

Organisational Communication Pattern and Its Implications for Ethics and Professionalism among Journalists in Akwa Ibom State

SENAM, Nsikan *PhD*

Department of Communication Arts
University of Uyo, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examined organisational communication pattern vis-a-vis ethics and professionalism among journalists in Akwa Ibom State. The main objectives were to find out the prevalent organisational communication pattern in mass media establishments in Akwa Ibom State, assess the influence of organisational communication on journalism ethics and professionalism, and examined the implications of mass media management style for ethics and professionalism among journalists. The study was a survey. The population of the study comprised all the 343 registered journalists in Akwa Ibom State. The complete census was adopted since the population size was manageable and the subjects had distinct addresses and meeting points. The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. A total of 335 copies of the questionnaire were correctly completed, returned and subsequently used for data analysis. The findings revealed that mass media organisations in Akwa Ibom State adopted a mixed pattern of organisational communication and this influenced ethics and professionalism among journalists positively. Also, the mass media management style in place had a great deal of positive implications for ethics and professionalism among the journalists in the State. It was therefore recommended among other things that media organisations in Akwa Ibom State should continue in the use of mixed organisational communication pattern to enhance effective journalism practice and keep encouraging journalists' adherence to professional code of ethics and practice.

Keywords: Journalism Ethics, Credibility, Journalists, Media Management, Professionalism, Organisational Communication

Introduction

All human interactions are forms of communication. No organisation can achieve its goals without effectively communicating with its employees, clients, customers and other stakeholders. Communication has a crucial effect on job performance among workers in any organisation. Organisational communication is the transmission of information within an organisation. This type of communication includes the sending

and receiving of messages through various levels of authority, using various message systems, and discussing various topics of interest to the organisation.

By using a good communication pattern, an organisation can work smoothly and successfully. Lack or absence of communication in an organisation can be a problem to the organisation. Effective communication is essential for the survival of organisations. Members of the organisation and communicators need to understand and enhance their communication skills. Unfortunately, sometimes lack of attention to communication occurs despite the fact "the preponderance everyday problems that plague all organisation are either problems that are patently ethical or moral in nature or they are problems in which deeply embedded ethical issues can be identified" (Redding, 2006, p.18).

However, it is essential for organisations that are interested in enhancing the professionalism and ethical stance of the journalists working with them to first establish what makes journalism the way it is. They should also find out the factors that contribute to journalists' attitude and reactions to ethical issues. They should as well encourage journalists to give regards to professional values, guiding principles and the codes of practice. Journalism ethics and standard comprise principles of ethics and of good practice as applicable to the specific challenges faced by journalist. These principles contribute to the framework of journalistic ethics and professionalism, the desire of every journalist and the very crux of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Communication is central to the survival of any organisation. The pattern of communication has a lot to do with staff productivity in the organisation. It, however, appears that some organisations only set out to look at other elements and indices of organisational success other than ethics and professionalism. It seems also that such organisations are not paying attention to journalism ethics and professionalism. One then wonders whether organisational communication pattern has anything to do with ethics and professionalism amongst journalists. In other words, what are the implications of organisational communication pattern for the ethics and professional stands of journalist in Akwa Ibom State-based media establishments?

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What kind of communication pattern is prevalent in media organisations in Akwa Ibom State?
2. How does organisational communication pattern affect journalism practice in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What is the perception of journalists towards the organisational communication pattern and how it affects their professional ethics?

4. What is the influence of mass media management style on the level of professionalism among journalists in Akwa Ibom State?

Conceptual and Literature Review

The following concepts are elucidated as in line with the thrust of this study:

Organisational Communication

Organisational communication is a generic concept used in describing the interactions that take place in a given organisation. Richmond and McCroskey (2009) describe it as the process by which individuals stimulate meaning in the minds of other individuals, by means of verbal and non-verbal messages in the context of a formal organisation. It is the transmission and interpretation of messages among people who are part of a particular organisation. An organisation comprises all the communication units in hierarchical relations to each other, functioning in an environment and targeting the same goal.

Kreps (2006, p. 24) defines organisational communication as "social collectives in whom people develop ritualised patterns of interaction in an attempt to coordinate their activities and efforts in the ongoing accomplishment of personal and group goals". Obviously, communication channel is an integral aspect of organisational communication. Communication channels are the numerous pathways used to convey messages within the organisation. Choosing the right channel to get a certain message through to the audience is important in determining the effectiveness or otherwise of organisational communication. Lewis (2009), for instance, observes that interpersonal channels are most likely to meet special needs of organisational members in overcoming risk and complexities associated with a change. When high risk and complexity are not major factors, mediated channels are more effective in providing general information (Pace and Faules, 2004). However, the best channel through which to convey information will depend on the situation, nature and goals of the organisation. Effective organisational communicators use a number of channels, taking time to ensure that messages are repeated and reinforced in different ways for effectiveness.

Organisation Communication Flow

Fieldings (2006) is of the view that messages in an organisation flow in five different patterns:

- 1. Downward Communication Flow:** This is the transmission of messages from personnel in a higher level in an organisation to those in a lower level. In other words, it is the communication from superiors to subordinates in the chain of commands in an organisation. This flow is used by the superiors to transmit work-related information to the employees at lower levels. Employees require this information for performing their jobs and for meeting the

expectations of their managers. Downward communication is necessary for the following reasons:

- a) providing feedback on the employees;
 - b) giving job instructions;
 - c) communicating the organisation mission and visions to employees;
 - d) highlighting the areas of attention in the organisation (Fieldings, 2006).
- 2. Upward Communication Flow:** This is communication that flows from personnel at a lower level to those at a higher level in an organisation. It provides feedback on how the organisation is functioning. The subordinates use upward communication to convey their problems, opinions and performance to their superiors. They also use it to tell how well they have understood the downward communication. This flow leads to more committed and loyal workforce in an organisation because the employees are given the opportunity to raise issues and express their colleagues at the higher level (Fieldings, 2006).
- 3. Lateral/Horizontal Communication Flow:** This type communication flow takes place at same level of hierarchy in an organisation; that is, between managers at the same level or any horizontally equivalent organisational member. The advantages of horizontal communication include:
- a) It saves time
 - b) It facilitates coordination of the text
 - c) It facilitates co-operation among team members
 - d) It helps in solving various organisational problems (Fieldings, 2006).
- 4. Diagonal Communication:** This type of communication flow takes place between manager and employees of other work groups within the organisation. It generally does not necessarily appear on an organisational chart; for instance, to design a training module, a training manager interacts with operations personnel to enquire about the way they perform their task.
- 5. External Communication:** This takes place between a manger and external groups such as, suppliers, vendors, financial institutions etc.; for instance, the Managing Director will interact with a bank manager outside his organisation to raise capital.

Communication Climate

Communication climate is the social tone of a relationship within a given environment or organisation. It is how people interact with others within their relationship or any other social sphere. Indeed, social tones define and distinguish friendships, families and other forms of relationships. Communication climates can be positive or negative, and can be changed. That is why it is important to understand them and their usefulness at all times. In fact, a positive communication is one in which the participant feel valued. Positive communication messages engender a positive

communication climate; people perceive others as liking, appreciating and respecting them. They feel valued. In contrast, negative messages produce a negative communication climate, and can often be found among people who feel unimportant or abused and therefore react negatively. For Redding (2004), climate is the atmosphere of an organisation. Specifically, climate is the atmosphere of supportiveness or defensiveness that people feel within an organisation. An ideal communication climate has the following ingredients:

- (a) Participative decision making
- (b) Supportiveness
- (c) Trust, confidence and credibility
- (d) Openness and candour
- (e) High performance goals

Organisational Climate and Organisational Culture

Organisational culture has become a source of concern to many leaders and experts. They are concerned about how a particular organisational culture can be implemented, or how organisational culture can be changed depending on the organisational goal. For Varsani (2015), organisational climate and organisational culture have different research perspectives. Accordingly, organisational climate concept is based on psychological theory while organisational culture is more of anthropology discipline. They also have different implications. Also, organisational climate means consciously perceived processes and factors of the environment that can be controlled by the organisation. The focus of organisational climate is on the situation and its link to perceptions, feelings, and behaviour of employees. On the other hand, organisational culture is the personality and the feelings, that distinguish one organisation from another, and the salient way that things are done in the organisation. It is more apparent to an outsider interacting with the organisation for the first time, or when two organisations merge or experience a take-over.

Robbins, Bergman, Stagg and Coulter (2015) outlined the following as the key characteristics of organisational culture:

- (1) **Individual initiative:** the degree of responsibility, freedom and independence that individuals have.
- (2) **Risk tolerance:** the degree to which employees are encouraged to be advocative, innovative and risk seeking.
- (3) **Direction:** the degree to which the organisation creates clear objectives and performance expectation.
- (4) **Integration:** the degree to which the various units in an organisation are encouraged to operate in a coordinated manner.
- (5) **Management contact:** the degree to which managers provide clear communication, assistance and support to their subordinates.
- (6) **Control:** the degree to which rules and regulations, and direct supervision, are used to oversee and control employee behaviour.

- (7) **Identity:** the extent to which members identify with the organisation as a whole, rather than with their particular workgroup or field of professional expertise.
- (8) **Reward system:** the nature of motivation, such as salary increases, promotions etc that are based on employee's performance.
- (9) **Conflict and criticism:** employees are encouraged to air their views, conflict and criticism openly.
- (10) **Communication pattern:** the nature of information flow within the hierarchy of command in an organisation.

Organisational culture is also transmitted in other ways such as stories, material symbols and language. It can also be expressed in ways such as status and formality rituals (Morandi, 2006), the structure of buildings and the nature of workspace layout (Parker and Hildebrand, 2006), casual act of formal dress code (Wood and Benitez, 2005), and attitudes and mind-set (Robbins, Bergman, Stagg and Coutler, 2015).

Organisational culture in itself is neither good nor bad; it is relative. There can be negative as well as positive expressions of organisational culture, which may indeed turn out to be a big issue, and can even become the main cause of the organisation's demise or rejuvenation as the case may be.

Media Ethics and Journalism Practice

Media ethics are the normative principles that regulate the professional activities of media workers. According to Prasad (2008, p. 33), "media ethic is the subdivision of applied ethics dealing with the specific ethical principles and standards of media including broadcast media, film, theatre, the arts, print media and the internet. The field covers many varied and highly controversial topics, ranging from war journalism to advertising".

It must, however, be pointed out that there are many classes of media ethics, viz: media ethics relating to journalism, entertainment, democracy, media economics, public officials and culture. Of all the areas of media ethics, journalism ethics is one of the most well-defined. Two reasons can be advanced for this. First, it is frequently taught in higher institutions offering communication and journalism studies. Secondly, journalism is the nucleus of mass media practice. Journalistic ethics are the code of behaviour or moral principle that guides the activities of journalist in any given situation. They are therefore the bases of the judgment of rightness or otherwise of the action or behaviour of the journalist. They are often encapsulated in journalism codes of practice. Media ethics mainly revolve around truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, objectivity and editorial independence.

Professionalism and Media Ethics

In the contemporary society, journalism practice is faced by pressure from several sources, such as pressure from commercialisation, socio-political dependence, the media organisation etc. It was based on the perceived falling of the standards of

practice that professional ethics emanated. Professional media ethics has so far taken various forms, such as the formation of associations, press councils and the drawing up of principles of good practice in the form of code of ethics.

The press council, the world over has similar objective. The press council is typically voluntary or at least the body that mediates between the public and the mass media. The main function of the council is to adjudicate on complains from any part affected by the practice of the media professional. Thus, its very essence is to ensure a high degree of professionalism and media ethics.

The major role of media ethics is to function as an instrument of self-regulation of mass media professionalism and responsibility to the public. The major instrument of mass media professional's self-regulation is the journalism code of ethics. It refers to a set of principles of professional conduct that are adopted, implemented and enforced by the journalists themselves. The establishment, practice and enforcement of journalist code of ethics “reflect the general process of professionalisation of journalism and also the wish of the media industry to protect itself from criticism and especially from the threat of external intervention and reduced autonomy” (McQuail, 2007, p. 173). The principal thing here is that professional ethics helps to set a boundary to public incursion to the realm of journalism profession. This helps to provide a good idea of what journalism ought to be doing – they reveal the values that the media workers publicly proclaim as guidelines for their work.

On the other hand, professional ethics constitutes a form of the normative theory. Howbeit, the codes are often a little more than a collection of disparate and practical prescriptions that do not express any single organised idea about the nature of the society and the overall social purpose of the media institution. Although the theses of the mass media professionalism ethics are similar in most countries of the world, there are usually some sorts of peculiarities among them. These peculiarities are usually based on the individual experiences and nature of influence in the particular society. The many different codes therefore reflect differences in the conventions and traditions of the state concerned and in the relative influence of different interest parties. Such interested parties could be publishers, media organisations, editors, journalists or the external regulatory body. Most of the codes concentrate on the provision of reliable information and on avoiding distortion, suppression, bias, sensationalism and the invasion of privacy.

Sometimes, in a bid to ensure greater service to humanity, media ethical codes go further to express some views of the extended role of journalism in the society. This could lead to the individual media establishments to fashion out their internal professional codes. This is, however, less of ethical code, but more of house style or organisational philosophy. In view of this, it is obvious that, “beyond the area of news journalism, there is extensive evidence of media self-regulation in the form of voluntary codes designed mainly to protect the public from some possible harm or the industry from outside pressure” (McQuail, 2007, p. 176).

Mass media practice would be incomplete and ineffective where there are no mechanisms to guide the practice and regulate the professionals in their conduct. This constitutes the whole gamut of mass media professionalism and ethics. Professional ethics is a necessary ingredient of journalism because of the delicate responsibilities that journalists owe the society. The responsibilities of journalist include:

1. educating the public generally;
2. promoting a free and democratic society by presenting accurate information to the public and allowing them to reach a rational discernment on issues of significance;
3. focusing people's mind on certain relevant issues in the society to enable the people to adopt a particular stand-point. This could be done through the agenda-setting role of the media;
4. aggressively investigating, reporting, analysing and interpreting events as well as exposing undesirable conditions, scandals, and unjust practices; and
5. calming down tension in the society.

The unfortunate thing, however, is that despite the above responsibilities, some journalists clearly perform below expectation, while many others out-rightly throw in the towel and shun their major responsibilities for one reason or the other. The negligence of the professional responsibilities by journalists triggered off the need for the promulgation of journalism Code of Ethics – the system or standard of moral judgement for journalists. Thus, journalists need to be guided by the objective moral principles in them to do right and abhor evil. Any journalist who may ignore or flout the rules of journalism ethical code is therefore a deviant and punishable according to the provisions of the Code, if any. Actually, journalism code of ethics is a guiding principle for the journalist. It is never the duty of government or its agency to promulgate the Code; rather it is the duty of the relevant professional bodies. For instance, in 1932 the American Society of Newspaper Editor drew up a list of ethical principles for journalist. The principles were:

- (i) Truthfulness
- (ii) Accuracy
- (iii) Impartiality
- (iv) Fairness
- (v) Decency
- (vi) Maintenance of free and independent expression in keeping with the welfare of the society

Although these ethical principles were set mainly for American journalists, it is strongly believed that other journalists and mass media practitioners within and outside America had borrowed a leaf from the above in drawing up their Codes of Ethics. As freedom of the press largely depends on the legal system of the country, and as there are some variations between societies wherein the mass media are located, journalism Code of Ethics also varies from one country to another, but with strict compliance with the canons of journalism practice. Currently, journalists in all countries of the world

have settled to their different Codes which serve as a guide for their practice and yardstick for judgment of their conducts.

There are several ways of identifying and deciding ethical issues. One of the common ways of categorising these approaches is the rules versus consequences criteria. The first argues that our actions should be guided by general rules or principles: do not harm, tell the truth, do not steal, have respect for persons. The second argues that we should assess the "Rightness" of an action or discussion by the consequence that will likely result. Most commonly the second approach identifies some "value", values and measures the actions by the extent to which these values are or not enhanced, or progress made towards certain goals, such as a better life for all. Redding (2006) suggests that credibility and openness are especially important for positive existence of an organisation. Honesty is needed for an organisation to remain open and trusted. A violation of trust can damage both the credibility of the organisation and its open communication climate. Harman (2007) defines ethics as "the liberal arts discipline that appraises voluntary human conduct in so far as it can be judged right or wrong in reference to determinative principle". In practice, ethics is a way of studying morality which allows decisions to be made when individuals face specific case of moral dilemma.

Review of Studies

Udofia, E. J. (2018). Organisational Communication Linkages in Participative Management and Job Satisfaction. *UNIUYO Journal of Communication Studies*, 2(1), pp. 24-33

This study sought to establish the nexus between organisational communication pattern and participative management as well as their implications for job satisfaction among the staff. It also set out to examine the role of communication in the survival of an organisation. The study revolved around two theories: McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y, and Rensis Likert's System I, II, III and IV theory.

The study revealed that participative management maximises workers' potentials thereby helping the organisation to compete favourably in the global economy. It is also one of the significant elements in organisational success because it enables the employees to play a direct role in setting goals, making decisions, solving problems and making changes in the organisation. Meanwhile, the nature of communication pattern in use in the organisation contributes a lot to the adoption of participative management in the organisation. It was recommended in this study that employee participation should be brought to life in the organisation through effective communication and other practices to increase employee job satisfaction and commitment to organisational goals.

This study is relevant to this particular study because they both have to do with organisation communication pattern and their implications for professionalism, job satisfaction and staff productivity. Organisations should therefore watch out and adopt

participative management style through appropriate communication pattern when necessary and applicable.

Igbaenkemen, G. O. & Idowu, O. A. (2014). Impact of Organisational Communication on Employees' Productivity: A Case Study of Nigeria Brewery Plc. *Journal of Management Dynamics*, 2(4), 18 – 29

This study sought to find out the implications of commitment by members of the organisation for staff productivity. It also set out to ascertain the fundamental determinants of organisational productivity in the milieu of participative management style. The survey method was used in the study. The population comprised two hundred (200) members of staff of the Nigeria Brewery Plc, Lagos. The stratified random sampling method was used in selecting 33 (thirty-three) respondents across the organisation's work force.

Findings of the study revealed that organisational commitment had a significant influence on employee productivity and as such improved organisational performance and effectiveness. It was further found that employee commitment to their organisation is significant to organisational performance which manifests in employees' skills, performance and devotion to duty. These all contribute immensely to the realisation of the organisational goals and objectives.

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among other things that organisations should frequently enhance their staff capacity through timely training and professional development in order to catch up with contemporary trends in organisational management. Effective communication pattern and information management were also recommended in order to carry all the employees along and update them enough to contribute meaningfully to management which inversely brings about high productivity and performance in the organisation.

This reviewed study is relevant to the present study because of issues of staff productivity and efficiency. This stresses the significance of communication and participation in decision making on organisational performance.

Asamu, F. O. (2014). Impact of Organisational Communication on Workers' Performance in Select Organisations in Lagos State. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social sciences*, 19(8); 279 – 293

This study examined the relationship between communication and workers' performance in select organisations in Lagos state, Nigeria. The survey method was used in this study with a population of 557 staff members of the select organisations. A sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents were selected through the purposive sampling technique. It was found out from the study that effective communication creates mutual understanding between management and workers. This in turn helps in building genuine relationship among the various arms of the organisation.

It was also revealed that effective organisational communication obviously enhances job performance by workers. It was therefore recommended that organisations should regularly articulate communication policies and strategies that are workers-friendly in order to effectively attain the organisational goals. The relevance of this study to the present work is based on the fact that both studies emphasise the fact that communication is central in all aspects of organisational growth and success. They also hinge on the implications of communication patterns for job performance and satisfaction of the employees in the organisation.

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded on the framework of the Social Judgement Theory. The Social Judgement Theory, according to Senam (2020), hinges on how individuals judge the message they receive. It follows that every bit of information from the mass media passes through some sorts of judgment by the audience before it is accepted, rejected, or is left in between acceptance and rejection.

The Social Judgment Theory was postulated in 1965 Muzafa Sherif, Carolyn Sherif, and Carl Horland. For them, Social Judgment Theory extends its concern to the fields of perception and persuasion, based on the attitude of the audience. According to Griffin (2000), attitudes which guide a person to pass judgment on the message, is an amalgam of three zones:

- (a) **The latitude of acceptance:** it is made up of the item that the people underscore as being accepted.
- (b) **The latitude of rejection:** it comprises the opinion or information that people cross out as objectionable.
- (c) **The latitude of non-commitment:** it consists of the messages or information which people find neither objectionable nor acceptable.

These imply that the audience is yet to pass the judgment, for whatever reasons significant to the audience's thought and judgment over it. For Senam, Udoakah & Udoh (2014), the forgoing means that for the audience of mass media, judgment is anchored on perception and attitude. Thus, where people (the audience) judge a new message or information to be within their latitude of acceptance, they then adjust their attitude somewhat to accommodate the new input. Accepting or rejecting a message or exhibiting non-commitment, to some extent, relates to the cognitive map of the audience.

The Social Judgment Theory is relevant to this study in the sense that, our modern society is too advanced for it to be thought that the audience would receive all the media completely, without any form of judgment. Therefore, there is the need to assess the link between the mass media and ethics and primarily, the social judgment passed on journalism practice in Akwa Ibom State vis-a-vis organisational communication patterns and media management styles in the media organisations in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Research Method

The survey research method was adopted in the study. The questionnaire was the research instrument. The population of this study was the 343 registered practising journalists in Akwa Ibom State, who are grouped into Chapels. These are: The State Ministry of Information Chapel – 60; Pioneer Chapel – 41; Correspondent Chapel – 30; AKBC-Radio Chapel – 34; AKBC-Television Chapel – 21; Sensor Chapel – 15; Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Chapel – 19, Weekly Insight Chapel - 16, Consolidated Chapel - 37, Planet Chapel - 17, Inspiration Chapel – 20; Atlantic FM Chapel – 19 and Comfort FM Chapel – 13 members. The complete census method was used since the population was manageable and the subjects had distinct addresses and meeting common point, the NUJ Press Centre. However, only 335 copies of the questionnaire were returned correctly completed. The data gathered were presented in tables, computed and analysed based on simple percentages. All the questions were close-ended.

Data Presentation and Analysis

As part of the objectives of this study, it was important to determine the type of communication pattern in existence in the media organisations where the journalists work. Table 1 below shows the prevalent pattern of communication flow in media establishments in Akwa Ibom State is the upward flow.

Table 1: Distribution of Responses on the kind of Communication pattern prevalent in their Media Organisations

Responses	No. of Respondents	%
Downward	86	25.7
Upward	185	55.2
Horizontal	64	19.1
Diagonal	-	-
External	-	-
Total	335	100%

On the issue of the potential influence of organisational communication patterns on journalistic practice in Akwa Ibom State, all the respondents agreed that the organisational communication pattern in any media organisation has a positive effect on the practice and professionalism in the industry. Table 2 below summarises this information.

Table 2: The Effect of Organisational Communication Pattern on Journalism Practice in Akwa Ibom State

Responses	No. of Respondents	%
Positive	335	100%
Negative	-	-
Total	335	100%

All the journalists surveyed also had a positive perception towards the organisational communication pattern in use in their organisations. In other words, Table 3 indicates that journalists in Akwa Ibom State are of the view that the organisational communication pattern in use by media establishments in the State is healthy for professionalism among journalists.

Table 3: Perception towards Organisational Communication Pattern in Use

Responses	No. of Respondents	%
Good	335	100%
Poor	-	-
Total	335	100%

From the data gathered and presented in Table 4 below, the management style in the organisations influences professionalism among journalists in Akwa Ibom State positively.

Table 4: Influence of Management Style on Professionalism

Responses	No. of Respondents	%
Positively	335	100%
Negatively	-	-
Total	335	100%

Table 5 indicates that inclusive management style is used in media establishments in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 5: The Type of Management Style in Respondent Organisation

Responses	No. of Respondents	%
Inclusive	335	100%
External	-	-
Total	335	100%

Table 6 shows that organisational communication pattern encourages journalists' adherence to journalism code of ethics in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 6: Distribution of Responses on whether the Organisational Communication Pattern encourages their adherence to journalism code of ethics

Responses	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	335	100%
No	-	-
Total	335	100%

Table 7 shows that all the respondents agree that there was no need for a change of the organisational communication pattern in use, further confirming their acceptance of the existing communication structure and climate.

Table 7: Respondents' opinions on whether there is need for a change of Organisational Communication Pattern in their Organisations

Responses	No. of Respondents	%
Yes	-	-
No	335	100%
Total	335	100%

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are discussed in relation to the research questions earlier raised. They are as follows:

Research Question 1: What Kind of Communication Pattern is Prevalent in Media Organisation in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1 gives a clue to the answer to this research question. The prevalent communication patterns in media organisations, according to journalists, are upward, downward and horizontal. These patterns are in accordance with a combination of the formal structure of the organisations and the nature of work and work ethics in the organisations.

The upward communication was reported to be dominant and recognised than downward and horizontal. From the survey, the employees from the various media establishments indicated that the predominant communication patterns were: upward communication – 55.2%, downward communication – 25.7%; and horizontal – 19.1%. From these figures, upward communication was the dominant communication pattern in media establishments in Akwa Ibom State. However, the finding also indicates other forms of communication pattern are still applicable, depending on the need of the time.

This finding is in contrast with the position of scholars like Richmond and McGroskey (2009) who asserted that communication pattern in formal organisations were predominantly downward. Apparently this is so because their focus was not on media establishments, rather on most other organisations where bureaucracy held sway. Incidentally, the respondents (journalists in media establishments in Akwa Ibom State) felt satisfied with the communication flow patterns.

Meanwhile, Varsani (2015) has already asserted that communication pattern in an organisation is determined by the nature and goal of the organisation. This assertion justifies the departure of the findings of this study from Richmond and McGroskey (2009) who stated that downward flow is most predominant in most organisations. It implies that the predominant communication pattern in media establishments in Akwa Ibom State is mainly determined by the peculiarities of the duty demands in the organisation.

The emphasis of this study points to the fact that the nature of journalism practice has a lot of influence on the nature of organisational communication pattern in the sense that, the journalists may even be at duty post earlier than their superiors and the process of intimating the superiors of the steps taken by the journalists lends credence to upward communication flow in the media organisation.

Also, findings revealed that respondents saw no need for a change in organisational communication patterns in their media establishments, emphasising that the communication flow gave them good sense of belonging. This implies that the present pattern of communication encourages ethics and professionalism in their journalism practice as well as journalists' productivity. Again this finding is in line with one of the major precepts of the Social Judgement theory which formed the theoretical framework for this study. In view of this, Senam, Udoakah & Udoh (2014) are of the opinion that judgment is anchored on perception and attitude. So journalists in Akwa Ibom State have positive attitude towards communication patterns in media organisations based on their overall perception.

This study reveals that there is effective communication in media establishments in Akwa Ibom State. Effective communication is pivotal to high productivity among staff because it directly influences the behaviour of the staff and the way they perform. Efficient communication, which includes clear instructions, fast message delivery and paper explanations, is a key factor of cooperation between manager and employees. Communication is only effective when the receiver understands the message conveyed just as the sender intended it. The receiver can confirm this by letting the sender know that the message was received through the right medium and on time.

Communication between the manager and team members is fundamental in every organisation. Thus, success cannot be achieved when there is no effective communication. Communication in the work place helps employees understand each other better and contribute to productivity and effectiveness in an organisation (Clampitt, 2010). This implies that productivity increases when employees are

satisfied with their jobs and with the level of communication they receive from the management. Effective communication has a direct impact on morals, which ultimately affect productivity. When employees receive regular feedback on their performance, they are motivated to work harder and more efficiently.

Research Question 2: How does organisational communication pattern affect Journalism practice in Akwa Ibom State?

The finding on how organisational communication pattern affects journalism practice in Akwa Ibom State is reflected in Table 2. According to the Table, all the respondents in this study indicated that the communication pattern affected their journalism practice positively. This gives credence to the view by Gupta and Kumar (2010) that effective communication does not only cause successful implementation of exchanging and settling processes but also positive perceptions about the organisation among employees. Prasad (2008) had already established that the ethical stance and level of professionalism among journalists is a reflection of both the nature of communication in the organisation and the level of involvement of the journalists in decision making processes.

Upward communication flow is obviously one of the ways of getting journalists involved in decision making in the media establishment. This implies that the organisational communication pattern encouraged ethics and professionalism among journalists in Akwa Ibom State. The mixed communication pattern gives room for inclusiveness in communication flow and journalism practice. Through the effective use of communication, journalists tend to be positive in their activities at the organisation, hence, a great motivation to ethics and professionalism. Obviously, communication pattern in the media establishment has some implications for the journalists' attitude to professionalism and the adherence to ethical code s set out to guide their practice.

Research Question 3: What is the perception of journalists toward their organisation's communication pattern and how it affects their professional ethics?

Table 3 indicates that all the 335(100%) respondents perceived the communication pattern as being good. Also, Table 6 shows that all the 335(100%) respondents said the communication pattern encouraged their adherence to journalism code of ethics, this implies that the communication pattern used in most media organisation in Akwa Ibom State were part of the factors that encouraged professionalism and ethics. This goes in line with the assertion by Defleur (1989) that the very essence of media ethics is to define various expectations concerning the structure, conduct and performance of the media. This also involves the principles of professional conduct that are adopted and controlled by both the government (via the law) and journalists themselves (via Code

of Ethics). Where the expected functions of media ethics are released, they reflect on the level of professionalism of the journalist.

Journalism practice is indispensable in the society. It is a delicate profession because its practice has a lot to do with peaceful and cohesive society, and the survival of the practitioners; it can make or mar the society. In view of the fundamental role of journalism, there has to be some checks on its practice; such checks include media ethics.

For Senam (2020), ethical codes for journalism practices constitutes the parameter of judging the right or wrong actions, conducts or behaviour that journalists should uphold or abhor as the case may be. It is natural that where the communication pattern is not just satisfactory to the journalists, but also encourages the ethics and professionalism among journalists, the journalists would have a positive perception and attitude towards ethics and professionalism.

This is in line with the precept of the Social Judgement Theory which formed part of the theoretical framework for this study. The theory indicates that, the audience, in this case journalists in Akwa Ibom State, pass their judgment based on their perception and attitude towards a particular issue of significance. One of the ways of enhancing professionalism and ethics among journalists is congenial communication flow in the media organisation (Redding, 2004). This being the case, journalists feel strong and convinced to hold positive perception of communication pattern and its effect on professional ethics.

Research Question 4: What is the Influence of Mass Media Management Style On the Level of Professionalism Among Journalists in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4 shows that all the respondents indicated that the management style affected them positively. This implies that the management style influenced professionalism and ethics. Respondents in this present study said when their opinions are always needed by management, they feel accomplished. This is in support of the view by Watson (2013) that management style is used by managers to influence the employees so that they would strive willingly toward the achievement of organisational goal. All the respondents mentioned the inclusive management style which balances the involvement of managers and subordinates in information-process, decision-making, or problem solving endeavour. This is in agreement with positions of the study by Udofia (2018) and the extant literature in Pace & Fauls (2004), Lewis (2009) and Richmond & McCroskey (2009) reviewed in this work. They all agreed that inclusive and participative management style enhances professionalism and job satisfaction among the staff, no matter the organisation.

Conclusion

We concluded based on the findings of this study that although there are different kinds of organisational communication pattern, most media organisations make use of upward communication pattern and this has also affected the practice of journalism greatly in a positive way. The study also made it clear that the extent of journalists' adherence to journalism Code of Ethics is mainly determined by the kind of organisational communication pattern in practice. It then follows that journalism practice is boosted when journalists are comfortable with the organisational communication pattern used. This makes it is easier for journalists to change their beats and phases of work as they are not faced with difficulties in adapting to the new kind of communication pattern practiced.

Also, journalists perceive that the organisational communication pattern differently and pass judgment on the impact of this communication pattern on journalism practice. The judgment in turn affects the practice of journalism positively. The major yard stick for this judgment is the level at which journalists adhere to the professional Code of Ethics despite the different communication pattern used. This then establishes the importance of the Social Judgment Theory to this work.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

First, media organisations should adopt the communication patterns that encourage journalism practice and Code of Ethics to thrive and be respected. The idea is not that media organisations should be bound by a particular communication, but should adopt the ones that encourage professionalism among journalists since the real essence of the mass media is to satisfy the public through effective journalism.

Second, for effective productivity, managers of media establishment should endeavour to communicate with their employees effectively, using the right medium as this will help motivate the journalists to be ethical in their practice. This is borne out of the fact that with smooth flow of communication, the staff (journalists) would have some sense of belonging and work as a team to ensure organisational success. Again, the journalists would feel a high sense of importance which inversely motivates them to put in their best, and at the same time obey professional ethics.

Third, inclusive management style should be employed by managers of media organisations as this will balance the involvement of managers and subordinates in decision-making, information-processing or problem-solving endeavours. When the management style is inclusive, journalists will have the opportunity to freely share their field experience with the management team and contribute to the resolution of issues that may arise from such challenges. This will automatically enhance professionalism among the journalists as well as increase their overall productivity as information managers.

References

- Asamu, F. O. (2014). Impact of Organisational Communication on Workers' Performance in Select Organisations in Lagos State. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social sciences*, 19(8), 279 – 293.
- Clampitt, G. (2010). *Communication for Managerial Effectiveness*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Deflur, M. L. (1989). *Theories of Mass Communication* (5th Ed.). New York: Longman Publishing Inc.
- Fieldings, M. (2006). *Effective Communication in Organisation, Preparing Message that Communication*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Griffin, E. (2000). *A First Look at Communication Theory* (4th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Gupta, M. A. and Rumar, R. (2010). "Look Who's Talking! Impact of Communication Relationship Satisfaction on the Justice Perception". *VIKALPA*, 35 (3), 55-65.
- Harman, G. (2007). *The Nature of Morality: An Introduction to Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Igbaenkemen, G. O. & Idowu, O. A. (2014). Impact of Organisational Communication on Employees' Productivity: A case Study of Nigeria Brewery Plc. *Journal of Management Dynamics*, 2(4), 18 – 29.
- Kreps, G. L. (2006). *Organisational Communication*. New York: Longman Publishers.
- Lewis, K. (2009). Disseminating Information and Soliciting Input During Planned Organisational Change: Implementers' Targets, Sources and Channels for Communicating. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 13(1), 43 - 76.
- McQuail, D. (2007). *Mass communication theory* (5th ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Miller, K. (2015). *Organisational Communication: Approaches and Processes* (7th Ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Morandi, A. (2006). What is in a Name? An Exploration of the Social Dynamics of Forms of Address. *Organisations Management Studies*, 40(6), 1453 - 1477.
- Pace, R. and Faules, D. F. (2004). *Organizational Communication* (3rd Ed). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Parker, R. D. and Hildebrand, H. W. (2006). Business Communication and Architecture: Is there Parallel? *Management Communication Quarterly*, 10(1), 227 - 242.
- Prasad K. (2008). *Media Law and Ethics: Reading in Communication Regulation*. Available at <http://cyberjournalist.org.in/medialawhtml>. Accessed June 24, 2018.
- Redding, C. (2006). Communication Ethics: A Case of Culpable Neglect. In: Jakka, J. J. and Pritchard, M. (Eds). *Ethics of Technological Transfer*. Cresskill, N.J: Hampton Press.
- Redding, W. C. (2004). *Communication with the Orgainsation: An Interpretive Review of the Theory and Research*. New York: Industrial Communication Council.

- Richmond, V. P. and McCroskey, J. C. (2009). *Organisational Communication for Survival*. Boston, MA: Pearson / Allyn and Bacon.
- Robbins, Stephen, P., Bergman, R., Stagg, I. and Coutler, M. (2015). *Management*. (7th Ed). Australia: Person Education.
- Senam, N. (2020). *Mass Media Law and Ethics (3rd ed.)*. Uyo: Inela Ventures and Publishers Limited.
- Senam, N., Udoakah, N. & Udoh, G. (2014). Influence of Mass Media Law and Ethics on Journalism Practice in Nigeria. *New Media and Mass Communication*, 31(1), 23 - 26.
- Thomas, G. F., King, C. L., Baroni, B. C., Keltelman, L., Steve, M. M. and Wardle, A. (2006). Reconceptualising E-mail Overload. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 20(3), 174- 186.
- Varsani, M. (2015). Organisational Climate Links to Managerial Practices and Innovation. *Humanities and Social Science Latria*, 23(3), 86 – 98.
- Udofia, E. J. (2018). Organisational Communication Linages in Participative Management and Job Satisfaction. *UNIUYO Journal of Communication Studies*, 2(1), 24 – 33.
- Watson, D. (2013). "Negative Affectivity: The Dispositive to Experience Aversive Emotional States." *Psychological Bulleline*, 96, 465-498.
- Wood, N. and Benitez, T. (2005). Does the Suit fit? *Incentive*, 177(4), 31 - 34.