Organizational Communication: Perceptions of Staff Members' Level of Communication Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to explore organizational communication and examine the perceptions of staff members’ level of communication satisfaction and job satisfaction in their workplaces. This study was also designed to test the relationship between communication satisfaction and job satisfaction by analyzing the significance of different dimensions of Communication Satisfaction with the view that satisfaction is multifaceted.

Several studies have discovered that communication satisfaction among employees occur at different levels based on the facets that contribute to the satisfaction level. Staff members play a key role in impacting the well-being, success, and smooth functioning of their institutions. It is important to understand the potential factors influencing organizational communication satisfaction and job satisfaction because low levels of job satisfaction has been associated with low productivity. Because the roles that staff members and faculty play are different, this study is focused only on staff members’ perceptions of communication satisfaction and job satisfaction in their current work positions and the relationship between communication satisfaction and job satisfaction. Because the interest of this researcher is communication that occurs within the organization, for the purpose of this study the terms organizational communication and internal communication are used interchangeably to mean communication that...
occurs among employees within the organization, in this case higher education institution.

To determine the level of communication satisfaction and job satisfaction among staff members at the participating institution of higher education, the following research questions were developed for this study.

Research Question 1: Do staff members report they are satisfied with communication in their organizations to a significant extent?

Research Question 2: Do staff members report they are satisfied with their jobs to a significant extent?

Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between male and female staff members’ mean overall scores on the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire?

Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between the level of communication satisfaction among staff members and the number of years of service in their current work positions?

Research Question 5: Is there a significant differences in the overall scores on Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire as compared by level of education achieved?

Research Question 6: Is there a significant differences in the overall scores on Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire as compared by job classification?

Research Question 7: Are there significant relationships among the eight dimensions of Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ)?

Research Question 8: Is there a significant relationship between overall communication satisfaction and overall job satisfaction (overall score on the eighth dimension of Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire)?

RELATED LITERATURE

Communication in the workplace, also known as organizational communication, has existed from ancient times and is probably one of the most important in modern complex organizations. A number of changes have taken place in the process of communication mostly because of technology. The way employees communicate today compared to the way employees communicated in the last several decades have also changed. We greatly advanced from the times of industrialization, assembly lines, long-term employment, cross functional work teams, early years of Internet and electronic mail to the current era influenced by globalization, terrorism, climate change, and changing demographics (Miller, 2015).

As organizations get more complex in structure and in the way they function, it becomes necessary to reevaluate the way organizational communication occurs to ensure that they function effectively. Whether it is exchanging task related information or relational information, we need to communicate with others in the organization. Proper communication helps improve future fact, maintain e-mails, and maintain relationships in organizations. Communication plays a vital role in the functioning of any organization, whether it is for business, nonprofit, educational, or government organizations.

Effective communication affects a wide variety of components in an organization and can aid in achieving greater success for the organization (Steinigrimsdotir, 2011). Effective internal communication can help create a healthy atmosphere of motivation, trust, engagement, and sharing of thoughts and ideas freely (Moyer, 2011). Lack of effective communication may cause miscommunication and adversely affect the smooth functioning of the organization.

Goris (2007) explained that unlike mechanical systems that operate on electrical impulse, organizations are social-systems filled with different people and hence operate and function through communication. He discussed the characteristics of the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) developed by Hackman and Oldman (1976) and stated that it was unique as it specifies the match between the needs of individuals and characteristics of the job and at the same time it highlights the performance and satisfaction variables (Goris, Vaught, & Pettit, 2000).

The early models of communication concentrated on one-way flow and focused on the sender and not the receiver. One of the well-known models of this type is the Shannon and Weaver’s (1949) S-M-C-R Model, which is a very basic model of communication that mainly highlights the exchange of information and focuses on the sender (communicationtheory.org, 2018). Over the years, many approaches and processes into communication have existed that highlighted various ways communication and management should occur based on how organizations should function for maximum effectiveness and efficiency. The various approaches and processes used for organizational communications include classical, human relations, human resources, systems, transactional, and human resource management approaches (Moyer, 2011).

Today one or more elements of each of these approaches are visible in different types of organizations.
dinate and supervisory communication and found media quality and horizontal communication as areas of high satisfaction perceived by the employees. Madlock (2008) highlighted the importance of supervisor communication competence as a strong predictor of communication and job satisfaction among the employees. Among the classifications of job, Ramirez (2012) found that among the various levels of jobs, workers experienced highest level of satisfaction, while managers experienced the lowest level of job satisfaction. Earlier studies often concentrated on the overall communication when evaluating the quality of communication in organizations. In this research, it appears that job satisfaction has been studied from mainly the employees’ perspective. Task related factors and communication, including interpersonal relationships and job security, that could influence job satisfaction (Zeithaml, 1994). The top seven factors influencing the level of job satisfaction among employees were found to be staff supervisory communication, job design, communication between employees and senior management, communication between employees and immediate supervisors, job security, benefits, and compensation. Among the factors, job security, benefits, and compensation were found as major determinants of the level of job satisfaction perceived by the employees. Pincus (1986) discovered that supervisors of employees’ level of job and communication satisfaction or evaluates job satisfaction based on individual facets of job satisfaction. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969), the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss, Dawis, England, and Lofquist (1967), and the abbreviated versions of the original MSQ, known as the Job in the General, the Abridged Job Index, and Abridged Job in General are some of the widely used scales for measuring job satisfaction. The original CSQ has been determined primarily through factor analysis, discovering eight factors contributing to communication satisfaction among employees. (Downs & Hazen, 1977). Downs and Hazen then developed eight dimensions through factor analysis that contribute to communication satisfaction among employees. The eight dimensions are communication climate, relationship with superiors, organizational identification, media quality, horizontal and informal communication, organizational perspective, relationship with subordinates, and personal feedback.

Job satisfaction has been studied either as the overall measure or has been considered as being composed of several individual factors that measure job satisfaction. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969), the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss, Dawis, England, and Lofquist (1967), and the abbreviated versions of the original MSQ, known as the Job in the General, the Abridged Job Index, and Abridged Job in General are some of the widely used scales for measuring job satisfaction. The original CSQ has been determined primarily through factor analysis, discovering eight factors contributing to communication satisfaction among employees. (Downs & Hazen, 1977). Downs and Hazen then developed eight dimensions through factor analysis that contribute to communication satisfaction among employees. The eight dimensions are communication climate, relationship with superiors, organizational identification, media quality, horizontal and informal communication, organizational perspective, relationship with subordinates, and personal feedback.

The level of content individuals perceive about their job, whether considering overall or individual facets is what Spotter (1975) referred to as job satisfaction. From past research, it appears that job satisfaction has been studied from mainly the employees’ perspective. Task related factors and communication, including interpersonal relationships and job security, that could influence job satisfaction (Zeithaml, 1994). The top seven factors influencing the level of job satisfaction among employees were found to be staff supervisory communication, job design, communication between employees and senior management, communication between employees and immediate supervisors, job security, benefits, and compensation. Among the factors, job security, benefits, and compensation were found as major determinants of the level of job satisfaction perceived by the employees. Pincus (1986) discovered that supervisors of employees’ level of job and communication satisfaction or evaluates job satisfaction based on individual facets of job satisfaction. The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969), the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss, Dawis, England, and Lofquist (1967), and the abbreviated versions of the original MSQ, known as the Job in the General, the Abridged Job Index, and Abridged Job in General are some of the widely used scales for measuring job satisfaction. The original CSQ has been determined primarily through factor analysis, discovering eight factors contributing to communication satisfaction among employees. (Downs & Hazen, 1977). Downs and Hazen then developed eight dimensions through factor analysis that contribute to communication satisfaction among employees. The eight dimensions are communication climate, relationship with superiors, organizational identification, media quality, horizontal and informal communication, organizational perspective, relationship with subordinates, and personal feedback.

Academic organizations or higher education institutes serve a great number of individual students with their back- grounds and roles. To function effectively some mode of communication is essential that not only transmits the message or information but also considers its impact on employees along with its effectiveness. As higher education institutions change in the way they are structured, the way they function, especially with both virtual and on ground format, and the changes in demographics, they require constant communication and need for their communication to maintain and improve their effective functioning and building effective relationships with individuals they serve.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Sample**

Approximately 2,680 staff members across three different campuses of a single institution in Northeast Tennessee comprised the population. For this study nonteaching staff were included (no faculty members were used). The sample included a wide variety in terms of gender, number of years in service, education level, and job classification. The participants also represented a wide range of departments. The institution is a public 4-year institution that offers undergraduate, professional, graduate, and doctoral programs in a variety of fields. Approximately 15,000 stu- dents are currently enrolled at this institution. The non- random sample used for this study included both full-time and part-time staff members from various job classifications. Some of the classifications used in this study based on the information derived from institution’s Fact Book 2013 and information from Human Resources Office were Executive Administration and Management, Professional Non-Faculty, Clerical and Secretarial, Technical & Paraprofessional, Skilled crafts, Maintenance, Service workers, and Student workers and Graduate Assistants.

**Instrumentation**

The research study was conducted using a modified ver- sion of a widely used scale for measuring job satisfaction, Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) developed by Downs and Hazen (1977) and has been shown to be consistent and reliable across organizations. The original CSQ included 40 statements from eight dimensions with five statement per di- mension. Data were collected from a single higher educa- tion institution. The modified survey for this study in- cluded 36 statements and five demographic questions. The survey was used to collect relevant information about staff member’s perception about their level of communication satisfaction and job satisfaction. The survey was a 7-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being strongly dissatisfied and 7 being strongly satisfied. The survey was designed based on eight dimensions. The original CSQ included eight communication satisfaction dimensions, out of which seven were used in this study. The eighth dimension that focused on supervisor’s perspective was omitted and re- placed with a new dimension named job satisfaction. The focus of the new dimension is communication and job satisfaction from subordinate or employee perspective.

The job satisfaction dimension included eight statements that were developed by the researcher and created based on the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969) and the SHRM Report (2012). From the original CSQ, 15 statements were omitted, 11 new were added. Some of the statements used minor modification in the way they were worded to fit the needs of the par- ticular group being studied. All the dimensions included three to five statements each, except the eighth dimen- sion, which included eight statements. An introductory paragraph about the research was included in the survey. The survey was calculated to take less than 15 minutes to complete.

**Data Collection**

The survey was distributed through SurveyMonkey, an on- line survey service. A paper version of the survey was dis- tributed to faculty and staff members and was completed electronically to increase the return rate. The participants were advised that their responses and identity will remain confidential and that they were free to stop participating in the survey at any time.

**FINDINGS**

**Research Question 1**

A one-sample t test was conducted on the mean scores for Dimension 1 of CSQ to determine whether the mean was significantly different from 4, the mid-point of the Likert- type scale. The sample mean for Dimension 1 (Personal Feedback) 5.14 (SD = 1.43) was significantly higher than 4, which represented neutrality, t (398) = 15.94, p < .001. The 95% confidence interval for the mean scores on the communication satisfaction personal feedback dimension ranged from 1.00 to 1.28. The effect size (d = 0.88) indicated a large effect. The results indicated that participants were generally somewhat satisfied with personal feedback.

A one-sample t test was conducted on the mean scores for Dimension 2 of CSQ to determine whether the mean was significantly different from 4, the mid-point of the Likert-type scale. The sample mean for Dimension 2 (Relational Feedback) 5.14 (SD = 1.44) was significantly higher than 4, which represented neutrality, t (365) = 18.79, p < .001. The 95% confidence interval for the mean scores on the communication satisfaction personal feedback dimension ranged from 1.27 to 1.56. The effect size (d = 0.98) indicated a large effect. The results indicated that participants were generally somewhat satisfied with relational feedback to supervisors.

A one-sample t test was conducted on the mean scores for Dimension 3 of CSQ to determine whether the mean was significantly different from 4, the mid-point of the Likert-type scale. The sample mean for Dimension 3 (Horizontal and Informal Communication) 5.19 (SD = 1.30) was significantly higher than 4, which represented neutrality, t (365) = 17.60, p < .001. The 95% confidence interval for the mean scores on the communication satisfaction horizontal and informal communication dimension ranged from 1.86 to 1.32. The effect size (d = 0.92) indicated a large effect. The results indicated that participants were significantly satisfied with horizontal and informal communication.
Research Question 2
A one-sample t test was conducted on the mean scores for Dimension 8 of CSQ to determine whether the mean was significantly different from 4, the mid-point of the Likert-type scale. The sample mean for Dimension 8 (Job Satisfaction) was 5.43 ($SD = 1.20$) significantly higher than 4, which represented neutrality, $t(393) = 20.13, p < .001$. The 95% confidence interval for the mean scores on the job satisfaction dimension (organizational level of satisfaction) ranged from 5.16 to 5.68. The effect size (d = 0.92) indicated a large effect. The results indicated that participants were generally somewhat satisfied with their job in their workplace.

Research Question 3
An independent samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean overall scores on Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) differed significantly among female and male staff members. The mean overall scores (Dimension 1 through Dimension 8 of CSQ) were the test variable and the grouping variable was female staff members or male staff members. The test was not significant, $t(315) = 36.6, p = .722$. Therefore, $H_0$ was retained. The $n^2$ index was <.01 which indicated a small effect. The female staff members ($M = 5.26, SD = 1.22$) tended to score about the same as the male staff members ($M = 5.21, SD = 1.19$) on the CSQ. The 95% confidence interval for the differences in means was −.24 to .35.

Research Question 4
A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed between the mean scores (overall scores from Dimension 1 through Dimension 8) on Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) and the number of years of service to test the relationship between the level of communication satisfaction among staff members and the number of years of service in their current work positions. The results of the correlation analysis revealed a weak negative relationship between the mean scores on CSQ ($M = 5.25, SD = 1.21$) ($r(317) = .01, p = .361$). Therefore, $H_0$ is retained. In general, the results suggest that the staff members’ mean scores on Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire is not related to the number of years in service.

Research Question 5
A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between total overall mean scores of staff members on Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire and the highest level of education achieved by the staff members. The factor variable, the highest level of education achieved by the staff members, included five levels (High school diploma, Some college, Undergraduate degree, Graduate degree, and Doctorate degree or higher). The dependent variable was the total overall mean scores of staff members on CSQ (Dimension 1 through Dimension 8). The ANOVA was significant, $F(4, 312) = 3.57, p = .007$. The strength of the relationship between the total overall mean scores of staff members and the highest level of education achieved by the staff members as assessed by $n^2$ was small (.04).

Because the overall $F$ test was significant, post hoc multiple comparisons was conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the means of the five groups. A Tukey procedure was selected for the multiple comparisons because equal variance was assumed. There was a significant difference among the group that achieved a graduate degree and the group that achieved doctoral degree or higher ($p = .048$). However, there was not a significant difference in the means of the groups that achieved high school diploma and the groups that received some college ($p = .869$); the group that achieved high school diploma and the group that achieved undergraduate degree ($p = .989$); the group that received some college and the group that achieved doctoral degree or higher ($p = .709$); the group that received some college and the group that achieved undergraduate degree ($p = .998$); the group that received some college and the group that achieved undergraduate degree or higher ($p = .941$). It appears that receiving high school diploma or some college, high school diploma or undergraduate degree, high school diploma or doctoral degree, or some college or undergraduate degree, or some college and doctoral degree or higher, undergraduate degree or graduate degree, and undergraduate degree or doctorate or higher degree, are equally responsible for achieving higher scores on Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (for receiving higher communication satisfaction in the workplace among staff members). The 95% confidence intervals for pairwise differences, as well as, the means and standard deviations for the five levels of education group, are reported in Table 1.
Clerical and Secretarial group and the Student Worker, Tuition Scholar, Graduate Assistant group (p < .001). However, there was not a significant difference in the means between the Executive, Administrative, Management group and the Professional Non Faculty group (p = .535); the Executive, Administrative, Managerial group and the Clerical and Secretarial group (p = .220); the Executive, Administrative, Managerial group and the Technical, Skilled, Maintenance, Service, and Others group (p = .934); the Executive, Administrative, Managerial group and the Student Worker, Tuition Scholar, Graduate Assistant group (p = .998); the Professional Non Faculty group and the Clerical and Secretarial group (p = .977); the Professional Non Faculty group and the Technical, Skilled, Maintenance, Service, and Others group (p = .999); the Clerical and Secretarial group and the Technical, Skilled, Maintenance, Service, and Others group (p = .941); and the Technical, Skilled, Maintenance, Service, and Others group and the Student Worker, Tuition Scholar, Graduate Assistant group (p = .627). It appears that Group 1 or Group 2, or Group 1 or Group 3, Group 1 or Group 5, Group 2 or Group 3, Group 2 or Group 4, Group 3 or Group 4, and Group 4 or Group 5, are equally responsible in affecting the mean scores of the staff members on the CSQ. The 95% confidence intervals for the pairwise differences, as well as the means and standard deviations for the five job classification groups, are reported in Table 2.

Research Question 7

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed among the eight Dimensions of Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ). Using the Bonferroni approach to control for Type I error across the 28 correlations, a p value of less than .002 (.05/28 = .0018) was required for significance. The results of the analysis revealed strong positive relationships among all eight Dimensions with the strength of the relationship ranging from r = .67 to r = .88 and p values all < .001 (Table 3). All the relationships were positive and strongly related, therefore high score on one Dimension tended to produce higher scores on other Dimensions. Table 3 displays the bivariate correlations among dimension 1 through dimension 8 of CSQ.

**DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the comparison of previous research and the present study, the results support the concept that communication satisfaction is a multidimensional construct as pointed out by Downs and Hazen (1977), and that each dimension contributes to the level of communication satisfaction among employees. Previous research by Mueller and Lee (2002) revealed that full-time employees (respondents) of nonprofit organizations perceived moderate amounts of communication satisfaction in their workplaces for all the communication satisfaction dimensions. The results of the same study also indicated that Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) played a key role in positively affecting subordinates' perceptions of communication satisfaction in each of interpersonal, group, and organizational contexts (all dimensions of communication satisfaction). The higher the quality of LMX, the higher communication satisfaction among subordinates was indicated. A previous study found that the composite mean scores for each of the communication satisfaction dimensions were all calculated to be above the midpoint of four for their employees which indicated they were at least somewhat satisfied in each dimensions of communication satisfaction (Jones, 2006).

The following recommendations should be considered to improve practice.

1. Research on the topic of organizational communication practice, communication satisfaction and job satisfaction among staff members could be conducted over a long period of time to see if similar perceptions are maintained or changed in order to get a better understanding of what factors contribute the most to communication satisfaction for staff members. This knowledge could be used to develop effective strategies for future.

2. Effective communication is crucial for many aspects of the organization’s proper functioning, constant and ongoing evaluation of effective approaches and creating a communication practice plan for the organization’s departments or units (higher education institution) through collaboration with other members of the organization at all levels can aid in effective communication practices. The supervisors can provide better communication practices by creating open-door policy, more face-to-face communication opportunities, use of different mediums or channels of communication, trust, conveying feedback, and opportunities for their subordinates (staff) to interact, contribute, and participate in the process for improvement and coming up with solutions.

3. A communication plan or procedure can be a great asset for improving the functioning of the organization. Similar strategies for effective communication by different units of the organization can aid in the overall effectiveness of the functioning of the organization. Receiving right amount of information through two-way communication, having a...
good communication flow through appropriate channels of communication, and receiving personal feedback can aid in higher satisfaction in communication and job satisfaction. To make this possible, the organizational leaders could emphasize using clear and consistent information to improve the internal communication process that currently exists in their organizations.

4. It is important for both supervisors and subordinates to understand each other, listen, communication, and maintain a positive and healthy relationship. Organizations can improve communication by providing opportunities for training programs and workshops for continuous improvement with the focus on effective communication and leadership skills. By providing more collaboration opportunities at all levels, organizations can improve relationships that can help improve professional relationships.

5. The higher education institution that participated in this study found that its staff members were for the most part somewhat satisfied to satisfied for all the dimensions of communication satisfaction except organizational perspective and communication climate, where they were found to be somewhat satisfied. The institution’s leaders should develop strategies and update policies and procedures by adding clear information and updates based on the needs and areas of concern, to keep employees (staff members) well-informed.

6. The leader of each unit or department should facilitate communication by creating an opportunity for staff to come together and collaborate on the needs, understanding of the existing policies, and design a plan for communication improvement based on the suggestions and concerns presented. A well-thought strategy based on the needs, accomplishments, resources, and past failures and successes can help create an environment where everyone works towards a common goal and perceive themselves to be part of a team. Leaders could send out information through a monthly or quarterly newsletter about the accomplishments, recognition, and state of the department. Also, they could create opportunities for group collaboration for departmental projects to help build healthy and positive co-worker relationships.

7. Communication satisfaction has been shown to be crucial for job satisfaction. The results from this study found that communication satisfaction and job satisfaction has a direct relationship. Keeping this in mind, the supervisors can educate their individual units or departments on the importance of effective communication. By creating an environment of open communication, organizations can create an effective workplace.

REFERENCES


