational goals. This directs communication channels, whereby it is used to disseminate relevant information to the entire organization. According to Siano et al. (2013), the use of communication channels is viewed as a management strategy and is recognized to instill values, regulate behaviors and contribute to corporate identity of the employees. An organization with effective communication channels available ensures employees are able to receive information regarding the company to remain informed (Murphy, 2017).

A critical review was done by Kovaite et al. (2020) to understand the role of digital communication channels in organizations. Using communication channels was seen as cost-effective and an ideal method to reach employees better. The findings also showed that one-way communication channels, like emails, were suitable for awareness purposes such as informing employees about final decisions made by management. Meanwhile, two-way channels were considered as a powerful tool as they require participation of multiple employees in order to gain collective knowledge and understanding. This is in line with Crittenden et al.'s (2019) view, stating that digitalization is evolving business to being more collaborative, which leads to digital communication being used in business models. Moreover, physical communication channels, such as meetings and face-to-face discussions, are of similar importance and should be maintained (Kovaite et al., 2020). Physical communication also contributes to employee engagement and emotional connection (Cho et al., 2017). Organizations from different industries or work nature may have varying goals of communication; therefore, requiring different communication channels.

A study by Kalogiannidis (2020) explored the effectiveness of communication and employee performance. A questionnaire was distributed to 110 respondents from the banking industry and analyzed using the regression model. It was found that all types of communication (horizontal, upward and downward) had a great positive impact on employee performance and commitment. It emphasizes that effective communication channels allow employees to share information, knowledge and ideas that enable them to perform beyond the expectations of their employer. This finding is supported by Tian et al. (2020), whereby organizations rely on the most effective communication channel in order to improve both employee and business performance. Meanwhile, another study conducted by Vercic and Spoljaric (2020) looks into communication channels affecting employee satisfaction. 1524 employees from 10 companies completed the questionnaire and results were analyzed using Pearson correlation. The finding showed that there was a significant positive relationship between communication channel effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

Communication Strategies in Organizations

Communication strategies enable dialogues and enhance communication with different groups within

organizations (Sewestianiuk & Voitovici, 2013). Organizations utilize a vast range of communication strategies to influence their employees' Behaviour, knowledge and performance. Men (2014) states that communication channels are one of the most effective communication strategies. Communication channels, which is seen as a strategic communication method, cultivates creativity within employees (Lee & Kim, 2021). The communication strategies implemented in organizations are also known as strategic communication, which is defined as an informational resource that builds relational and expansive communication (Sewestianiuk & Voitovoci, 2013). Thus, by incorporating communication strategies and effective communication, it enhances the employees' performance and satisfaction (Vuori, 2012).

Kibe (2014) conducted a case study to investigate the effect of communication strategies on organizational performance. Upon analysis, it was found that relevant communication strategies should be applied in order for an organization to have a good performance. The strategies listed were an open communication environment, inclusivity, two-way communication, result driven communication and multi-channeled platforms. With these practiced strategies, employees agreed that there was a significant positive impact on their performance. Thus, it is evident that communication strategies play a central role in employee performance. Hyland-Wood et al. (2021) supported that communication strategies that can maximize employee support are two-way process messages that are delivered via appropriate platforms. Messages should also be tailored for a diverse audience and shared by trusted employees.

Meanwhile, Musheke and Phiri (2021) studied the effects of effective communication on organizational performance. The questionnaire was answered by 138 respondents from 3 consultancy companies and revealed that there is a positive relationship between the channel of communication used and organizational performance. It highlighted that communication channels were a vital strategy used by the management in order to ensure all members are aligned with the organization goals. Furthermore, it was also established that well-defined communication strategies are integral to accomplish strategic goals. Communication strategies were also important for corporate reputations, as studied by Ajayi and Mmutle (2020). In this research, it was posited that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributed greatly towards corporate reputation, and it was important for organizations to use effective communication strategies to communicate the activities to stakeholders. Communication strategies are also important in digital communication as highlighted by Wuersch et al. (2024). It is presented that holistic digital communication as a communication strategy promotes employee development.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Sampling

A qualitative research design was applied to this study in order to gain better insights in the experiences and perspectives of employees in Malaysia. Specifically, the case study approach was used for an in-depth observation of unique contexts provided by the participants. According to Daniel (2016), based on the data generated from qualitative research, it allows researchers to construct and reconstruct theories when necessary as it creates a wider understanding of a certain behavior. Thus, this approach is best to understand the complex setting of an organization and provides a more detailed understanding of the employees' experience. Three participants interviewed for this study hold executive positions in their respective companies and have a minimum of two years of professional experience, ensuring they can contribute valuable insights to the research. They were:

1. Respondent 1: A female executive with over 2 years of experience in the transportation technology industry.
2. Respondent 2: A male executive with over 14 years of experience in electronics, engineering and healthcare industry.
3. Respondent 3: A female executive with over 5 years' experience in recruitment and financial technology industry.

Although only three participants were involved, they provided rich, contextual data in understanding their communication practices and perspectives from diverse organizations in Malaysia. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), 1–10 participants can be sufficient if they provide substantial, meaningful data relevant to the

research objectives.

Instrument

Data for this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were carefully developed to align with the research objectives and to gain participants' insightful responses. Probing questions were incorporated to allow participants to elaborate on their personal experiences and this approach enhances the quality of responses by encouraging participants to reflect on their perspectives more comprehensively (Fylan 2021). To ensure both the validity and reliability of the instrument, the interview questions underwent an expert review process (Kallio et al., 2020). Expert feedback ensured the clarity and precision of the questions, confirming that they were relevant and directly addressed the research objectives. This process helped ensure the data are accurate and consistent (Hernandez et al., 2020). These rigorous procedures contributed to the overall quality of the data collection process.

Data Collection Procedures

Before conducting the interviews, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants, and informed consent was obtained for ethical consideration (Hernandez et al., 2020). The interviews were then carried out either face-to-face or online, depending on the participants' availability and preference, which is consistent with recent trends in data collection practice (Gibson et al., 2021). All interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate data capture and allow for thorough analysis (Gould et al., 2021).

Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, providing sufficient time for participants to share their perspectives in depth (Fylan, 2021). Afterward, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using NVivo, a software widely used for qualitative data analysis due to its robust features in coding and theme identification (Bazeley & Jackson, 2021). This analytical process facilitated the identification of patterns and insights relevant to the research objectives.

Data Analysis Method

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis with NVivo software, a widely used tool for qualitative data analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2021). Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify and analyze patterns or themes within the interview data, providing a structured approach to understanding participants' experiences and perceptions. This method enables the researcher to capture both explicit and implicit meanings embedded within the data, ensuring that the findings reflect the participants' perspectives in a comprehensive manner (Nowell et al., 2021).

The findings were organized according to the identified themes and codes, ensuring clarity and systematic presentation. This approach not only enhances the rigor of the analysis but also allows for the presentation of findings that are grounded in the data, offering valuable insights into the study's research questions (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2020). The NVivo software facilitated efficient coding and data organization, which contributed to the reliability and transparency of the analysis process (Fylan, 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study will be presented in two sections, which are the effects of communication channels on organizational communication and the role of communication strategies in improving communication effectiveness in the workplace. The themes and categories found in this study are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1: Themes and Categories for The Effects of Communication Channels on Organizational Communication

| Themes | Categories |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Employee morale | Employee motivation for work |
| | Employee satisfaction |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Information delivery | Accuracy of information Urgency for decision making Restricted delivery of information |
| Organizational Productivity | Employee productivity Shared mutual goals Progressive operations |
| Positive communication | Space for open communication Feedback on improvement |
| Timeliness | Response time |

Table 2: Themes and Categories for The Roles of Communication Strategies in Improving Communication Effectiveness in The Workplace.

| Themes | Categories |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Promote Personal Growth | Encourage self-expression Promote accountability Promote recognition |
| Facilitate problem-solving | Focus on solutions Mitigate conflicts |
| Promote diversity and inclusivity | Create inclusive cultures Encourage multilingual communication |
| Promote organizational success | Define organizational direction Enhance teamwork Keep track of progress |

These themes and categories will be discussed below by incorporating utterances from the respondents who are labelled based on their codes as Respondent 1, 2, and 3.

The Effects of Communication Channels on Organizational Communication

The findings of the effects of communication channels on organizational communication will be demonstrated through five themes: employee morale, information delivery, organizational productivity, positive communication, and timeliness. Despite working at different firms, all respondents reported that they used similar communication channels at work which included face-to-face meetings, emails, virtual meetings, online messaging platforms, and online portals.

Employee morale

Employee motivation for work

All three respondents reached a consensus that the communication channels used influenced employee motivation for work. A respondent mentioned that she felt encouraged to improve her work performance with the support given through the channels, while another respondent viewed the channels as platforms that could enhance the sense of belonging and create a healthy workplace culture.

“So as for TERAS Connect, I didn’t see people much, but people give me support, I feel appreciated and

acknowledged.”

“Another example is weekly sync-up meetings. So when we set time with the team lead or the project manager, it reminded everyone that you did not do this project alone. You have people to lean on; you have people to rely on.”

(Respondent 1)

“I mean, it also can mitigate conflict, can increase employee engagement and improve the, you know, sense of belonging.”

“...create a healthy workplace culture.”

(Respondent 2)

On the contrary, the third respondent believed that the channels used discouraged her motivation. She reported that she felt drained with work-related issues progressing at a slow pace. Conversely, through face-to-face interaction with her colleague, she believed that they were able to have emotional understanding.

“I’d say, it’s very draining. It’s very, it’s slowing down a lot of things.”

“But then, because we share, you know, because we practice that comprehension, comprehensive communication. And then we tried, she understands, she tried to understand me, emotion on the, you know, emotional understanding, and then I tried to understand her as well.”

(Respondent 3)

Employee satisfaction

Additionally, one respondent highlighted that the communication channels also improved employee satisfaction.

“...and then of course, you can improve employee satisfaction working in the organization.”

(Respondent 2)

The finding implies that the communication channels used at work mostly have positive impacts on employee morale due to how they create space for support and encouragement. This applies to both physical and virtual interaction; when empowering communication practices are performed, a healthy work environment can be created. This inference stands in line with Chan et al. (2023), who discovered that employee motivation positively affects employee productivity with both rewards (monetary and praises) and employee empowerment as the motivational tools. However, in some instances, the findings also indicate that employees might feel stressed with face-to-face meetings due to the lack of comprehension and emotional intelligence among co-workers.

Information delivery

Accuracy of information

Two respondents believed that the communication channels used influenced the accuracy of information delivered and received. One of them agreed that the communication channels used allowed the delivery of accurate information, which was deemed necessary to enrich his work performance.

“So, whereby, if, you know, I mean, effective communication should... should, I mean, promote my superior to accurately convey information that I need to perform well.”

(Respondent 2)

In contrast, another respondent believed that the information delivered through face-to-face interaction tended to be inaccurate or overlooked.

"But then, when I think about it again, you know, physical sharing means that it's an on-the-spot kind of discussion. So then I believe there must be some points that will, you know, be overlooked. So those are the important bits that I think is, are missing."

(Respondent 3)

Urgency for decision making

In terms of urgency for decision making, two respondents thought that the communication channels used, online portals and face-to-face interaction, necessitated two-way communication and immediate or updated information, which helped urgent judgment.

"TERAS is a very small company. So we can have like our internal platform, like TERAS Connect. So, it is a two-way communication."

"Uhm, even when TERAS Connect was used casually or indirectly, the information is updated."

(Respondent 1)

"If, if the decision making or feedback is really time sensitive, we prefer a face-to-face meeting, a conference call meeting, so that we can get an immediate response from the relevant party."

"I need that job to be done fast because I need to get the saving, uhh, to explain the saving fast so... so, I can just, uhh, because we are... we are using Microsoft Teams here, right?"

(Respondent 2)

Restricted delivery of information

On the other hand, a respondent reported that some information delivery was restricted due to the regulations applied for external communication. In other instances, the company's individualistic culture also restricted information delivery, in which information cannot be shared through the channels used.

"Especially for us in finance, fintech, where, you know, it relates to financial services for the people in the country, then the security is very, very tight. So it's very, at one point, it's quite complicated for us to share some information or some documents with the externals."

"I think rather than finger pointing, it's more of, like, individualistic way."

(Respondent 3)

It can be inferred that the accuracy and immediacy of information is affected by the communication channels used. This is related to the ability of the channels to provide timely and accurate information through connectedness and precision. This issue is discussed in Zhurakovskiy et al. (2020) stating that the information delivered in text form requires a compressed amount of time. Similarly, online portals or platforms are found to provide updated information in this study. Nonetheless, this study also discovered that some employees believe that face-to-face communication allowed them to give and receive immediate information due to the presence of co-location and synchronicity. This finding corresponds to Dennis and Kinney (1998) who posited that face-to-face interaction provided the highest level of immediacy of feedback which was proven through the media richness theory.

Organizational productivity

Employee productivity

Two respondents mentioned how the communication channels impacted employee productivity; one of them viewed it positively, while the other asserted the negative effects. The latter is associated with how computer-

mediated communication was used as the channels during remote working, which led to slow-paced productivity. It was also mentioned that unfairness in information delivery reduced employee productivity.

“So, it can improve productivity.”

(Respondent 2)

“And then they discovered the two days that most people were working in, at home, those were the days that were the slowest for everyone, for the entire company.”

“And then, then they will meet like one person’s work seems slower than the other person’s, because the message is not shared fairly.”

(Respondent 3)

Shared mutual goals

Face-to-face meetings used as a communication channel also gave room for shared mutual organizational goals, as discussed by two respondents below.

“I think on top of my head, like I said just now, when we did weekly sync, it’s very helpful because it’s easy, you casually call for a meeting, and then everybody comes, shows their commitment to achieve the same goal.”

(Respondent 1)

“So, in this town hall, I mean, the management shall share the up-to-date performance. So I mean, just share with the employees, so where are we now, what are our targets, what is already being achieved, and what are the short-term or long-term plans.”

“I mean, the impact, I mean, it gets people aligned to achieve the common goal, right?”

(Respondent 2)

Progressive operations

Another effect of communication channels discovered was progressive operations in which the respondents endorsed that the progression of daily operations towards the predefined performance goals could be tracked through the channels.

“So I think as long as the important message gets across, especially from top down, then daily operations should run smoothly.”

“So every week we set a meeting with the project owner, leads. So sync progress of any project so no one will be left doing the task alone”

(Respondent 1)

“So basically this session is to discuss or to follow up on each department’s KPI and to discuss if there’s, uh, you know, if there’s help needed by which department and then which department can support that department.”

(Respondent 2)

The findings revealed that communication channels, functioning as the touchpoints of information transmission, held the key to organizational productivity. As presented in the results, employee productivity, shared mutual goals, and progressive operations were among the effects of effective communication channels. These dimensions rely on the flexibility of communication channels which boost information transfer. The availability of communication channels allows the flow of information that in turn amplifies overall organizational

productivity as discussed by Musheke and Phiri (2021). Similarly, Otamiri and Idochi (2021) reported that there was a significant relationship between employee communication and organizational productivity. Employee communication can only take place in the presence of communication channels which are predefined by the organizations. Hence, this explains how communication channels are able to enhance employee productivity, exhibit shared mutual goals, and allow progressive operations.

Positive communication

Space for open communication

All three respondents agreed that the communication channels used at their organizations determined whether there was space for open communication. Two of them expressed that they were allowed to voice their thoughts freely and openly in a safe and comfortable environment.

“So everyone can voice out what they are feeling, what they are handling.”

(Respondent 1)

“The way we do the town hall is to provide a comfortable space for the employee, so that they can have a sense of belonging in the organization, so that they can speak up openly.”

“You have good company culture, it’ll promote open communication, and when you can, like, engage anybody, there’s no like, really strict protocol.”

(Respondent 2)

In contrast, another respondent responded that she did not feel comfortable communicating face-to-face with the higher-ups, especially pertaining to dissatisfaction and complaints.

“But, but because it’s vertical, you know, and then I’m just sort of like a subordinate, right? I can’t like, go up to that management and to that manager and like, hey, can you please do your job?”

(Respondent 3)

Feedback on improvement

Through positive communication, feedback can be shared to improve one’s morale in performing their jobs, as mentioned by Respondent 1 below. Meanwhile, Respondent 2 asserted the positive impacts of exchanging feedback, which helped maintain and improve the relationship between co-workers through two-way communication.

“For example if I wanna share about how I disassemble the system, I can make a video and then I post. And people will react and give feedback.”

(Respondent 1)

“So, that, you know, I know, what I need to do, I know what to improve, but at the same time, while giving the feedback, it should be, you know, it should maintain or should improve our relationship.”

“I mean, during this town hall, uh you know, we will get feedback from the employees, we will ask their concern, it can be from any topics, not just about the performance, so, it can be any topic, it’s a... we promote a two-way communication.”

(Respondent 2)

The findings indicated that the communication channels used promoted space for open communication and constructive feedback. Regardless of the types of communication channels used, employees have the opportunity

to speak their work-related concerns, which stimulates support from others. Rather than one-way informative communication, employees become comfortable with opening up about their thoughts through two-way communication which works both vertically and horizontally. By and large, open communication is closely related to feedback sharing in organizational communication since the former does not exist without the latter and vice versa.

Timeliness

Response time

All three respondents mentioned the time it took for messages to get across through the communication channels used. One of them believed that computer-mediated communication channels, such as online portals, provided information promptly. However, another respondent who used Microsoft Teams as an online communication platform reported that the response time was too slow; thus, immediate feedback could not be received.

“And then, post is done in a very timely manner.”

(Respondent 1)

“But then for Microsoft Teams, or like, let's say virtual communication medium, it takes time. People will also like, type, and then think, type, and then wait, you know. Those take time.”

(Respondent 3)

For face-to-face communication, two respondents revealed that it provided a high level of timeliness since the interlocutors were co-located within a physical proximity. They asserted that the face-to-face medium led to effective communication due to its synchronous nature, which allowed employees to receive information almost instantaneously.

“There's no like, uh I mean, when... when you can get immediate response, I mean, your... your decision making process is smooth, of course, your... your work, you become more productive.”

(Respondent 2)

“And then I think it's important to highlight as well, the timing, like you know, if it's physical sharing right on the spot right there and then, pass, you know.”

“I think that is very effective, I would say, because then it, you know, it reached out to everyone, almost at the same time.”

(Respondent 3)

Based on the findings, it can be deduced that the type of communication channels may affect the response time or the time it takes for responses to be conveyed. It is presumed that computer-mediated communication channels will have faster response times due to the technological features embedded in the platforms. However, it turns out that is not the case for all instances since the timeliness of computer-mediated communication seems to rest on the individuals behind the machines. On the contrary, face-to-face communication was proven to have shorter response times due to the synchronicity of the medium. This result is similar to Dennis and Kinney (1998) stating that the synchronicity of face-to-face interactions influences the time it takes for information to be transmitted, which hence affects communication effectiveness.

Role of Communication Strategies in Improving Communication Effectiveness in the Workplace

Promote personal growth

Encouraging self-expression, promoting accountability, and recognition were described as invaluable for effective communication. Respondents gave examples of how this was occurring within organizations.

Encourage self-expression

Respondents explained how they were given space to express themselves in their organizations. For example, the role of superiors in encouraging feedback from employees was cited.

“But, when you're working with a positive environment, and then the boss is also understanding to you, when you have questions, they're encouraging you to ask, it's okay, it's okay. You feel good about it”.

(Respondent 1)

Two other respondents echoed this with similar illustrations of the importance of superiors in encouraging feedback from employees by facilitating two-way communication. One of the respondents mentioned that it can be done through interaction with the employees, talking about any topics, and making them feel comfortable.

“I mean, during this town hall, uh you know, we will get feedback from the employees, we will ask their concern, it can be from any topics, not just about the performance, so, it can be any topic, it's a... we promote a two way communication. And then... and then, of course, there will be some refreshment after that and try to mingle with them, and then, you know, to make them feel comfortable...”

(Respondent 2)

In addition, the other respondent initiated the two-way communication with managers to give feedback to ensure effective communication took place, even though no one in the respondent's team did it.

“Because I always believe that, you know, if it's, if there's not one person trying, then nothing is going to work. At least I try. So I tried to even with my managers, I tried to do practice open communication with them”.

(Respondent 3)

In summary, the role of superiors in organizations in facilitating two-way communication was described by respondents as essential to processes of encouraging employees to express themselves, which contributes to effective communication. From the respondents' responses, it is evident that open communication helped employees feel safe to share opinions, ideas, and suggestions without the fear of judgement among team members and superiors.

Promote accountability

Empowerment is crucial in promoting accountability. Processes of promoting accountability and recognition were characterized by a respondent as facilitating a sense of empowerment by superiors to give a sense of ownership in decision making among employees. When employees were given trust in decision making, it would promote accountability among themselves since they had to be more cautious in making decisions as they felt the weight of responsibilities that came with it. One of the respondents corroborated this,

“So, I mean, empowerment meaning that... that we own our decision, we take the accountability for all our actions”.

(Respondent 2)

As the above example illustrates, empowerment given by superiors leads to increased ownership and accountability. Hence, increased accountability leads to increased personal growth.

Promote recognition

Promoting recognition was described as vital for effective communication. A respondent explained that employees, regardless of position levels, could participate in the company's recognition award competition.

"I mean, if you're an executive, you're a ground-level worker, if you are managers or directors, you can actually share your project, submit into the portal during the, uhh before the due date. Normally, they will open this Fantree award nomination in January and will end by February".

"So basically, this promote uhh recognition".

(Respondent 2)

This is crucial because employees saw recognition as their companies acknowledged and valued their contributions. It instilled a sense of worth and assurance in employees regarding their significance to the company and boosting their motivation to always perform better.

Respondents discussed open communication encouraged self-expression, which created a safe environment for employees to give feedback without the fear of judgment which promoted accountability among themselves that led to recognition from the company. All these ultimately promoted employees' self-growth.

Since the working environment has been proven to have a substantial effect on employee engagement, and consequently, employee performance, special focus and effort are needed in this area. The findings imply that organizations should prioritize creating a positive work environment for their employees and promoting programs that would enhance employees' relationships. The determinants of employee engagement refer to a healthy working atmosphere that reflects the organization's social impact. This study is similar to Anitha's (2014) earlier research, in which she mentioned that employees would receive significant attention concerning the determinants being addressed. To conclude, personal development fosters professionalism which enhances employees' professional image. It improves employees' confidence level as they have better skills and competencies. This then leads to higher productivity because employees who are always improving and growing tend to be more engaged (Motyka, 2018). Additionally, organizations that invest in employees' growth can increase loyalty and reduce turnover rates (Rajest et al., 2023).

Facilitate problem solving

Focusing on solutions and mitigating conflicts was important for effective communication as described by respondents. These two communication strategies were employed to facilitate problem solving in the workplace.

Focus on solutions

Understanding the root cause of a problem was suggested as the first step in facilitating problem solving by a respondent.

"Although I applaud them for the efforts, but I think they have to drill down better to understand what's the core problem".

(Respondent 3)

While understanding the root cause of a problem is important, another respondent explained that rather than pointing fingers, discussing how to solve the problem is more important.

"I mean, there's... there's no need to... to find faults, just straight to the point to discuss on how to solve things".

(Respondent 2)

It was also mentioned by another respondent that brainstorming solutions with team members and other departments would also facilitate problem solving in the workplace.

"So when we discuss in the focused group, so everyone will hear, everyone will give their opinion. So you can actually find solutions from other departments too".

(Respondent 1)

Mitigate conflicts

Respondents gave examples of how mitigating conflicts led to effective communication among colleagues.

"I always communicate anything that I don't understand more, anything that I don't know of with my other colleagues, which is my two other colleagues. And so far, we never really had any issues between one another".

(Respondent 3)

On top of that, another respondent described mitigating conflicts as creating a positive work atmosphere.

"So basically, this will surely mitigate conflict, especially between me and my direct superior and of course, it will create a positive work environment for me".

(Respondent 2)

In summary, focusing on solutions and mitigating conflicts were described by respondents as crucial processes of problem solving, which contribute to effective communication.

The findings imply that focusing on problem solving in the workplace can inculcate certain traits among employees when facing problems. This is because in order for employees to solve problems, they need to utilise these traits. This is in line with the findings from research conducted by Kapur (2022), where she stated that there is a significant benefit of morality, ethics, diligence, and conscientiousness traits in enhancing problem solving skills. Conversely, employees have to work collaboratively in solving problems. Therefore, it is vital to have good teamwork among the team members to tackle problems in their day-to-day tasks. Ultimately, employees with problem-solving skills make the workplace more productive and effective as it fosters critical thinking, teamwork, and most importantly decision-making. Wang et al., (2009) corroborate this view by stating that "teams are successful when they dealt successfully with clashing outcomes, had some mixture in their structure, and were busy in effective mutual reasoning." This is supported by the result from a previous study by Assbeihat (2016) shows that collaboration among team members is important, and team performance improves when team members prioritize teamwork.

Promote diversity and inclusivity

Creating inclusive cultures and encouraging multilingual communication were described by respondents as valuable in facilitating communication between employees in multinational companies.

Create inclusive cultures

All respondents shared that their organizations created an inclusive culture to promote diversity and inclusivity.

"So management can directly give feedback to the employees. They gave feedback, such as, What's your strength, What area can you improve, something like that. So they listen to our concerns, our ideas, and input. So this way, it's creating a culture of inclusivity."

(Respondent 1)

"You know, this, because, you know, rather than communicating to prove, like my point, it's important to highlight that comprehensive communication also covers that, trying to understand the other person's point of views and pointers, you know, and that would pull us all together up, rather than just me and my work."

(Respondent 3)

Based on the above responses, inclusivity culture was defined by taking employees' points of view and getting

constructive feedback from the management into consideration. On the other hand, another respondent's definition of inclusive culture was by including a foreign senior staff member who could converse in Malay or English to be part of a committee.

"Senior staff. Maybe he or she can converse in Malay or English. So, we, you know, invite them to join the safety committee. So, this safety committee, I mean, is being read or represented by any level staff from each department?"

(Respondent 2)

The respondent then further explained that this was important because the senior staff could then convey information to other foreign workers so that all employees would be on the same page, which facilitated effective communication.

Encourage multilingual communication

One of the respondents gave an example of how multilingual communication was encouraged in the workplace to promote diversity.

"So...so there's also signage in Hindi language"

(Respondent 2)

As described by this respondent, signage in the Hindi language was put up in the workplace to facilitate effective communication among the employees who came from different nationalities.

The findings may imply that effective diversity and inclusion can impact the points of view of employees as well as others about an organization, which may result in a positive corporate reputation if both points of view are largely positive. An organization's corporate reputation can be enhanced by focusing on several important areas, as shown by the reputation index developed by Cravens et al. (2003). "Employees are how a corporate reputation is created. Through the actions of all employees, at the senior management and lower levels, the public derives an image of the corporation," (Cravens et al., 2003). Thus, a company's corporate reputation is one of its most precious assets.

Promote organizational success

Defining organizational direction, enhancing teamwork and keeping track of work progress were described by respondents as invaluable for effective communication.

Define organizational direction

A respondent gave an example of how defining organizational direction promotes organizational success.

"So we were always informed of the company progress and what's their goal is. So everyone can work towards the goal"

(Respondent 1)

As expressed by this respondent, defining organizational direction includes informing employees on the company's progress and goals so that everyone has a clear understanding of the company's direction and worked towards it.

Enhance teamwork

Respondents gave examples of how teamwork was enhanced within their organizations.

"So team members can support when you share, and people will be a bit respectful. Sharing will be more

meaningful”.

(Respondent 1)

As described by this respondent, not only was teamwork enhanced, but also the sharing would be more meaningful and team members would be respectful towards one another, which all contribute to effective communication. Another respondent explained that trusting team members was not easy, and it must be practiced in order to enhance teamwork.

“So, in terms of my communication between other people, I need to practice, you know, trust each other, I need to respect them, I mean, I cannot just, you know, communicate with them uhh, blindly”.

(Respondent 2)

This respondent stated that communication in the workplace should promote teamwork and one should not “communicate blindly” with team members.

Keep track of progress

One of the respondents gave examples of how keeping track of work progress can promote organizational success.

“So... so from this Excel sheet, you know, we will feed this data to this Power BI and it will generate, uhh you know, will turn to visually immersive or interactive insight. It can be in the form of graph or charts.”

(Respondent 2)

As expressed by this respondent, employees in the company would keep track of their progress by using software called Power BI where they could key in data and the data would be translated into graphs or charts.

“So that when you perform your work, you can straight up see and look the status where you are currently right now. So, do you need to bulk up or do you need or... or... you already uhh, you know, go beyond the KPI so that you can slow down a bit...”

(Respondent 2)

From the example above, the respondent expressed that the graphs and charts helped them to check their current progress for tasks given and if they have gone beyond the Key Performance Index (KPI), they did not have to rush to complete a certain task.

Based on the above findings, an organization’s success can be considered successful if its goals are effectively achieved in line with its mission. This usually entails carrying out a leadership-established plan. After establishing the plan, teamwork and close monitoring of work progress should be executed. According to Musheke and Phiri (2021), these routine tasks must be measured for the business to succeed in order to assess performance levels and enable management to decide actions for improvements.

Although this study involved a small number of participants, the use of thick description offered rich, contextualized accounts of communication practices within the organizations examined. This approach enhanced the potential for transferability, thereby contributing to the validity of the study. With the depth and richness of the data, future researchers can draw on these insights to investigate organizational communication practices that are applicable to their own contexts (Zakaria et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of effective communication in the workplace, focusing on the communication

channels and strategies employed. Through the lens of media richness theory, the data were synthesized to outline actionable strategies for enhancing communication between employees. The findings indicated that the communication channels and strategies utilized significantly influenced organizational communication. These factors, in turn, had an impact on both the organization's reputation and its overall performance. As organizational success is often driven by how well communication strategies are implemented, organizations must adopt strategic communication practices that promote alignment and foster success across all areas.

Despite its contribution, this study has certain limitations. The sample size was relatively small, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the research involved a small number of organizations, which may not fully represent the diversity of communication practices across different industries or organizational types in Malaysia. Furthermore, the methodology employed was purely qualitative, relying solely on narrative accounts without the inclusion of any statistical representations. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted with caution and may not reflect the broader organizational landscape.

Due to these limitations, future research should consider expanding the sample size to capture a more in-depth view of organizational communication, particularly within the Malaysian context. In addition, focusing on specific industries could provide valuable insights into how the nature of work affects communication dynamics and organizational outcomes. The use of methodological or data triangulation is also recommended to enhance the validity and reliability of qualitative research, as it allows for more comprehensive and robust findings.

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