

The Role of Organizational Communication on Employee Job Satisfaction in Telecommunication Industry in Kenya

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Abstract- This study seeks to appraise the role of organizational communication on employee job satisfaction in telecommunication industry in Kenya in a bid to improve its effectiveness and applicability in the industry. It aims to achieve this by (1) Examining the role of organizational flow of information on employee job satisfaction (2) evaluating the role of communication climate on employee job satisfaction (3) Assessing the role of nature of information on employee job satisfaction and (4) Evaluating the role of information load on employee job satisfaction in telecommunication industry in Kenya. In view of the background and literature review, it was found that, organizational communication plays a vital role in ensuring employee job satisfaction. Also, the attributes of organizational flow of information, communication climate, nature of information being shared with employees, and information load, all work together for the benefit of employees' productivity and satisfaction at work. The study concluded that, the interplay and harmony of these aspects ensure effective organizational communication that leads to job satisfaction. Therefore, there is need to ensure that proper communication strategies are employed in all organizations.

Index Terms- Organizational communication, employees, Job satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

The current business world, Organizations' existence fully depends on effective communication. Employees communicate to each other and to the potential clients in order to build and develop services. They also communicate to the world at large to sell out their products and services. According to Goldhaber (2007), communication is the lifeblood of the organization; the glue that binds the organization; the oil that smoothens the organization's function; the thread that ties the system together and a binding agent that cements all relations. This statement clearly shows the magnitude played by organizational communication in the organizations today.

Scholars have shown that effective communication is vital to employee job satisfaction. According to Abugre (2011), Organizational communication takes on language that formulates various kinds of social structures that bring up teams and networks which ensure employees are committed and are satisfied with their jobs. Organizational communication ensures

that all employees are familiar with what is expected of them, through relevant and timely information disseminated. In turn, employees could seek clarifications where need be hence great satisfaction is achieved (De Ridder, Lixin 2014).

There is need to mend retention rates and decrease the associated costs of high turnover (Odemba, 2011). Voluntary turnover is a huge problem for many organizations (Mitchell et al., 2001). Communication between top management and supervisors plays a key role in ensuring that the precise employees are hired and retained in an organization. It also sustains productivity by keeping the workforce continually motivated. All these can only be possible if an organization maintains an efficient communication channel. This study seeks to investigate the role organizational communication plays in ensuring employee job satisfaction.

Telecommunication industry in Kenya

The telecoms industry in Kenya is one of the most vibrant industries in the country. One of the organizations under this industry – Safaricom limited has been rated as the best tax paying organization in Kenya for five years consecutively (Daily Nation, Tuesday, October 21, 2014). However, just like many other industries in the world, the industry has had to go through intense changes. In the past decade, technological development and regulatory reforms have seen the industry transform a great deal. Markets that were previously distinct and isolated, almost unique and monopolised have merged across their old boundaries with a huge investment of capital emanating from private sector practitioners. The end product of all this is an up surge of new markets, new players and new challenges which cuts across board. The biggest challenge has been the restructuring of staff which has caused a lot of job dissatisfaction and job insecurity (Odemba, 2011). To alleviate such challenges, it is essential to address employee engagement and their job satisfaction rates through organizational communication.

Therefore, it's quite evident from these studies and advisable that management should strive to communicate even though the responses to some questions may be unknown. The internal communications department should create and emphasize on two-way communication and feedback machineries always (Deloitte, 2007). Leaders require the feedback to quantify how well the organization is doing. This study is out to establish the attributes mentioned about organizational communication and how they affect job satisfaction in telecommunication industry in Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

An organization's most important employees are normally the most likely persons to look elsewhere for other opportunities. Talent will always be in high demand, and many talent groups will be attracted by the prospect of short periods of employment with a large number of employers (Armstrong 2006). Telecommunication industry in Kenya has been a victim of this. Since the mobile telecommunication industry is unique and having been introduced in Kenya less than two decades ago, it has a low supply of experts in that field creating competition among the four organizations that exist in this industry (IJARAI 2015). This has resulted to huge losses in terms of high turnover of staff such as telecom engineers, expert customer service, financial managers and technical officers who are persistently enticed by lucrative pay packages from rival organizations. Additionally, the growing number of changes in the industry including mergers and acquisitions (Telkom Kenya 2007, Airtel Kenya 2010, Essar communications 2012) have left employees feeling disconnected (Mukanzi 2011, Ochieno 2013). Success in the telecommunication industry squarely depends on human capital. This is because their products and services are identical hence competition to retain staff would be the only defining feature (Almansour 2012). It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the various roles that organizational communication plays to ensure job satisfaction among employees in the telecommunication industry of Kenya. Therefore, the need of this study is to find out the role of organizational communication on employee job satisfaction in telecommunication industry in Kenya. How does organizational communication improve employees' job satisfaction hence maintain high levels of employee retention in Telecommunication industry in Kenya.

1.2 Objectives

The Study had five objectives;

- 1) To assess the role of organizational flow of information on employee job satisfaction
- 2) To examine the role of organizational communication climate on employee job satisfaction
- 3) To investigate the role of nature of organizational communication on employee job satisfaction
- 4) To evaluate the role of organizational communication load on employee job satisfaction
- 5) To investigate the role of demographic factors on employee job satisfaction

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND (LITERATURE REVIEW)

2.1 Organizational flow of information

One of the most important role of organizational communication is to generate a scenario where employees believe on the goals and strategies used by the executive management. Vertical communication happens among or between people who are on diverse levels of authority in the organisation. It happens between hierarchically placed persons and comprises both downward and upward, diagonal and horizontal communication flows. The communication atmosphere in any organisation commonly remains controlled by

downward communication flow. Moorcroft (2003) carried out a study from three telecommunication companies in Jordan, whose results indicated that, it does not matter how brilliant the business strategy sounds, what matters is if it reaches and wins employees' support so as to achieve its optimum effectiveness. Employees need a fundamental story that reliably links strategy into context of the mission and vision of the organization (Sanchez 2004). This helps them to feel as part of the organization. Their feedback to management on how the organization is performing also makes them feel respected and that they are contributing towards the success of the organization. Various studies have indicated that flow of information from top management downwards and the extent to which employees are informed have a direct link to employee job satisfaction (Abugre 2010, Goldhaber, 2008, Goris & Petit 2002). Therefore, vertical flow of information which entails top-down & down- top communication, horizontal and diagonal communication have their own distinct advantages when it comes to employee job satisfaction.

2.1.1 Downward communication

Downward communication happens when information flows down through an organization's official chain of command. Information starts at the higher levels of the organizational hierarchy then moves down toward the bottom levels. Any information in response to the messages move up the same path (Hannegan, 2004)). A study conducted by Candace (2004) on employees of large, diverse organizations in the United States indicate that the most crucial source of communication is direct from the head of the organization. Employees are always doubtful of trickle-down information. When they hear straight from top management, mainly the CEO, this gives them the sense that what they are receiving is true and hence makes them feel important. Communication coming directly from the top is quite important in that, if the reasons of the insufficiencies at workplace are clarified well through downward communication, then employees may read just their expectations hence perceive their working conditions as satisfactory (Bulutlar 2008, Giri & Kumar 2007, Abugre 2010). On the same breath, when the CEO mingles with the employees and feedback is given to him directly, this makes employees more satisfied.

2.1.2 Upward Communication

Upward communication is usually used by employees for providing feedback and asking questions. Other than that, it's also a perfect way of making suggestions. All these avenues when left open, more often than not, improves employee attitude towards their work and morale (Goldhaber, 2008, Bulutlar 2008). Upward communication could also entail reports, complaints, grievances and even rumours which flow from subordinate to superior management. Giri and Kumar (2009) indicate that, such communication flow inspire employees to take part in forming policies for the organization and eventually facilitates the acceptance of the same. This affords management a means to receive information concerning the organization from the lowest level. With time, job satisfaction increases. Upward communication may also concern problems and exclusions to repetitive work in order to create an awareness of difficulties being encountered at the place of work to the leaders. It mainly

entails recommendations for improving task-related processes, periodic reports concerning departments and individual performance and various kinds of Complaints (Verma et al 2013).

2.1.3 Horizontal communication

Horizontal communication flow mainly happens in order to enhance coordination. This horizontal channel allows a diagonal or lateral flow of messages, empowering departments to work with other departments without having to strictly follow the up and down channels. These communication styles are also informational, but in a dissimilar way from upward and downward communication. Here, information is essentially for coordination — to draw together activities across or within units. This could happen as intradepartmental or interdepartmental as various times, task achievement remains related to matters connected to other departments. This style of communication works best in decentralised power (Larkin and Larkin 2004). It is believed that when such horizontal communication happens frequently, job satisfaction also increases. Miller (2007) through a survey discovered that decentralization of some strategic decision making causes more interaction amongst employees yielding greater job satisfaction.

2.2 Communication Climate in the Organization

Communication climate is of supreme significance in an organization as it contributes to the success and effectiveness of an organization. The organization's communication climate may impact the atmosphere in and around the organization which could either boost or hamper upward, downward and horizontal communication among the employees (Azrai Abdullah et al 2013). Communication climate has been differentiated from other climates such as motivational climate and organizational climate in that, management has the sole responsibility of controlling the communication climate in an organization (Zaremba, 2003) Communication climate can be termed as the enduring quality of internal environment of an organization that is felt by employees and influences their behaviours. This is further defined as open or closed communication climate.

Organizations with open communication climate encourages workers to participate, be free and exchange information without fear of intimidation. It helps the employees to constructively contribute towards conflict resolution hence boosting job satisfaction. On the other hand, organizations with closed communication climates have employees who keep their opinions to themselves and make shielded statements which translate into reduced morale hence job dissatisfaction (Miller 2006).

2.2.1 Open communication

The concept of Open communication involves allowing "open door policy" in an organization whereby, employees are free and feel at ease in expressing honest feedback to their colleagues and management. The process needs to work from either side in that, both management and employees are considerate in the communication and applaud feedback that helps in achieving greater success (Trombetta 2008). Studies indicate that, employees who experience open communication in their organizations are led to increased performance and job

satisfaction (Neves & Eisenberger 2012). Abugre (2011) indicates that, open communication permits employees to be more involved in organizational matters and understand that their engagement is important in achieving the success of the organization. He further notes that, it ensures that employees conceive the bigger picture and the portion they contribute in the success of the organization. Therefore, if a decision is made, employees will be in a position to better understand and comprehend how it will affect them specifically. This will in turn reduce job dissatisfaction and uncertainty in cases such as retrenchments.

Effective open communication causes a bigger chunk of employees to be on the same page, moving towards the same direction to achieve the same goal. Lack of it creates devastation that can cause continued turnover, indifference in the ranks and bad customer service. All of this can translate into reduced sales and profits (Triveni, Rao & Prasad 2007). Therefore, experts indicate that, Generating an open communication climate leads to greater job satisfaction reduced stress, team building, increased loyalty and commitment by employees to the organization plus mutual respect all over the organization. Open communication assures a more industrious and productive work environment with a positive workplace. (Kumar BP 2008)

2.2.2 Closed communication

Closed communication on the other hand limits the kind of information that employees can part with. When employees do not feel free to communicate at work, particularly about negative information or bad news, then the climate is closed. An organization with closed communication doors always results to poor feedback from employees for fear of reprisal. The organization then loses treasured information about how it functions (Petit & Vaught 2002) such communication climates often lead to high turn overs due to job dissatisfaction. Employees feel that in closed communication climates, major decisions are made at the top level and pushed down the line hence this leads to poor relations across the organizations. Therefore, open communication should be embraced at all times if an organization is to succeed in maintaining employees commitment and loyalty.

2.3 Nature of information being shared with employees

Creating clear guidelines of what needs to be communicated, and by whom in an organization is the most important value that will foster trust and perceived influence in organizational communication. If management assume that employees must not know everything, the information being guarded might leak out and come through unexpected means such as grapevine hence creating an untrustworthy atmosphere in the organization. Goldhaber (2008) indicates that, Successful organizations and enterprises give prominence to a few key messages. Management in such organizations are always accurate and consistent in their messages and certify that everyone involved comprehends the goals and how to attain them.

2.3.1 Trust and Accuracy of information

The level of trust and accuracy in various significant activities is also key for success. Employees at all ranks can enquire for information and obtain useful, honest responses (Finch and Hansen 2010). Scholars advise that, Leaders must ensure that they are good communicators in that, they strive to convey their ideas persuasively. Their behaviour must be dependable at all times and be consistent with what they are communicating, both officially and unofficially. This will ensure that employees are easily convinced with the kind of information they put across at any given time. Hansen and Alexander (2010) advise that, ideally, the more difficult or the more crucial the message is, the more probable that a face-to-face communication is necessary. This should then be accompanied by an electronic or printed version for accuracy and uniformity of message. It is also advised that, for the purposes of trust and influence of the information being shared, Employees usually prefer to receive from their direct supervisor, nevertheless "big picture" news may be more suitable coming from senior management or the chief executive office himself. Information such as take-overs, mergers and acquisitions, layoffs or retrenchments need to be relayed directly from the governing body of the organization (Harris 2002).

The basic rule on timing is that employees must know about anything that touches on them before anyone else knows. This makes employees to feel more respected and valued if they become cognizant of information before it is relayed to the public. It will ensure that they trust the organization at all times, which ensures high productivity and job satisfaction. Any information that is found inaccurate by employees leads to loss of credibility which culminate into management losing credibility. Therefore, scholars 'advise that all information being sent to employees must be accurate at all times in terms of the content and other simple things like grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pettit et al., (2002:81) explain that an employee's perception of a supervisor's communication pattern, content and credibility plus the organization's communication structure will to some degree influence the amount of satisfaction he or she gets from the job.

Over and above the trustworthiness and accuracy of information from the management, Barnard (2008) indicates that, the official structures of the organization has failed in covering some significant aspects of communication in an organization. He explains that, leaders should be bold enough to listen to grapevine in the organization. This kind of communication serves as a means of staff to release their emotions. It will provide a way for the management to grasp what the climate is like in the organization. This way, management is able to react with feedback that is trustworthy and accurate so as to clear the air within the organization (Stevenson and Gilly 2006). Pincus (2003) found out that, accuracy of information in an organization proved to be a predictor of quality and productivity in the organization hence job satisfaction.

2.4 Information load on employees

Most often than not, attention has been concentrated on the trend of communication flow, and quite little has been put on the quantity. Most organizations assume that, if information flow is high, that's good enough, so long as they are communicating continuously. Studies conducted by O'Reilly (2006) indicate

that, unrestricted flow of information within the organization is perfect. However, when the information received by employees exceeds the optimum amounts, the recipients may not give the attention required to this information. This will then lead to lose of information. The study further indicate that, communication overload is likely to have an inverse relationship to job satisfaction and Underload a direct relationship with job satisfaction. One of the greatest issues of information repetition to curtail breakdown in the communication method is possible overload. Therefore, management needs to be quite careful in order to capture the attention of the employees without possibility of ruining the worthwhile course of communication (Pettit and Vaught 2000).

One of the most essential aspects of an employees work in today's organization is the control of communication loads that he or she receives on the job (Wheless \$ Wheless 2003). Communication received can be considered as a communication load, which denotes to the frequency and complexity of communication involvement an employee must process in a specific time frame. Therefore, Goris & Vaught (2007) explain that employees in an organization can experience communication under-load or communication over-load which could have a negative effect on their job satisfaction.

2.4.1 Communication overload and Underload

When an employee receives too much information in a short time which causes them to slow down on their productivity in order to respond to such information, this could result to low performance hence further repercussions. Information that is difficult to process and requires more time to unravel the meaning could also lead to overload. Due to this loads, taking into consideration an employee's motivation to finish a task, they may take such as excess work, which can be negative to job satisfaction rates. On the other hand, when communication is strangled and given below the employee's capability to process them, this is called under-load (Goris & Vaught 2007). Scholars indicate that communication Underload usually results to grapevine. Grapevine is an unofficial way of communication in an organization. It is referred to in that manner because it spreads all through the organization in various directions regardless of the authority levels. It exists more at lower ranks of the organization. Communication Underload which leads to grapevine is quite dangerous as it carries partial information most of the time hence leading to uncertainty that results into job dissatisfaction. Since this kind of information is based on unconfirmed reports, most often than not, it lowers employee productivity as much time is spent on trying to confirm if what they have heard is true or false (Harris 2002).

It is also wise to avoid communication Underload as grapevine which fills that gap usually leads to hostility between management and employees. This then impedes the goodwill of the organization as it carries false and negative information concerning the top rank management of the organization (Giri & Kumar 2007, Callan & Monaghan 2001, Kumar BP 2008). According studies conducted, the ideas of communication under-load and over-load, results into an employee not receiving sufficient input on the job or is ineffective in processing these information, hence they are more likely to be disgruntled, aggravated, and discontent with their work which results to a low

level of job satisfaction. Therefore, experts advise that, for an organization to be successful in managing communication loads, management should use filtering techniques in order to check what information is important and needs to be disseminated without any delay. Delegation and decentralization in decision-making methods should be key to ensure that not all messages go to a particular executive. Careful selection of vital information sources and eradicating of the unreliable and inaccurate ones should be a daily function (Rao & Prasad 2007).

From these scholars, it is evident that organizational communication plays a vital role in ensuring employee job satisfaction. The attributes of Organizational flow of information, communication climate, nature of information being shared with employees, and information load, all work together for the benefit of employees' productivity and satisfaction at work. These are four features that informed the purposes of this study and it is the interplay and harmony of these aspects that will ensure effective organizational communication that leads to job satisfaction within the telecommunication industry in Kenya.

2.5 Demographic factors on job satisfaction

Positive employee attitudes comprise total satisfaction and loyalty towards the organization. Employee job satisfaction is absolutely associated with job involvement, motivation, employee commitment and mental health which translates to job performance and satisfaction (Sek and Khin 2009). A Case Study of two Malaysian universities on factors influencing jobs satisfaction indicated that demographic factors which include gender, age and designation (position/rank) of employees had a great influence on how an employee is satisfied with their work. Various researchers have presented diverse opinions in regards to the relation between job satisfaction and these factors (Hooi 2012, Kosteas 2009, Hanif & Kamal 2009, and Chimanikire et al. 2007). Kosteas (2009) showed that there is a U-shaped relationship between age and satisfaction. This means that, fresh entrants feel positive regarding their job, nonetheless after a few years they lose motivation, probably due to lack of career growth, monotony and dullness in their job. Afterward, when the employees are promoted to different desirable positions, they become pleased and therefore, their satisfaction goes up again. According to a study by Hickson and Oshagbami (2009) on the effect of age on satisfaction level among the research and academic (teaching) staff of higher education institutions, it was observed that age affects negatively the job satisfaction of teaching staff, while job satisfaction goes up with increase in age for research staff. Male employees appeared to be more content than female employees. In the United States and United Kingdom, given the assessed gender earnings difference, female employees get less pay and less viable working conditions, nevertheless, they seem to be more content with their jobs compared to male employees since females have fewer expectations (Chiu and Mason 2008). Female employees put more value on social factors while male employees emphasize on extrinsic aspects such as financial benefits, promotions and pay (Hooi 2012). Notwithstanding all the moderating factors, the role of organizational communication plays a significant role in determining the level of job satisfaction in organizations. Abundant knowledge on the impact of organizational communication on employee job satisfaction will be sought.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was based on literature review related to organizational communication and job satisfaction in organizations. It also examined the role of organizational flow of information on employee job satisfaction. Thirdly, it evaluated the role of communication climate on employee job satisfaction. Additionally, it assessed the role of nature of information on employee job satisfaction and the role of information load on employee job satisfaction. Finally, it investigated on whether, demographic factors affect job satisfaction in organizations.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study established the following conclusions based on literature reviewed. Today, more employees find that a vital part of their work is communication, especially when service workers outnumber production workers. Therefore, communication goes beyond training managers to be effective speakers. It requires them to have relational communication habits with the employees.

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