

Managing Informal Communication for Enterprise Productivity

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Abstract: This study concern is to investigate how the effective management of Informal Communication can enhance enterprise productivity in the selected construction firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The population of the study is made up of nine hundred and six (906) staff of selected corporate construction companies in Port Harcourt. The sample size is drawn from the target population using the Yaro Yamane formula for selection of sample from a finite population. Therefore, the calculated sample size is two hundred and seventy (270). The closed-ended four point Likert scale questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. It contains structured items on Informal Communication Management and entrepreneurial success. Content and face validity were done using pretest on a group of managerial employees with a view to ascertaining their suitability for the study as well as inputs from field experts. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to enhance the internal reliability of the measures and that was determined using SPSS. Only items that return alpha value of 0.7 above were taken as reliable enough for use. The analysis of the data was further enhanced with the aid of SPSS and recommendations were drawn from the findings and conclusion which apparently indicated strong relationships between the tested attributes of the predictor and measures of the criterion variables.

Keywords: Informal communication, Rumour Mill, Regulatory Policy, Employees Involvement, Organisational Trust.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today, information technology has made the whole world a very small place to live in at any point in time and technology seems to be the only solution to man's problems arising from lack of information. In most cases, there is difficult to come by correct and accurate information as at when needed. There is no exaggeration that information is knowledge, wealth and power (Ajadi and Adeoye, 2005). Hence, human beings exist meaningfully with information and human beings need information. People can communicate at many levels for many reasons, with many people and in many ways. It can take place between two individual or between an individual and a group of people (Thankgod, 2015) informal communication always occur in every human organization; people chat in tea rooms, along office corridor setc, and it frequently crosses boundaries within an organization and is commonly separate from work flows. But even if this aim were achieved, and their goals were identical, the input-output dependencies among individuals require that their efforts be sequenced and interrelated efficiently. The coordination mechanisms used by organizations differ in their degree of formality -- that is, in their degree of pre-specification, conventionality, and rule-boundedness. At the formal end of the dimension, coordination is accomplished by adherence to common rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures, through pre-established plans, schedules, and forecasts, and through memos, management information reports, and other standardized communication channels. These formal coordination mechanisms are common and are specified in advance which sometimes are unidirectional and relatively impoverished. The essence of these informal communication systems is their lack of pre-specification. Information is not prepackaged and then shipped intact to a recipient; courses of action are not pre-computed and then executed without modification. Rather, information is often exchanged interactively, through meetings and conversations, and courses of action are worked out in the context of the circumstances into which the actions must fit. Informal communication usually leaves no recorded trace for others to find or share. In the past, many organizations considered informal communication a hindrance to effective organizational performance and tried to stamp it out. Today, however, employees find that an important part of their work is unregulated communication, especially now that service workers out-number production workers and research as well as production processes emphasize greater collaboration and teamwork among workers in different functional groups. Moreover, a sea-change in communication technologies has contributed to the transformation of both work and

organizational structure. For these reasons, communication practices and technologies have become more important in all organizations, but they are perhaps most important in knowledge-intensive organizations and sectors and, as such, are of great significance to science organizations and to public science management. As organizations increased in size, informal communication becomes the main concern of organizational managers. Organizational communication in today's organization has not only become far more complex and varied but more important to overall organizational functioning and success. While research used to focus on understanding how organizational communication varied by organizational type and structure, the emphasis has increasingly turned to understanding how new communication technologies and capabilities can help bring about new and more effective organizational forms and processes (Tucker et al. 1996; Desanctis and Fulk, 1999). Therefore most researchers view informal communication from the disadvantage point of assessment to organizational workflow with limited emphasis on its advantages and competitive advantage when properly managed. It is therefore a concern of this study to explore better ways of managing informal communication and give room for robust entrepreneurial success.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kreps (1990) defined organizational communication as the process whereby members gather pertinent information about their organizations and the changes occurring within it. Generally organizational communication has two objectives. The primary objective is to inform the workforce about their tasks and the policy issues of the organization Ridder & Francis, (1989). Organizational communication is defined as "transmitting news about the work from organization to employees and through employees. Phattanacheewapul & Ussahawanitchakit, (2008). The second goal of organizational communication is to construct a community within the organization. Formal communication comprises of stipulated procedures for communication within and outside the organization, they comprise of organizational reports, staff meetings conferences, company newsletters and official notice. They are highly documented and as such, are rigid to amendment. However nearly all information within the informal context is undocumented, informal communication often travels faster than formal communication within and outside the context of an organization. Informal communication carries useful information within the organization; it is significant in building organizational teamwork, collaboration, co-ordination and organizational trust. (Barrett, 2002). Informal communication takes the role of filling the gap that the formal structure of information flow could not accomplish. It can be seen in its content and structure as presented below alongside the formal structure.

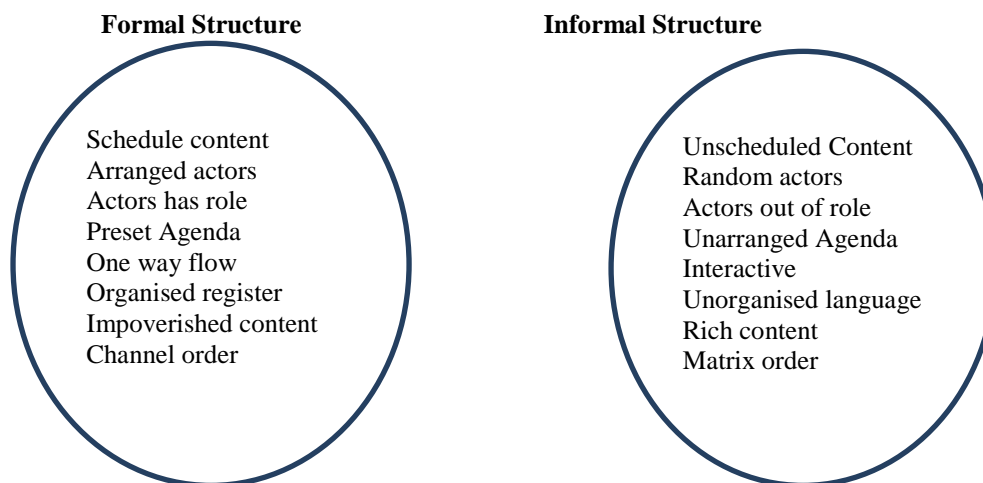


Fig. 1: Features of formal and information communication

Rumour-Mill

It is commonly known that Rumours have had a significant effect on organizational operations throughout the years. According to Moulin,(2010). Rumours are performances of border languages or an expression of how the sense of others is revealed for the political endeavours. They are mechanisms used from a humanistic point of view by employees to understand the ambiguous and to make meaning of what is the truth. Unfortunately, Nigerian organizations have pushed employees to the outer limits and do not share the most accurate information when it comes to change, which leads to misunderstanding and the surge of organizational rumours that ignites curiosity. Rivero (2013). Part of the problem occurs when the organization develops a powerful immune system similar to immunities developed in the human body. As a result, this immunity of

resistance defends the status quo and resists changes that are unrecognizable to mid-management and staff alike (Gilley, Gilley, & Godek, (2009). This could lead to miscommunication among staff thus causing rumours to spread within an organizational setting. At times, organizations do not address rumours in the workplace and dismiss it as a common occurrence. Rumours do not just fill up time around the water fountain. They can drain productivity, reduce profits, create stress in the workplace Bordia, DiFonso, & Rosnow, (1994). Sense of urgency among employees arises when organizational change initiatives are not communicated accordingly. In some cases, organizational change may not have been officially announced, which leads to employees seeking the truth. Most rumours have the potential to creep into most organizational settings. Consequently, if rumours are not addressed by the organization, this lack of action can be seen as validation by the employees, which can drain work productivity leading to profit reductions and ultimately damaging the organization's image. For years, researchers have attempted to have a better understanding of rumours in the workplace and their potential to derail an organization. Knapp (1944), suggests that rumours are shared attitudes, concerns and anxieties, which create mistrust among the organization's shareholders. Additionally, Voas (2002) suggests that false rumours are due to poor communication between management and subordinates and others who desire to seek the truth about inside information relating to the organizational setting. His study further states that closed door meetings spawn more incorrect assumptions than any other reason for rumours. Organizations have a choice to either address or ignore rumours in the workplace. Managing Rumour in the Organisations involves (a) establishing open dialogue system of communication with employees, particularly when organizational change is taking place. (b) addressing rumours that have the potential to damage the organization's image. It is recommended that management communicates publicly to clear the air. It is expected prompt action be made to address rumours in the workplace to avoid the further spreading. (c) establishing workplace rumours procedures and a rumours training program that coincides with the organization's ethics training program or a similar type of training program. (d) hold general meetings to address organizational change initiatives and the latest information to the general employee population. (e) attention to patterns or subtle disruption of the organization's climate. This will provide an indication of lurking rumours that have the potentials to surface.

Regulatory Policy

Ensuring effective compliance with rules and regulations is an important factor in creating a well-functioning organization and trust in government. It is a key element in safeguarding health and safety, protecting organizational environment, securing stable state revenue and delivering other essential organizational goals. This is critically important from a social perspective and as a foundation of economic growth. The challenge for government is to develop and apply enforcement strategies that achieve the best possible outcomes by achieving the highest possible levels of compliance, while keeping the costs and burden as low as possible. The term regulation is used in various ways. In a narrow sense it can refer to a set of authoritative rules used alongside processes for monitoring and promoting compliance often referred to as traditional 'command and control' approaches. A broader Interpretation of regulation includes a range of interventions including market based instruments, etc. all mechanisms of social control including unintentional and non-state processes, (Baldwin et.al.1988). This interpretation means that regulation can be carried out by governmental and non-governmental entities Farmer, (2008). The interventions covered by this review are captured by this wider interpretation. The interventions may be used as alternatives, but more commonly and preferably as complementary activities, to traditional command and control approaches. The latter point is important because evidence suggests that SMEs for example will only act when there is a specific requirement to do so, Williamson et al (2006). Regulation bridges the gap between an entrepreneur's self-interest and the interests of employees. Regulation can refer either to individual rules or collections of rules. Similarly, an evaluation of regulation could focus either narrowly on how well an individual rule works or more broadly on the impacts of collections of rules. An evaluation of a collection of rules will simply combine or sum up the results of a series of specific evaluations of the separate impacts of individual rules that make up the aggregation under evaluation.

Employee Involvement

Economic changes in recent decades have required employers to seek more efficient and flexible means of production. Deregulation and privatisation have also significantly altered the world's industrial relations climate, with a decline in trade unions' influence and membership. Mirroring this has been the growth in 'new' forms of work-related participation by employees, under the banner of human resource management and associated programmes and strategies for partnership and high commitment. (Suchman, & Wynn, 1984). Against this background, the three main rationales for introducing employee involvement in decision making are based upon different economic, social and administrative assumptions: **Economic**: Changes in employee's attitudes and behaviours are achieved through financial participation, by offering employees a stake in the firm. Employees' association with management values and goals is thereby increased, and they are more motivated

and committed to achieving those goals. **Social:** By catering for employees' social needs, through improved job security and satisfaction and quality of working life, higher performance is achieved. Alternatively, satisfying social needs can be treated as an end in itself. **Administrative:** Organizational policy is directed to improve national economic efficiency while also improving the experience of work for employees. Participatory measures such as team working and high-involvement work practices demonstrate improvements in performance, but can also have less positive outcomes for employee and social well-being. Performance changes may occur because participation leads to attitudes change which leads to higher performance. Alternately, changes to behaviour and performance may be achieved not through attitude changes but through fear and an insecure or intensified work environment. Employees involvement has the potential to induce the friendly conditions that are capable of reducing the negatives of informal flow of communication at the enterprise level. This includes but not limited to: **Compliance and Work Commitment:** participation may induce compliance and attitude changes necessary for employees' commitment to the enterprise. If this is so, behavioural changes may not be of the order anticipated, the degree of influence accorded to employees is also important. Low levels of participation with little employee autonomy have been identified as a reason for disappointing results. Where employees' expectations have been raised by introducing participation, but there is little real improvement in employee influence, workers may express resentment and dissatisfaction. Where participation is only from the top down, workers may feel that they are being lectured and not listened to. Even where participation is from the bottom up, workers may feel that management is using their ideas, with no return seen by employees. High levels of participation also have their own problems. Forms of participation may clash with existing collective arrangements and fail to induce a harmonious climate. Concerns have also been expressed over individualized financial participation, and a fall in share prices could make it harder to attract high-quality staff. Collective participation, on the other hand, can work with existing labour-relations channels and attitudes in a productive way. The role of trade unions therefore continues to be significant. **Workforce Collaboration:** The potential for positive impact on performance seems to arise when participation measures are used in combination, either as financial and work-related participation, or as representative and direct participation. Either combination may act upon employee perceptions, encouraging high-trust relations within the workplace and allowing employees with different motivations to enjoy the benefits of participation. Employees are not a homogeneous group responding identically to participation initiatives. Different employees have different motivations: some respond to financial incentives and others to more social or work-related ones. This is why a combination of financial and work-related participation appears to have a positive effect on performance. **Transferability:** A further issue is the transferability of participation schemes, particularly between large and small firms. It is uncertain whether participation schemes suitable for large firms will have positive effects in smaller companies, or whether participation measures can be transferred between industrial sectors and even between different national conditions. For example, the success of Japanese profit-sharing and other involvement techniques has been accounted for by Japan's unique culture, which emphasizes mutual obligations by employee and employer. **Workplace Equality:** Questions arise concerning the benefits of participation measures to workplace equality. Work-related participation can place a premium on social factors such as ability to communicate and the time available to commit to participation. **Discrimination:** Less advantaged groups and individuals, such as older workers, ethnic minorities and disabled people, may have a restricted voice within the workplace. Coupled with greater employment insecurity, this can permeate workers' performance through frustration and impotence, with a negative impact on both organizational performance and quality of working life. The evidence indicates that participation schemes in tandem with welfare measures such as equal opportunities and friendly policies improve organizational performance and the quality of working life. By contrast, perceptions of unfairness have a negative impact. **Work friendly environment:** Some studies which have examined the business consequences of implementing family-friendly employment policies have found benefits in doing so. Others have tried to determine whether employees have a voice over work-life issues, and how instrumental it might be in establishing family-friendly employment policies. Employees appear to have a voice of some kind in larger organizations. It tends to be collective, and expressed through trade unions or staff associations. Smaller enterprises typically lack collective means of expression, though there can be direct communication between individual employees and their employers over flexible working. This can be to an extent successful where there are work friendly unions. (Goodman, & Abel, 1987).

Organizational Trust

Gilbert & Tang (1998) described organizational trust as a feeling of confidence and support in an employer. Organizational trust refers to employee faith in corporate goal attainment and organizational leaders, and to the belief that ultimately, organizational action will prove. Trust has been a widely studied concept both by itself but, most importantly, as a component of the quality of relationships. In psychology and interpersonal communication, trust has been one of several dimensions identified in relationships. It also has been studied extensively in business management and organizational communication sometimes as a single concept but,

again, most often as a component of relationships. In psychology and communication, the emphasis has been on interpersonal relationships among spouses, friends, relatives, and the likes. In business management and organizational communication, emphasis has been on relationships among managers and between managers and other employees. Trust implies the following: *Competence*: The belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do. It includes the extent to which we see an organization as being effective that it can compete and survive in the marketplace. *Integrity*: The belief that an organization is fair and just. *Dependability/Reliability*: The belief that an organization will do what it says it will do that it acts consistently and dependably. *Openness and Honesty*: This dimension involves not only the amount and accuracy of information that is shared, but also how sincerely and appropriately it is communicated. *Vulnerability*: The organization's willingness, based on its culture and communication behaviours in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group, or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and identified with common goals, norms, and values. *Satisfaction*: The extent to which one party feels favourably disposed towards the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. Or a satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs. Satisfaction can also occur when one party believes that the other party's relationship maintenance behaviours are positive. *Commitment*: The extent to which one party believes the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote. Two dimensions of commitment are continuance commitment, which refers to a certain line of action, and affective commitment, which is an emotional orientation. Major Trust measurement and evaluation components for research becomes credible when one define the public with whom you have or want to have relationships. Because trust is an element of a relationship, you need to specifically identify those groups or individuals with whom you have or need relationships. Once those publics have been identified, you can begin to create a system to measure your relationship with each one. Set specific, measurable goals and objectives. No one can really measure the effectiveness of anything without first figuring out exactly what it is they are measuring. When trust is jettisoned at the advantage of power and officialdom divergences in relationships emerge in informal flow of message interchange.

III. METHODS

The population of the study is made up of nine hundred and six (906) staff of the selected corporate organizations in Port Harcourt. The sample size is determined from the total population using the Taro Yamane formula for selection of sample from a finite population. Therefore, the calculated sample size is two hundred and seventy (270). The instrument used for the study is the questionnaire. It contains structured items on Informal communication Management and entrepreneurial success in selected organization in Port Harcourt. content validity and face validity were done using pretest on a group of managerial employees with a view to ascertaining their suitability for the study as well as field experts. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to enhance the internal reliability of the measures and that was determined using SPSS. Only items that return alpha value of 0.7 above were taken as reliable enough for us.

Test of reliability

Table 1: The reliability test for the study instruments

<i>Variable List</i>	<i>Measures</i>	<i>Items per Instrument</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha Coefficient</i>
Informal Communication Management	Rumour Mill	3	0.812
	Regulatory Policy	3	0.813
	Organization Trust	3	0.792
	Employee involvement	3	0.813
Entrepreneurial Success	Expansion	3	0.709
	Profit	3	0.760

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Data Analysis Technique

The responses gathered from the questionnaire was analyzed using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation. The mean was computed for the average mean response and compared to the acceptance criteria of the likert model. The decision rule of the likert scale is that any mean equal or above 2.50 is accepted, otherwise, rejected. The 2.50 is obtained by dividing the sum of the weighted point of the likert scale values by four (4). On the other hand, Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to test the postulated hypotheses.

$$r = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{X})(y - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{[\sum (x - \bar{X})^2][\sum (y - \bar{Y})^2]}}$$

The formula for Pearson:

Based on the sample size, a total of 270 (100%) copies of questionnaire were administered to the target organizations. The success rate for retrieval of administered questionnaire copies was 258 (96%) after which copies were cleaned for blank entries and omissions resulting in a success rate of 252 (93%).

Primary Data Analysis

Primary data analysis here is characterized based on average response rates and standard deviation values which are presented using contingency tables. The independent variable; informal communication management is measured using rumour mill, regulatory policy, organizational trust and employee involvement while the dependent variable; entrepreneurial success is measured on expansion and profit.

Table 2: Showing Dimensions of Informal Communication Management

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rumour Mill	252	1.00	4.00	3.0633	.80422
Regulatory Policy	252	1.00	4.00	2.1008	.81316
Organizational Trust	252	1.00	4.00	3.2116	.74013
Employee involvement	252	1.00	4.00	3.0383	.86007
Valid N (listwise)	252				

Source: Data Output, 2017

Presented in the table above is the output for the analysis on the four dimensions of the independent variable (informal communication management). The variables each carry mean scores higher than $x = 2.5$ which serve as the base for moderate agreement levels. Where $X > 2.5$ represents a substantial agreement level while $x < 2.5$ represents poor or inadequate agreement levels.

Table 3: Showing measures of Entrepreneurial Success

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expansion	252	1.00	4.00	3.2449	.83320
Profit	252	1.00	4.00	3.6307	.82666
Valid N (listwise)	252				

Source: Data Output, 2017

Hypotheses Testing

In this section, the hypotheses of the study are analyzed. Analysis is at a 95% confidence interval and using the Pearson product Moment correlation coefficient. The significance level (0.05) is used as a criterion for the acceptance or rejection of each null hypothesis relative to the p-value.

Table 4: Showing the tests of hypotheses for Management of Informal Communication and Measures of Entrepreneurial Success.

			Rumour Mill	Regulatory Policy	Organizational Trust	Employee Involvement
Pearson's	Expansion	Correlation Coefficient	.785**	.192**	.745**	.773**
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000

	N	252	252	252	252
Profit	Correlation Coefficient	.820**	.263**	.718**	.745**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	252	252	252	252

Source: Data Output, 2017

The table 4 above shows a significant correlations at $r = .785$ and $r = .820$ respectively, where P-values = $.000$ ($P < 0.05$). This implies a strong and significant relationship between both variables at 95% level of confidence. The null hypotheses for rumour mill on expansion and profit are therefore rejected to show significant relationships. At Significant correlations of $r = .192$ and $r = .263$ respectively where P-value stood at $.000$ ($P < 0.05$), a strong relationship is noticed between regulatory policy and the measures of entrepreneurial success. Thus, the null hypotheses earlier stated are rejected. The table also shows significant correlations at $r = .745$ and $r = .718$ at P-values = $.000$ ($P < 0.05$). These imply strong and significant relationships between both variables at 95% level of confidence. We therefore reject their null hypotheses to present significant relationships between organizational trust and the measures of expansion and profit. At a same P-values of $.000$ ($P < 0.05$), correlations stood at $r = .773$ and $r = .745$. These further imply strong and significant relationships between both variables at 95% level of confidence. We therefore reject their null hypotheses and restate that there are significant relationships between employee involvement and expansion as well as profit.

IV. CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurial success significantly depends upon communicative and informative skills of employees at all levels. However, the Informal strands of communication if managed will pose no threat to organisational productivity.

The study concludes that rumour mill if well managed and recognised within the internal mechanism of the enterprise, the break of unguided information will be reduced and addressed positively. Same way, the absence of regulatory policy helps to allow for the emergence of negative rumour at the enterprise level. The study further affirmed that organizational trust increases their satisfaction and level of productivity in the organization because they believe and have faith in the leaders and vice versa and to the belief that ultimately, organizational action will improve. That way informal communication negativity is addressed.

Employees studied believe that if they are involved in the affairs of the business, it would create a change in attitude and induce compliance and commitment to the enterprise and this could secure competitive positioning for the organization and that means informal communication evolution will be successfully utilized for the good of the enterprise.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the conclusion above, it becomes imperative to recommend that to reduce the negative effects of informal communication, a rumour mill where all employees and customers alike are allowed to channel their concerns and worries will ensure proper management of rumour should be provided.

The study recommends result driven regulation of informal communication so as to forestall its negative impact on enterprise competitive strengths and opportunities. This can be achieved through proper policy formulation that cut across all levels of the organisation that is unbiased or selective.

From the findings and conclusion, organisation should create some high degree of organisational trust between itself and the union as well as members of the organisations. This will further boost mutual work relationship, free flow of positive communication and good communicative climate for all actors in the organisation. More emphasis needs to be placed on good employment relationship. Unions can play a constructive role in supporting a positive communication, both as the representatives of their members within particular workplaces and as sources of information about employment practices and welfare of employees, and every discussion about the affairs of the organization should be treated vital as information is the life blood of every organization.

The work force that are involved and engaged harps motivation; and engaged employees demonstrate willingness to “go the extra mile in making enterprise objectives achievable.”. There is no single prescription for creating a productive work force but firms can cultivate such an environment by fostering some significant ways of managing informal communication, creating an efficient and effective regulatory policy, acknowledging the contribution of individuals, rewarding participation and good ideas, developing healthy and respectful relationships in the workplace and promoting a sense of shared goals and values.

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