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## Organizational Communication Linkages in Participative Management, Peak Performance, and Job Satisfaction

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### **Abstract:**

*This study focuses on the links between organizational communication, participative management, peak performance, and job satisfaction. The study looks at the organization's structure of communication, focusing attention on the key processes through which communication plays critical roles in participative management. A detailed consideration is given to the question of participative management and to the growing interest in job satisfaction, with a look at the models of participation. The study establishes a theoretical base with two theories, both emphasizing effective two-way communication to foster a participative climate in the organization. This is followed by the research findings linking effective communication in the organization to employee participation in decision-making, performance, and job satisfaction. The study concludes that participative management enhances peak performance and job satisfaction through communication. It recommends, among others, that employee participation should be brought to life in organizations through effective communication and other practices to increase employee job satisfaction and commitment to organizational goals.*

**Keywords:** Organizational communication, participative management, peak performance, job satisfaction

### **1. Introduction**

Management is communication. In any organization, every managerial function and activity involves communication. In essence, effective communication in the organization is the cornerstone of the survival of an organization.

The need for managers to communicate with subordinates in ways that encourage them to identify with the organization has now become more important for organizational effectiveness. Kreitner and Kinicki (2001) posit that organizational effectiveness can be gauged by the prevalence of smooth flow of information, employee loyalty, commitment, and job satisfaction. It is, therefore, deductive that having employees who feel they are well informed pays dividends in improved commitment to the organization, more productive work, and increased job satisfaction.

Employees are the assets of an organization. Their needs must be merged with the needs of the organization. Their needs can be satisfied if the organization's communication climate permits them to communicate upward with a true sense of influence. The relevance of this direction of communication flow in the organization is underscored by Schol's (2005) consideration that upward communication is useful in facilitating acceptance of the decision by encouraging subordinates' participation in the decision-making process. In consonant with this assertion, Peterfreund (1998), cited in Jablin and Putnam (2007), states that when an organization keeps its employees aware of what is anticipated, of its long-range plans as they affect employees, the organization establishes a climate in which employees are most likely to grow. Such openness allows the employees to concentrate on their work, secure in the knowledge that they are part of the organization's network. Mulins (2002), cited in Udofia (2014), corroborates this statement by saying that when an employee feels more involved in what the organization is trying to achieve, it positively affects that person's motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to organizational goals.

Human resources theorists emphasize that self-directed work teams and other forms of employee involvement offer potential benefits for both employees and their organizations. Predictably, there will be such benefits as improved decision-making quality, decision commitment, employee development, and employee job satisfaction. According to Chiles and Zorn (2002, p. 338), 'People are motivated to work hard toward a goal they have helped to develop.'

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to locate the relationship among organizational communication, participative management, productivity, and job satisfaction.

Other objectives include:

- To bring to the fore those organization bottlenecks that hamper effective organization communication that prevent job satisfaction and how to overcome them.
- To figure and/or reel out perhaps how effective communication can be enhanced to shore up peak performance among employees and scale up productivity and job satisfaction.

### 1.2. Problem Statement

It has been observed that some organizations find it difficult to reach the peak of productivity due to communication gaps between the top managers and the employees of the organization.

It has also been observed that the elasticity of losing employees in an organization due to lack of job satisfaction and how morale and incentive are perfectly elastic. These have led to low productivity and an inability of an organization to sketch revenue generation. Some organizations find it difficult to operate, while some have closed shops and gone bankrupt. Therefore the study seeks to connect the nexus between organizational communication and participative management for maximum productivity and job satisfaction.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. Organization at Communication Structure and Participative Management

In the past, employees were expected to be compliant, take directives, and speak only when spoken to. Hence, there were narrowly defined jobs, military-like discipline, and strict chains of command that enabled managers to control their employees and meet production targets. Communication was one way down and or didactic while obedience flowed upward.

The old ways of management based upon carrot-and-stick philosophies of dealing with people cannot succeed in today's work environment. Haney (2008, p.176) predicts that 'there will be organizational crises as long as managers, supervisors, and leaders maintain anachronistic organizational structures that destroy an individual sense of worth and accomplishment'.

Organizations must be flexible and open to effective communication to remain competitive in today's global business to foster employees' loyalty, increase employee commitment, and increase job satisfaction. The communication structure that limits information flow from all directions of the organization hinders the interests of the employees and the organization as a whole.

Flexibility in management requires the development of responsive informal systems for communication and getting work done, as well as the sort of social interaction that support authentic dialogue and problem-solving. According to Eisenberg, Goodall, and Trethewey (2010), this structure of communication in the organization creates positive work relationships between managers and subordinates. It provides social support and a sense of identification with and participation in the organizational dialogue, enabling the employees to have a voice in the decision-making process.

### 2.2. Nexus of Organizational Communication, Participative Management, and Job Satisfaction

Human resources theory emphasizes the need for managers to create an environment where subordinates can contribute their full range of talents to accomplish organizational goals. According to Chiles and Zorn (2002, p. 136), this requires managers to listen to employee concerns, avoid close supervision, and trust employees to participate in work-related decisions. This level of communication relationship is a function of the content, direction, and style of communication in the organization.'

#### 2.2.1. Content of Communication

When quality interaction in human resource organizations is considered, innovative human messages come to the forefront. According to Goldhaber (1993), cited in Udofia (2008, p.17), 'human messages are directed at the people within the organization. It is about employees' attitudes, morale, satisfaction, and fulfillment'. Human messages are concerned with feelings—Interpersonal-relationship, self-concept, and morale. The human message is evident when the subordinates perceive that their communication relationship with their manager helps them build and maintain a sense of personal worth and importance. Another way to look at the content of communication flow in the organization is to consider innovative messages. According to Farace, Monge, and Russel (1977), cited in Sypher (2011, p. 226), 'innovative communication is concerned with interaction about how the job can be done better, new products the organization could produce, different ways of structuring the organization to increase productivity, and so on which employees are allowed to make meaningful contributions and to participate in the whole process-given them that sense of worth and collection responsibility'. This type of message flow in the organization encourages input from employees.

#### 2.2.2. Direction of Communication Flow

In human relations organizations, the need for satisfaction among employees is an important aspect of communication. So, an interaction that flows horizontally among employees is just as important as downward communication in accomplishing organizational goals. The goal of human resources organizations is to encourage the flow

of ideas from all locations throughout the organization. Therefore, communication in this organizational approach includes: downward-upward and horizontal. These directions of message flow are crucial for employees' needs achievement. Douglas McGregor (1960), Frederick Herzberg (1966), and Abraham Maslow (1954), cited in Eisenberg and Goodall (2001), have argued, in different but related ways, that a satisfied employee is one whose needs are being met. Haire (2011) noted that upward communication, in particular, is indispensable for individuals' active and responsible participation in decisions affecting their careers.

### 2.2.3. Style of Communication

The classical theory of the organization is concerned almost entirely with the design and structure of the organization, not with people. Thus, those at the top of the organization are concerned with the communication effectiveness of the downward-directed messages to employees. Predictably, the tone or style of communication will be highly formal. In contrast, human resources organizations have dual goals of enhancing organizational effectiveness and fulfilling human needs. On the needs side of the equation, Miller (2009, p.51) states that an informal style with less emphasis on titles, 'business' address, and bureaucratized language, is most likely to satisfy needs for affiliation. On the organizational effectiveness side, an informal style will also probably serve better than a formal one. It is because employees will probably feel comfortable contributing in a relatively informal manner. This is because the informal way of communication opens up space and allows for flexibility and deeper concerns without bureaucratic barriers or bottleneck red tapism.

A basic tenet of the organizational style of communication is that the employees' cognitive and affective perceptions of informal communication in the organization influence individual behaviors in the organization. Informal communication is associated with increased social interactions in organizations. When these occur, upward communication is enhanced with ease. This is fundamental to employees' participation in decision-making, job satisfaction, and commitment to organizational goals.

### *2.3. Participative Management*

An organization needs to maximize its workers' potential. The global economic climate is tense with stiff competition, and only the most productive companies are going to win it. Hence, participative management is a highly touted method for meeting this productivity need.

Participative management is one of the most critical elements in any organization because it can contribute to the success or failure of an organization's activities. Nutt (2008) notes that half of all decisions made in the organization fail because of the failure to recognize the need for input from a wide range of organizational members, including employees. This implies that for organizational decisions to be effective, those responsible for enacting them must be involved in the decision-making process right from inception to implementation.

Participative management is defined by Kreitner and Kinicki (2001, p 357) as 'the process whereby employees play a direct role in setting goals, making decisions, solving problems, and making changes in the organization'. Without question, participative management entails much more than simply asking employees for their ideas or opinions. It is an effective way to get the individual worker more involved, responsible, informed, and, therefore, more productive. The higher the level of participation, the more power people have over the decision process and outcomes, and the more people derive job satisfaction.

Although participative management has been promoted as a panacea for poor morale and low productivity, Robbins (2003) has, however, cautioned that participative management is not appropriate for every organization or every work unit. However, for it to work, the issues in which employees get involved must be relevant to their interests so they will be motivated. Also, employees must have the competence and knowledge to make a useful contribution, and there must be trust and confidence between all parties.

### *2.4. Models of the Participation Process*

It is important to consider the processes through which participation in decision-making may produce some outcomes. Miller and Monge (1986), cited in Miller (2009), have summarized some models which explicate links between participation, productivity, and job satisfaction.

These models are:

- The cognitive model, and
- The affective model

#### 2.4.1. The Cognitive Model

The cognitive model is based on principles of the human resources approach to management. This model proposes that participation in decision-making improves the upward and downward flow of information in the organization. The improvement of upward information flow rests on the notion that individuals close to the work (that is, at the 'bottom' of the organizational hierarchy) know the most about accomplishing the work. Thus, when these individuals participate in the decision-making process, a decision is made with higher quality information. The improvement of downward information flow rests on the idea that individuals who participate in decisions will be better able to implement the decisions down the road. When decisions are made with a better pool of information and are better implemented, productivity should improve. Increased employee satisfaction is seen as a by-product of their participation in important organization's decision'.

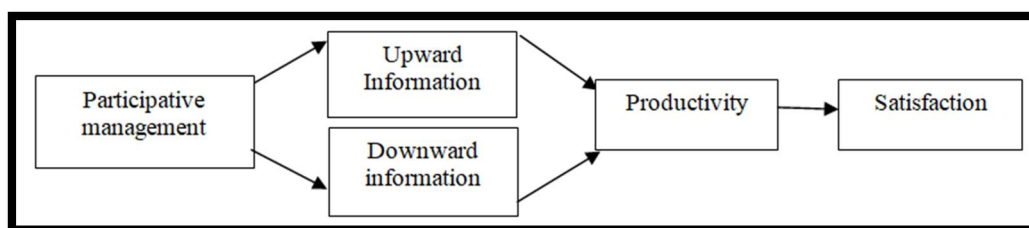


Figure 1: The Cognitive Model of Participative Decision-Making of Coch, L. and French, J.R.P (1948) in Miller, K. (2009)

#### 2.4.2. The Affective Model

The affective model of participation is based on the work of human relations theorists. This model proposes that participation in decision-making is an organizational practice that should satisfy employees' higher-order needs (i.e., esteem needs and self-actualization needs). The proponents of this model believe simply in involvement for the sake of involvement, arguing that as long as subordinates feel they are participating and are being consulted, their ego needs will be satisfied, and they will be more co-operative.

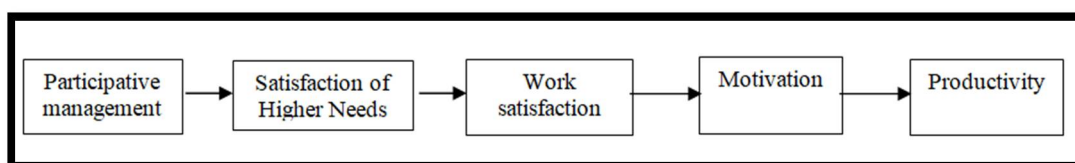


Figure 2: The Affective Model of Participative Decision-Making of Coch, L. and French, J.R.P (1948) in Miller, K. (2009)

#### 2.5. The Nature, Meaning, and Causes of Job Satisfaction

The focus on employee job satisfaction originates in the human relations and human resources approach to organization and communication. These approaches to organizing highlight the importance of finding the job factors and management practices that enhance employee satisfaction. The reasoning is that satisfaction will lead to:

- More effective and productive employees, and
- Organizational success

Job satisfaction represents a person's evaluation of his or her job and work context. It is an appraisal of the perceived job characteristics and emotional experiences at work (McShane and Glinow (2000)). Therefore, it is presumptive that employees have a favorable evaluation of their job based on their observations and emotional experiences.

Kreitncr and Kinicki (2001) argue that job satisfaction is not a unitary concept. This suggests that there is no single overall factor of job satisfaction. Employees can be satisfied with some elements of the job while simultaneously dissatisfied with others. Mullins (2003) stated that job satisfaction is itself a complex concept and is difficult to measure objectively. It is further argued that the level of job satisfaction is measured by a wide range of variables relating to social factors, which include relations with co-workers, opportunities for interaction, and positive leadership behaviors. According to Jenkins (2007), employee satisfaction is determined by the extent to which social factors allow an individual to fulfill his or her needs. This argument is consistent with the affective model of participation in decision-making. Apparently, if employees' need in the decision-making process is met, job satisfaction should result.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This work is predicated on the propositions of Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Y (1957) and Rensis Likert's systems 1, 2, 3, and 4 (1961).

#### 3.1. McGregor's Theory X and Y

Theory X and Theory Y represent the divergent assumptions that managers can hold about organizational functioning. Theory X represents a manager influenced by the most negative aspects of classical management theories. In contrast, Theory Y manager is one who adheres to the precepts of the human relations movement.

McGregor spells out three propositions of the typical theory X manager. These propositions argue that management is responsible for organizing money, material, and people for economic ends:

- That people must be controlled and motivated to fit organizational needs, and
- That without intervention and direction, people would be passive or resistant to the achievement of organizational needs

McGregor asserts that these beliefs are widely held by managers but are incorrect. He believes that managers should conceptualize workers as motivated by the higher-order needs of Maslow's hierarchy and as capable of independent achievement in the workplace. Thus, theory Y manager assumes that workers are highly motivated to satisfy achievement and self-actualization needs and that the job of the manager is to bring out the natural tendencies of these intelligent and motivated workers. Not surprising, McGregor advocates the use of theory Y in the organization because of

the openness in the communication system, an atmosphere of trust, reciprocity, intimacy, and growth. Apparently, employees recognize their input in the decision-making process, which leads to a more satisfied and productive workforce.

### 3.2. Rensis Likert's Principle of Supportive Relationship, Systems 1, 2, 3 and 4

Likert theorizes that there are a number of forms an organization can take and that these various forms are more or less effective in satisfying organizational and individual goals. He concentrates on explicating four organizational forms labeled system I, system II, system III, and system IV, respectively. Likert believes that these four system types can be clearly differentiated in terms of motivational factors, communication, decision-making, goal-setting, control, influence structure, and performance.

System I, called the *exploitative authoritative*, is characterized by motivation through threats and fear, downward and inaccurate communication, top-level decision-making, giving orders, and top-level control.

Likert's system II is called the *benevolent authoritative organization*. This system of organization is characterized by motivation through economic and ego rewards, limited communication, decision-making at the top, goal-setting through orders and comments, and top-level control.

System III is the *consultative organization*. In this organizational type, decisions are still made at the top, and the control still rests primarily at the upper levels of the hierarchy. However, before decisions are made, employees are consulted, and their views are taken into consideration. There is a high level of communication moving both up and down the hierarchy.

System IV is a *participative organization*. In a system IV organization:

- Decision-making is performed by every member of an organization, Goals are set by complete work groups,
- Control is exercised at all levels of the organization, and
- Communication is extensive, including upward, downward, and horizontal interaction

The contributions of all organizational members are strongly valued, and employees are rewarded through the satisfaction of a wide variety of needs. This study adopts McGregor's theory Y and Likert's system IV based on interesting parallels between the two theories. One way to look at the values and relevance of these theories is to consider the key factors necessary for creating a satisfied and committed workforce in the organization. The theories place a high premium on effective communication, which is considered to be one of the most important aspects of management because it facilitates and encourages the flow of ideas from all locations throughout the organization. Thus, the participation of individuals in decision-making and the performance of the organization are enhanced.

### 3.3. Organizational Implications of Participative Management

Many research findings documenting the values of participative management show the correlation between the high involvement of employees in decision-making, employee commitment, and job satisfaction. For example, a study by Coch and French (1948), cited in Miller (2009, p. 148) to determine the factors that could enhance employees' commitment to organizational decisions, found support for their hypothesis that participation in organizational decisions would make employees less resistant to change. Seibold and Shea (2008, p. 198) also found that the attitudinal effect of participation is job satisfaction. Also, Jardin (2007, p.87) reports that the results from a meta-analysis involving 27 studies and 6,732 individuals revealed that employees' participation in the performance appraisal process is positively related to an employee's satisfaction with his or her performance review.

Employee involvement in management's decision-making is potentially necessary for both employees and their organizations. According to McShane and Glinow (2000, p.311), employee participation in decision-making can improve corporate decisions because they possess relevant information. This is particularly true because employees are closer to customers and production activities, so they often know where the company can improve product or service quality and realize unused opportunities. In corroborating these arguments, Jameson (2006, p.124) also states that employee involvement in corporate decisions may improve the quality of decisions in some ways:

- First, it may lead to a more accurate definition of the problem. Employees are, in many respects, the sensors of the organization's environment. When the organization's activities misalign with customer expectations, employees are usually the first to know.
- Second, employee participation can potentially improve the number and quality of solutions generated (to solve organizational problems). In a well-managed meeting, members create synergy by pooling their knowledge to form new alternatives that no one would have designed alone. In other words, several people working together and building on others' strengths can potentially generate more and better solutions than if these people worked alone.
- Thirdly, involving employees in decisions increases the likelihood of selecting the best option. This occurs because several people working together can analyze the alternatives more carefully than if one executive made the choice alone. There is less chance that a grossly inaccurate person will be selected when knowledgeable people are involved.

McShane and Glinow (2000) have argued that the degree to which an employee identifies with an organization and its goals is crucial in facilitating productivity. It is obvious that 'employees' participation can elicit higher levels of commitment. This claim has found support in Miller's (2009) finding that the attitudinal effects of participation in decision-making include commitment. Jones (2004, p. 301) posits that 'employees who are expected to implement organizational development should be involved in choosing the course of action because it creates a psychological

ownership of the decision'. Invariably, employees will be personally committed to the success of the decision as they do not view themselves as agents of someone else's decision.

In the same vein, Robbins and Judge (2013) have also contributed to the argument of employee participation and commitment to organizational decisions. According to them, employees' participation in managerial decisions increases their perceptions of fairness in distributing organizational rewards. Employees' commitment to decisions can be triggered by the belief that the procedure used in the distribution is fair if they have the opportunity to contribute to the process.

The cognitive model of participation in decision-making assumes that increased employee satisfaction is the product of their participation in important organizational decisions. This assumption correlates with the argument of Orlitzky and Hirokawa (2007) that when the manager consults with employees, asks for their suggestions, and takes these ideas into consideration before making a decision, employees are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has exerted that communication is essential to an organization and is important for creating and maintaining productive business and relationships with other members of the organization. It is, therefore, instructive that managers and organizational leaders, who still maintain the old ways of structuring the organization with control directed from the top of the hierarchy, should cling to communication behaviors that provide contributions under which employees can work enthusiastically and effectively. This involves concern for effective communication, which helps managers to:

- Deepen their connections with others,
- Improve teamwork and problem solving and
- Facilitate employee's involvement in decision-making

The motivational benefits to be derived will be accompanied by a greater willingness of the employees to accept change and be committed to its success since they have been part of the decision-making process. This illustrates that working in a participative climate can meet workers' needs and increase employees' satisfaction. Against this backdrop, this study, therefore, recommends that:

- Organizational leaders should create a communication climate that permits employees to share in the decision-making process for a greater pool of knowledge and information.
- Management should support employees' participation in problem-solving so that a greater number of approaches to a problem can be used through multiple inputs from employees.
- Organizations should involve employees in decision-making as this increases their decision-making skills, employee development and offers additional benefits of fostering teamwork and collegiality as co-workers learn more about each other and appreciate each other's talents.
- Employees should be involved in organizational decisions, particularly in matters that affect them. This will create psychological ownership of the decisions, reduce industrial unrest, and increase their personal commitment to the decisions.

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