



An Investigation on the Impact of Effective Communication in a Christian Organisation (A Case Study of A Catholic Secretariat, Lilongwe, Malawi)

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Abstract

Communication is an important element that organizations need to apply in the workplace. In an organization, managers associate with subordinates as a form of communication. Information is passed on from management to subordinates through formal and informal communication. Different scholars have researched effective communication before. For organizations to achieve their goals and objectives, they have to use effective communication. Managers need to be reminded now and again of the importance of effective communication. Employees depend on their managers to guide and supervise their work at the workplace. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of effective communication within a Christian organization in Malawi. The research targeted 27 respondents. The qualitative method was applied, and questionnaires and interviews were used as instruments for collecting data. The research used qualitative data analysis in the form of thematic analysis. The AtlasTi version 7.0 was used to develop a coding system in the qualitative analysis. Tables and graphs used in this research were generated using Microsoft Excel. The study had three goals: mainly to examine communication channels, communication challenges, and communication strategies. These objectives were met. The results from the respondents indicate that the Christian organization uses both verbal and written communication. These are multiple channels, such as announcements, face-to-face interactions, emails, memos, letters, phone calls, and social media. The results indicated that the respondents found it difficult to identify the official channels, which created a challenge for them to identify the proper channels for official communication. The research identified a number of challenges, such as holding on to information by managers, short notices, no room for dialogue and feedback, limited technology, and an unwillingness for managers to listen to juniors. The researcher discovered that 25 of the 27 respondents stated that they were unable to identify any strategies. The respondents were given room to make suggestions to improve effective communication. The research respondents reported that the organization should develop a communication strategy, organize communication training sessions, provide open dialogue and feedback, and hold constant, regular staff meetings.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a two-way process in which there is interaction between at least two people (Moloney, 2013). Communication takes place every moment of our lives. Humans, animals, trees in one way or the other they communicate. It is the information exchange by words or symbols. It is the exchange of facts, ideas and viewpoints which bring about commonness of interest, purpose and efforts (Priya, 2009). Communication is a process of creating and sharing ideas. Individuals share feelings, exchange ideas and opinions in this way understanding is made between two or more people. Effectiveness involves achieving the goals we have for specific interactions. In different situations, your

goals might be to explain an idea, to comfort a friend, to stand up for your position, to negotiate a raise, or to persuade someone to change behaviors. The more effectively you communicate, the more likely you are to be competent in achieving your goals (Wood, 2016). Communication is essential in the workplace for developing and sustaining good working relationships (Sangeetha, 2022). Communication is done through verbal and nonverbal. It can be in a form of writing, visual and listening. Communication is also done on the internet by using different forums of the social media. We use communication to develop and sustain relationships. In fact, communication is essential to relationships because it is in the process of interacting with others that we



develop expectations, understandings, and rules to guide relationships. Effectiveness in interpersonal communication can be learned through committed study and practice of principles and skills (Wood, 2016). For an organization to achieve goals employees have to practice good and effective communication. Communication problems arise due to many reasons. Most of which are related to communication barriers. The main barriers of communication, like language are the means by which communication takes place, and culture, the way of life, a set of shared values, attitude, goals and practices, can influence the outcomes in a workplace where people from different backgrounds work together (Zuifikri, 2020).

II. Literature Review

Communication is a process of transmitting information, ideas, thoughts, opinions and plans between various parts of an organization. Good and effective communication is required not only for good human relation but also for good and successful business. Effective communication of information and decision is an essential component for management-employee relations (Priya, 2009).

Communication is also a basic tool for motivation, which can improve morale of the employees in an organization. Inappropriate or faulty communication among employees or between manager and his subordinates is the major cause of conflict and low morale at work. With effective communication, you can maintain a good human relation in the organization and by encouraging ideas or suggestions from employees or workers and implementing them whenever possible, you can also increase production at low cost (Priya, 2009).

Communication may be made through oral or written. In oral communication, listeners can make out what speakers is trying to say, but in written communication, text matter in the message is a

reflection of your thinking. So, written communication or message should be clear, purposeful and concise with correct words, to avoid any misinterpretation of your message. Written communication provides a permanent record for future use and it also gives an opportunity to employees to suggest their comments in writing. So, effective communication is very important for successful working of an organization (Priya, 2009).

Communication changes have rapidly penetrated all of society, including the church, and must be factored into organizational planning. Purpose influences and in many cases dictates the choices of medium. The medium will differ if the goal is pure information sharing, motivating,

brainstorming, or decision-making. When we apply the effectiveness standard (do the sender and receiver meet in the message?), we find the following ascending hierarchy: non personalized memo; email, personalized letter; telephone call; face to face interaction. If it is necessary to get one message out to many people within a short period of time, a memo or email is efficient and economical, although it suffers by its impersonal nature and the inability for discussion or feedback. When we need to observe the way, the message is being received, the telephone or face to face meeting is more time consuming but also more respectful of the individual and also allows for feedback (Dantuono, 2021).

2.1 Dialogue and debate at the work place

Organizational success as well as multicultural harmony depend upon the ability to address issues openly, objectively and not dogmatically so that hearts and minds are united in the search for truth or the best practice solution to a problem. Many USA television and radio shows adopt a crossfire and over-talking style, which impedes communication and unfortunately is very easily imitated. As secularity increases it is especially important that Catholic Institutions clearly, respectfully communicate the convictions foundational to our beliefs and listen attentively as others share their convictions (Dantuono, 2021).

2.2 Communication challenges

When we experience problems in the organization, most times, their causes are usually identified to poor communication. This is also because communication is the source of information used by managers in making decisions that affect the organization. Managers depend on their communication skills to get the information required to make decisions and to transmit the results and intention of the decisions to other people (Babatunde, 2015).

Research has shown that Managers used as much as 80% of their time in verbal interaction with other people i.e. Manager spends time: (i) giving and receiving directives (ii) participating in Conferences (iii) receiving telephone calls (iv) instructing subordinates (v) hearing grievances, discipline and counseling staff (vi) reading memos, letters, reports, etc. (vii) writing a wide variety of messages (Babatunde, 2015).

Therefore, any organization which fails to communicate properly must be prepared to face the consequences. Any idea no matter how great is useless until it is transmitted and understood by others. Perfect communication would exist 'when a



thought or idea is transmitted so that the mental picture perceived by the receiver was exactly the same as that envisioned by the sender (Babatunde, 2015).

Intercultural communication, whether verbal or nonverbal, holds many challenges because all communication is shaped by culture and embedded in culture. Language reveals the values and beliefs under girding culture. Intercultural communication offers an excellent opportunity to broaden knowledge and understanding of others (Dantuono, 2021).

A lack of awareness of differences can create grave misunderstanding and can also offend others to the point where communication becomes ineffective or problematic in an ongoing way. This danger exists at interpersonal level but also at the international level, where poor choice of vocabulary as well as the shape of a conference table can ignite wars and cancel trade agreements as well as simply inhibit communication (Dantuono, 2021).

Not all communication is by any means effective. Being a good communicator demands more than being a clever speaker with a large vocabulary. Effective communication is best judged by looking at the effect it has on the receiver. An essential quality of communication is thus to achieve a common understanding of the message by both the sender and the receiver. To achieve this is challenging particularly when there are a number of messages to be given and received in a relative short time, as is the case in teaching or even more so in ordinary conversation. The possibilities of mistakes being made and of the messages becoming ineffective are immersed due to a variety of factors such as differences on culture, age, vocabulary, values and so on the list is endless. Then there are the obstructions of communication which can come from both inner and external distractions (Moloney, 2013).

Furthermore, knowing fully that poor communication rank as the single most important reason that people do not advance in their career. Thou there are many barriers to communication; filtering, selective perception, information overload, personal bias, language and communication apprehension (Zahid, 2020).

2.3 Organization Communication

Organizations are composed of people, and they are living rather than inanimate systems. Indeed, a corporation has the legal identity and status of a person. The lifeblood of organizations is communication, whether channeled directly (face-to-face), electronically (email, tele-conferencing, video-

conferencing), and digitally (blogs, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, wikis) (John, 2015).

According to (John, 2015) communication exerts a profound influence on individual and collective thinking, feeling, and behavior within organizations. The vigor of an organization depends on its members' willingness and ability to communicate. While a high level of proficiency will optimize the performance of an organization, poor communication renders it dysfunctional; this is of particular concern to healthcare organizations where matters of life and death are at stake.

Organizational communication is usually examined in terms of flow. Communication in organizations flows in at least three directions: up, down, and across. The structure of most conventional organizations tends to be more or less hierarchical. The larger an organization, the more likely it is to adopt a hierarchical or bureaucratic structure, and the greater the tendency for communication cascading or escalating within it to be filtered, and even impeded (John, 2015).

Organizations that develop effective communication processes are more likely to both have positive work environments and be more effective in achieving their objectives". In this way, communication contributes to increased job satisfaction for employees and better bottom line benefits for the organization (Hargie, 2016).

2.4 Major functions of Effective communication

Effective communication in a company has three major functions such as ensuring that products and services are of the best possible quality and standard. Ensuring that staff work well together, understand the organization's objectives and work to achieve those objectives. Helping staff generate new ideas and adapt to changes. The specific context of communication are downward communication, sideways and upward communication (Fielding, 2009).

Downward communication involves managers communicating down the line to the subordinates. Managers might send information about the mission and goals of the organization. Feedback to subordinates on their performance. Procedure to be followed and instructions for specific tasks (Fielding, 2009).

Sideways communication also called lateral or horizontal communication or peer communication takes place between departments in a company or between managers of equal rank. It involves reports on activities of departments to keep other departments informed. Information to managers on



company policies and progress so that they are able to make informed decisions (Fielding, 2009).

Upward communication is called subordinate/ manager communication. It involves communication from the lowest positions in the company to the highest positions. It involves reports about individual problems and performance. Reports on what needs to be done and how to do it (Fielding, 2009).

Through communication, team members have been able to share knowledge and experience in the best interest of the team. Leaders have also been able to articulate potential problems for the success of the organization and take steps to avoid and overcome difficulties. Communication enables coordination of activities, sharing of information and respect of values, beliefs and norms of different groups (Nnyuku, 2010).

2.5 Business Communication

There is no success in the business without investing in communication development. In order to enhance their business, firms must learn effective communication in order to communicate effectively with them. There are different types of communication activity, starting from manager to staff etc. Research shows that the main obstacle in the organization is misusing communication skills in the proper way. In order to escape the problems in the organization leaders should be able to find a proper way to communicate effectively inside an organization (Osmanovic, 2021).

Business communication can be achieved in two ways: business communication which includes all employees, and business communication which includes only some of the selected employees. There are four main types of communication: verbal, writing, non-verbal and e-communication. Most of the information and news inside the management is transferred verbally. In the business organization, most information is exchanged verbally by negotiation and discussion. Non-verbal communication can be understood as any communication that is not written or spoken. Today, in the organization, we have a modern type of communication, i.e. e-communication. Globalization force nations to move as much faster as they can remotely (Osmanovic, 2021).

Today, communication is replaced by electronic communication in most of the world businesses. Virtual communication and virtual team help the organization to communicate effectively all around the globe (Osmanovic, 2021).

According to (Osmanovic, 2021) effective virtual communication cannot be realized without

technology in the organization. Using effective chatrooms, video conferencing and voice mail is very effective for the communication tools that help the people stay connected any time to finish their tasks successfully. Technology and goal setting are prior factors of effective virtual communication

2.6 Human Relation and Communication

Emphasis on communication came from the human relation approach of management. The human relation writer conceptualized that if employees knew what is expected out of them, and are aware of the objectives of the organization and there is regular feedback of their performance, they will invariably be more productive. Communication is defined as the exchange of information and understanding between two or more persons or groups. Without understanding between sender and receiver concerning the message, there is no communication (Hailiaw, 2018).

According to (Hailiaw, 2018) effective communication is an indispensable instrument for organizational success because without communication, one remains isolated and stranded. Effective communication occurs when a desired effect is the result of intentional or unintentional information sharing, which is interpreted between multiple entities and acted on in a desired way. This effect also ensures the message is not distorted during the communication process. Effective communication should generate the desired effect and maintains the effect with the potential of increasing the effect of the message.

People cannot succeed in life without communicating effectively. It's not enough just to work hard. It's not enough to do a great job. To be successful, you need to learn how to really communicate with others (Maxwel, 2010).

2.7 Connecting with others

According to (Maxwel, 2010) connecting is crucial whether you're trying to lead a child or a nation. President Gerald Ford once remarked, "If I went back to college again, I'd concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively." Talent isn't enough. Experience isn't enough. To lead others, you must be able to communicate well, and connecting is key.

When people possess the ability to connect, it makes a huge difference in what they can accomplish. You don't have to be a president or high-profile executive for connecting to add value to you. Connecting is vital for any person who wants to



achieve success. It is essential for anyone who wants to build great relationships. You will only be able to reach your potential—regardless of your profession or chosen path—when you learn to connect with other people. Otherwise, you'll be like a nuclear power plant disconnected from the grid. You'll have incredible resources and potential, but you will never be able to put them to use (Maxwel, 2010).

2.8 Communication at work place

Communication is a skill that is central to the human experience. We each know how to do it; we've done it since birth and receive additional practice each day. So why is it so difficult to communicate on the job? As a manager, it is important to understand how the workplace changes the nature of communication, for both sender and receiver (Rourke, 2009).

According to (Rourke, 2009) several factors alter the way we look at communication in the business context. We all have a personal communication style, but within an organization you often have to adapt your approach to accommodate the needs of those you work with and work for. If you put the preferences of your audience—particularly your boss and your clients—above your own, you will often get what you want faster. The way you communicate also depends on your position within the organization. The higher your level of responsibility, the more you have to take into account when communicating. And as you become more accountable, you need to keep better records—a form of communication to yourself that may later be read by others.

All communication must work within an organization's culture. The accepted approach can vary considerably between different organizations: some companies, for example, require every issue to be written in memo form and circulated before it can be raised in a team meeting. Other organizations are more "oral" in nature, offering employees the opportunity to talk things through before writing anything down. Many companies rely on a particular culture to move day-to-day information through the organization. To succeed in such a business, you must adapt to the existing culture rather than try to change it or ask it to adapt to you (Rourke, 2009).

2.9 Theoretical Reviews

The theoretical review represents the theories that have been used in the previous studies related to the investigation of the impact of effective communication in a Christian organization. The researcher has selected three theories, namely,

communication skills theory, organizational co-orientation theory, and organizational culture.

The communication skills theory connects well with the research in the sense that for one to communicate well in an organization, an employee has to attain certain skills that will allow the employee to communicate timely. According to (Foss, 2009) skillful communicators are happier and healthier, enjoy more satisfying interpersonal relationships, and perform better in school and in their jobs (Foss, 2009).

On the other hand, in any organization people are involved in several activities which requires employees to communicate to one another and share ideas. The organizational co-orientation theory is in line with this research in the sense that it speaks well on the day to day activities.

Finally, the organizational culture theory, is where employees behave in a way according to the culture of the organization. This research expects the employees to behave and communicate according to the core values of the Christian organization

2.9.1 Communication Skills Theory

According to (Foss, 2009) at the very core, communication skill simply concerns the proficiency or quality of one's communicative performance. Just as people's dancing, driving, or chess playing reflects a certain level of proficiency, so too do their various communication activities, such as listening, public speaking, and making small talk. Communication skill is one of the most extensively and intensively studied of all aspects of human behavior, in part because it is fascinating in its own right, but also because communication skill is vitally important to one's well-being: Skillful communicators are happier and healthier, enjoy more satisfying interpersonal relationships, and perform better in school and in their jobs.

Because skills are acquired over time, a great deal of research has focused on understanding the processes that underlie skill development. This research shows that skill acquisition is typically a gradual process; in fact, studies in a variety of domains (not just communication skills) have shown that expert performance requires approximately 10 years of concerted practice. They show large performance gains early on, but over time, improvements with practice become smaller and smaller (Foss, 2009).

Significant to note is that although skill acquisition curves almost always take the same general form, there are individual differences in the course of skill acquisition: Some people start off better, learn faster, and achieve higher levels of



performance than others do. Theories of skill acquisition suggest that a variety of personal factors, including intelligence, achievement motivation, and age, will affect the course of performance improvement (Foss, 2009).

According to (Foss, 2009) at the most molar level of the hierarchy are properties of skilled behavior identified in the aforementioned communication competence perspective. Certainly, there are differences in the specifics of various formulations, but models in this vein generally emphasize that competent communication is characterized by (a) effectiveness and (b) appropriateness. That is, the competent communicator is able to accomplish his or her goals while also acting in a socially appropriate way. A person who is effective in achieving his or her objectives, but does so by threatening, bullying, lying, and so on, would not be considered competent, nor would one who is polite, ethical, and pleasant, but unable to “close the deal.”

Examinations of the role of motivation and ability in communication proficiency are predicated on the notion that skilled performance requires both the ability to act in an effective and appropriate way and the motivation to do so. The person who does not know what to do (or how to do it) is unlikely to act in a socially skilled way. By extension, the individual who does know what to do but is not motivated to put that knowledge into practice is likely to behave in a suboptimal fashion. Almost certainly, the most common approach to examining variability in communication skill is to locate the source of cross-individual differences in proficiency in relatively enduring trait like individual-difference factors. Examples of such individual-difference variables are numerous (Foss, 2009).

2.9.2 Organizational Co-Orientation Theory

Developed by James Taylor and his colleagues from the 1990s to the present, organizational co-orientation theory shows how the process of everyday conversation is the basis for organization. Building on insights from linguistics, discourse, and organizational theory, this theory shows that organizing starts when two people interact about a topic of mutual concern, but that it goes well beyond this simple base. This approach to organizations continues a line of work that highlights the importance of communication in the process of organizing (Foss, 2009).

According to (Foss, 2009) since communication implies transaction, the groups must talk to each other. Groups, however, by definition cannot talk or write or do any kind of communicative work: They have no voice of their own. Thus, intergroup communication always occurs in more than one register or level that is, intergroup communication occurs via particular and multiple interactions among individuals affiliated with those groups. Intergroup communication is at one and the same time interpersonal A-B-X and in a different way intergroup or interdivisional A-B-X interactions. For groups to engage in what are commonly referred to as turf wars, therefore, they must do so through the mediation of human agents, who act for them as spokespersons.

2.9.3 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as the shared assumptions, values, beliefs, language, symbols, and meanings systems in an organization. This approach views organizations as a set of loosely structured symbols that are maintained and created by a pattern of individual psychological factors and various interactional factors (such as language, behaviors, espoused values and physical artifacts) that shape shared (and unshared) values, beliefs, and assumptions within a given organization (Foss, 2009). Professions have unique cultures. Engineers value precision, managers value leadership, and salespeople value good publicity. Such values are taught in graduate school and reinforced by day-to-day activities, rituals, and ceremonies. Corporations have distinct cultures as well. A good cultural leader is charismatic, playing the roles of cheerleader, nurturer, and coach. Cultural leaders strategically consider how to manage intrinsic values such as employees' underlying beliefs, assumptions, and unconscious mental frameworks. Leaders manage values through understanding and communicatively shaping external factors through strategic use of everyday language, rituals, and vision statements. Culture is implicated in both what employees and leaders say they do (espoused values) and what they actually do (values in use). Cultural leaders determine espoused values through visioning and help determine values in use through framing (Foss, 2009).



2.10 Conceptual Framework

The variables of this research are effective communication and Christian organization

Fig 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables	Intermediate Variables	Dependent Variable
Effective Communication	Tools Policies Management support	Efficiency Performance Quality

Source: Dzikolidaya

Discussion of the Conceptual Framework

Communication enables coordination of activities, sharing of information and respect of values, beliefs and norms of different groups (Nnyuku, 2010). Effective communication is an independent variable that cannot be changed. While the tools, policies, and management support are intermediate variables. The tools are used by the staff members to assist in the process of communication, such as phones, laptops, notice boards, desktops, and smartphones. The policies are rules and regulations that staff members are required to follow. The Catholic Secretariat has policies such as Safe Guarding Policy, Risk Management Policy, Gender Policy, which assist staff members to know what is necessary in the organization.

Management support is another intermediate variable. According to the respondent's information is passed on from Management to the employees though verbal or written communication. In this case Management provides information to the employees for the members to be aware of new developments as well as issues that affects them in general.

In this research, it has been discovered that efficiency, performance, and quality are dependent variables. According to the results in Chapter 4, the respondents indicated that holding on to information affected their work most. This means that the staff members are affected due to a lack of information. Their performance is affected by the challenges that they encounter where there is no effective communication.

Quality of work is another independent variable that the researcher recognizes as an important element. The respondent indicated a lack of feedback and no dialogue, which in the end affects the quality of the work.

III. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research was conducted at Catholic Secretariat in the Lilongwe City in Malawi. The aim was to have a deeper insights and deeper

understanding of the problems faced by the employees in effective communication. At the same time opinions and attitudes in relation to effective communication in a Christian organization, a case study design. The researcher used qualitative method to gather data from respondents. Questionnaires and interviews were used as instruments for gathering data. The research has depended on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained using the questionnaires and interviews. Secondary data was used by using recent academic papers, books and previous studies on effective communication. The data collected was evaluated and analyzed using thematic analysis. In order to be objective, the researcher targeted all the directorate such as Pastoral Commission, Social Development directorate and Finance, Investment and Administration directorate. The research has provided recommendations for improved ways of communication between managers and subordinates, by building strong relations in an organization.

3.2 Population of the study

The researcher collected data at Catholic Secretariat one of the Christian organizations. The researcher targeted all the directorate such as Pastoral Commission, Social Development directorate and Finance, Investment and Administration directorate. The targeted population included both the managers and employees at Catholic Secretariat, a population of 55 employees. The demography included age, gender, years of working and job status. The respondents included the managers and employees working under the Catholic Secretariat.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

Three directorates under the Catholic Secretariat were part of the study. The research used probability sampling technique, in which participants were selected randomly. In probability sampling people, places or things are randomly selected. Each unit in the population has an equal chance of being included in the study (Tromp, 2012).



3.4 Sample size

The study targeted a sample of 27 respondents.

3.5 Sampling Area

The study was carried at Catholic Secretariat in Lilongwe city. Probability random sampling was used in this research. The research used purposive sampling. The researcher purposely targeted a group of people believed to be reliable for the study. This means using common sense and best judgment in choosing the right number of the correct people for the purpose of the study (Tromp, 2012). The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) is the permanent institution of the Bishops of Malawi. The ECM Catholic Secretariat is the national administrative, facilitative and coordinative arm through which the ECM implements and co-ordinates various pastoral programs at the national level and undertakes all those responsibilities which express the mission of the Catholic Church in Malawi.

It is composed of the Secretary General who is the Executive Officer of the Conference and the staff of the Secretariat comprising the National Secretaries of the Commissions and their assistants. The Catholic Secretariat was established in 1961 with approval of the Holy See, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) and is an assembly of eight Catholic Dioceses of Blantyre, Chikwawa, Dedza, Karonga, Lilongwe, Mangochi, Mzuzu and Zomba. The General Secretariat is in Lilongwe. The Catholic Secretariat has been in existence for sixty-two years.

3.6 Sources of Data Collection

Data collection refers to gathering specific information aimed at providing or refuting some facts (Tromp, 2012). This research used both primary and secondary data as sources of data. Primary sources were those that came into existence in the period under research. Secondary sources are interpretations of events of that period based on primary sources (Waters, 2014). Primary sources data was collected from respondents using questionnaires or interviews.

3.7 Methods of data collection

This research used qualitative data method. The researcher used questionnaires and interviews as instruments for collecting data.

3.8 Tools for Data Collection

Questionnaires and interviews were used as tools for data collection. The questionnaires were used to provide enough time to the respondents to answer the questions and provision of confidentiality. The interviews were done to other respondents and these open-ended questions. According to (Tromp, 2012)

closed questions give the respondents a set of choice or options. While open ended questions are free response type questions. These questions allowed the respondents to answer in their own words.

3.9 Tools for Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deductions and inferences (Tromp, 2012). Data collected in this research was analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. Where code and themes will be developed from the discussion. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying and analyzing and reporting patterns within data (Selvam, 2017). The researcher developed a coding system to simplify the work. Atlas.ti version 7.0 was used to code the data and used for all qualitative analysis. To get some quantitative insights, Microsoft excel was used to generate tables and graphs for specific variables of the data collection tool.

3.10 Limitations of the study.

Lack of adequate time since the researcher was also committed at work place. To balance the time between work and the research hasn't been easy. The researcher found it hard to collect data from respondents because the respondents had to respond to Cyclone Freddy which affected Malawi in March 2023.

IV. Findings of the Study

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interpretation of data from the findings of the research. The researcher was involved in the process of collecting data through interviews and questionnaires. This is putting the data into some systematic form. This organization includes identifying (and correcting) errors in the data, coding the data and storing it in appropriate form. On the other hand, analysis refers to examining the coded data critically and making inferences (Tromp, 2012). The researcher analyzed the data using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying and analyzing and reporting patterns within data (Selvam, 2017). The researcher will also develop a coding system to simplify the work. Atlas.ti version 7.0 was used to code the data and used for all qualitative analysis. To get some quantitative insights, Microsoft excel was used to generate tables and graphs for specific variables of the data collection tool.

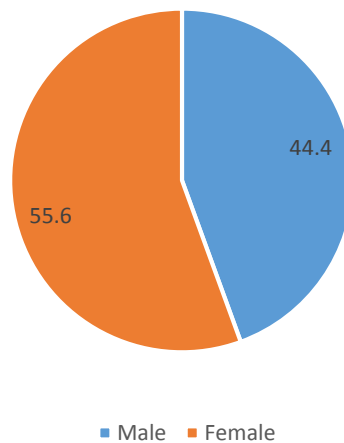
4.2 Respondents' Information

A total of 27 interviews were carried out for the research and the distribution by gender, though not



predetermined was dominated by females (55.6%) with their male counterparts at 44.4% as presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 *Distribution of respondents by gender*



4.3 Knowledge about Communication

The study assessed the level of awareness and understanding of communication among employees at the Catholic Secretariat, Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM). Overall, the results show that people have a good understanding, with varying depth, on the notion of communication from

an organizational perspective. While some described communication as one-way channel from sender to receiver, the majority of the interviewed staff recognized the two-way flow of information from one point to another with room for feedback. Some of the respondents were quoted as follows:

"Exchange and sharing of information that which helps people to connect with others and help us to know what is happening"

"Communication is the act of sending information through a prescribed medium."

"The exchange of messages between two or more people"

"It is the process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs and behavior is the act or a means of sending and receiving information from one party to another – Transfer and exchanging of information"

"It means sending and receiving information"

Box I: Quotations on definition of communication

There were some noted differences in the pattern of responses between senior and junior staff with the former describing communication from a more formal perspective and with a recognition of the two-way process. While the majority had recognition of the source and destination of

information through a communication medium, few – mostly junior staff only recognized the sending of information in the definition.

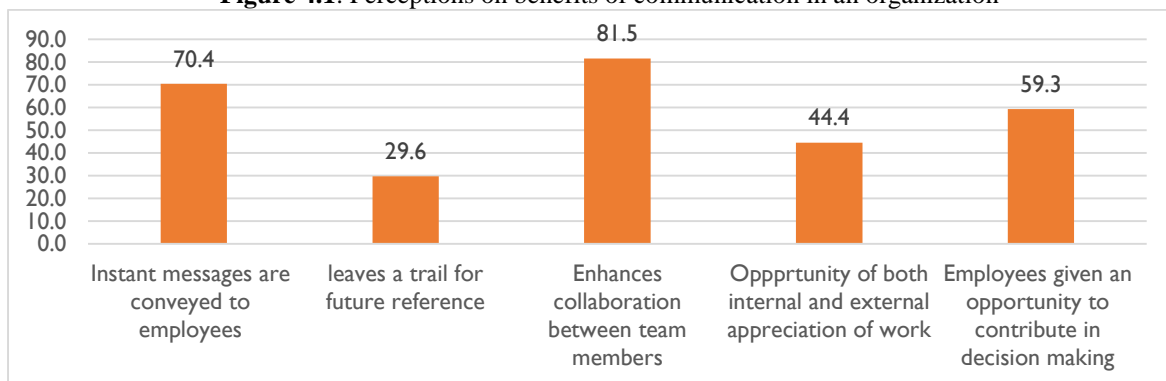


4.3 Value of information

The researcher was in recognition of the notion that information can be relayed to others when one assesses the value of doing so. Conversely, the receiver is likely to pay attention to communication received if they tend to associate some value in particular communications. The

perceptions on benefits of population were thus assessed. The majority of the respondents (81.5%, N=27) shared the view that communication enhances collaboration among employees or team members. A few (29.6%) expressed that communication is beneficial as it leaves a trail for reference in future. **Figure 4.2** presents the results.

Figure 4.1: Perceptions on benefits of communication in an organization



The results show that all respondents agreed that communication is important in an organization for its efficient operations and sharing of information with external partners. **Box2** shows some of the quotations.

"Exchange and sharing of information that which helps people to connect with others and help us to know what is happening"

"Communication allows for easy accessibility to information

"Employees given an opportunity to contribute in decision making which instils sense of ownership, and this is good in building trust in employees."

"Instant messages are conveyed to employees and people have a chance to ask questions through announcements"

"Clear and organized communication enhances collaboration between team members and increases efficiency in organizational operations."

Box 2: Quotations on benefits of information

4.4 Communication Channels

The study sought information on the channels that are used for the organization and when the various channels are used. The following channels were reported:

(i) **Verbal communication:** Verbal communication was reported in various forms including face to face engagements, voice phone calls and announcements in various platforms. The most common form of verbal communication reported was through announcements during daily

morning prayers. Face to face engagements were common among junior staff and between senior and junior staff when instructions are issued.

(ii) **Written communication:** Emails, MEMOs and notices on leaflets and notice boards were reported to be commonly used for most official communication on pertinent issues that require the attention of staff or when notifying on events.

(iii) **Social Media:** The organization has social media platforms that are used at various levels. An organizational WhatsApp group was established



where all members of staff that have access to smart phones are members. General information relating to staff is shared on this platform. Commissions or departments also have departmental level social platforms to share information that only concerns members of that particular department. Other social committees have equally established WhatsApp platforms to enhance specific information within the mandate of the particular committees. The organization also maintains other social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to promote awareness and inclusivity in information dissemination.

4.5 Information Flow at ECM

The study assessed how information flows within the organization. The results show that there are two streams of information flow i.e. Vertical and Horizontal.

(i) **Vertical** – As explained by the study participants, vertical information was that between senior and junior members of staff along the organizational hierarchy. It was reported that the flow is usually from the top management when senior members of staff issue instruction or relay important messages including executive decisions. Conversely, junior staff report to senior officers and management.

A common quote was as follows: "Information flows both horizontally and vertically. The horizontal approach entails the information is flowing up and down the organogram. The senior members of staff communicate to the junior members of staff while junior members of staff can also communicate to the senior members of staff. The information also flows vertically, where communication can be made in within the same section such is made."

The vertical flow is as illustrated in **figure 3**

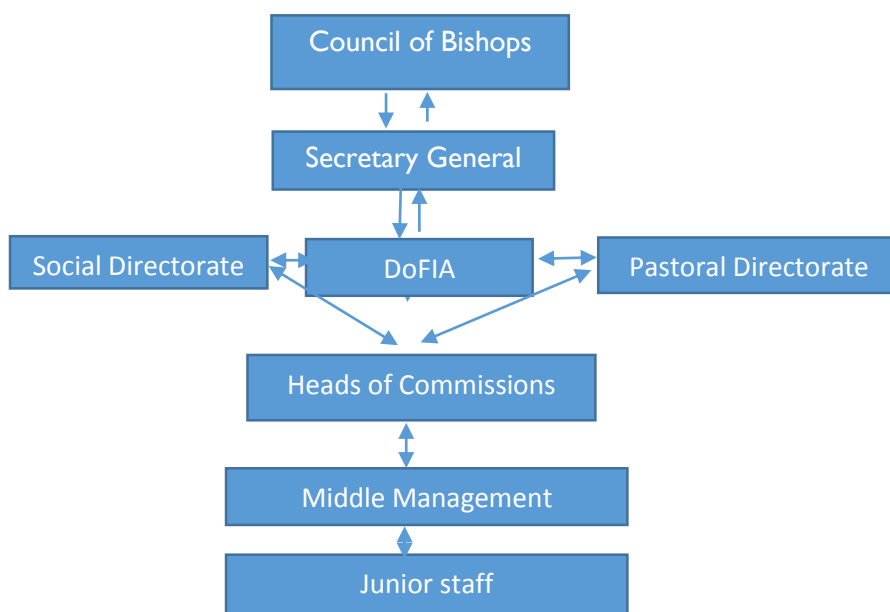


Figure 2: Vertical information flow

(ii) **Horizontal** – Information flow was described as horizontal when members within the same line of designation in the organizational hierarchy. The most common means was verbal, especially face to face among junior support staff.

Emails were also reported as one common means among middle management staff.

4.6 Other proposed communication channels

While appreciating the existing communication platforms, study respondents were asked if they could



propose other communication channels that could help make the system more effective. The following were suggested:

- **Enhanced telecommunications** – Intra-telecommunications using ground line was proposed to help improve efficiency in communication between officers as at present, reliance is on mobile phone which puts people that do not have at a disadvantage.
- **Provision of desk-tops for junior staff** – It was reported that provision of desk-tops to junior staff, including drivers, would help people document files beyond physical file copies.
- **Notice boards at department level**– information can be displayed of various activities of members within the same department and can act as a reminder of important information of field activities.

- **Increased frequency for staff meetings** – Regular staff meetings were proposed to help improve communication among members of staff at various levels.

4.7 Challenges of Communication

Challenges that members of staff encounter around communication in the organization were assessed to better understand how they impact the effectiveness of operations. All respondents echoed the opinion that the current communication channels face challenges. Communication delay was reported the most (77.8%) followed by non-willingness to share information with juniors (66.7%) and looking down on others (51.9%). Some of the respondents narrated that in some cases, information provided is not well unpacked for non-technical staff to understand. **Table 4.1** provides a summary of the main challenges reported.

Table 4.1: Main communication challenges faced

Challenge	#	%
Undigested information for non-technical staff	7	25.9
Delayed provision of information	21	77.8
Looking down on others	14	51.9
Lack of feedback	12	44.4
Non willingness to listen to juniors	18	66.7
Limited technological competence	11	40.7

Multiple response

Other challenges reported were quoted as follows:

"The institution is not catching up with technology and is characterized by Slow internet, some staff members that are non-conversant to email etiquette thus they are prone to no response, slow response and informal response"

"No proper communication structure. The department of communication is not active to facilitate communication processes."

"Most communication is done through WhatsApp which some members do not have access especially junior staff"

Box 3: Other communication challenges



4.7.1 Challenges affecting people most

As most challenges, it is inevitably likely that some challenge will tend to affect people more than other challenges. The research also assessed the perceptions on which challenges tend to affect people more in institutional communication practices. For most of the junior staff, the practice of looking down upon them as if they cannot contribute to the decision making processes or issues affecting the institution, affected them most. *“We are not told what is going to happen even when it affects us. When we are told, it usually delayed when some decisions have already*

been made.” One respondent lamented. For almost all staff, it was reported that not being chance to explain oneself in case of issues that arise from time with no room for dialogue at all is frustrating and affects future contributions. *“When people are not given chance to ask question or share their views, they suffer silently and this even affects how they perform in their various tasks.”* Another member of staff added.

Some of the respondents also mentioned the Christian nature of the institution as one of the challenges affecting the people as follows;

“The Christian nature affects the process of communication in the sense that some members are afraid to voice out and provide feedback to managers. They feel the managers do not provide a listening ear. There is no dialogue. They employees just do as instructed by the managers.

Box 4

4.7.2 Proposed solutions to the challenges

In view of the reported challenges, survey respondents were asked on what they would propose as solutions in mitigation of the challenges. A need to create room for feedback and dialogue was reported the most (92.6%) followed by conducting monthly technical meetings (85.2%) and promoting timely communication (81.5%). Some, mostly junior staff proposed the promotion of written and printed communication.

Table 4 2: Proposed solutions to challenges

Proposed Solutions	#	%
Training sessions of customer care, message procedure and switchboard	6	22.2
Promote timely communication	22	81.5
Promote written/printed information on upcoming events	12	44.4
Provide room for feedback and dialogue	25	92.6
Conduct monthly technical meetings	23	85.2
One to one dialogue sessions between managers and junior staff	17	63.0

Multiple response

4.8 Existing Communication Strategies

The research also assessed exiting communication strategies in place. Almost all the respondents apart from 3 of the 27, reported that they did not recognize any communication strategy in place to promote efficiency and effectiveness of communication within the organization. The noted existing strategies were as follows:

- (i) **Daily meetings/prayers** – It was reported that daily morning prayers are a form of a communication strategy that provides an opportunity for management and all members of staff to communicate on any pertinent issues.
- (ii) **Provision of airtime to staff** – Members of staff are provided with airtime on a monthly basis to facilitate communication processes among staff.

- (iii) **Departmental/commission level meetings** – Commission level meetings are carried out on regular basis for staff to discuss and share information that affects the department.

4.9 Proposed strategies

When engaged on what could be done better to improve communication in the organization, the following strategies were proposed:

- (i) **Developing a communication strategy** – The lack of a communication strategy for the commission was highlighted as one area that would help the institution improve on communication.
- (ii) **Provide regular training sessions for all members of staff on communication** – Besides a communication strategy, it was suggested that



members of staff should be trained on communication processes regularly to ensure that there is timely and quality information sharing.

(iii) **Procure a communications system** – It was pointed out that procurement of a communications system, including installation of intercoms, would help reduce movements between offices and thus was proposed as a strategy that should be adopted.

(iv) **Encourage open dialogue** – A deliberate policy to encourage dialogue among staff and between senior and junior staff was proposed as one way of promoting dialogue and feedback.

4.10 Interpretation of results

The interpretation of results is presented with a focus on the three specific objectives and research questions.

4.10.1 Communication concept

A section was provided to get to know if the employees had knowledge of the communication concept. It has been noted that all respondents have basic knowledge of communication. They expressed that the organization has an organogram, which it follows as a structure. Information moves from top to bottom as well as from bottom to top. It can also be expressed as a vertical and horizontal flow of information.

4.10.2 Communication Channels

According to the respondents, the organization uses multiple channels of communication. Some of the respondents indicated that multiple channels provide a chance for members to access information in the most inclusive manner possible. It was also noted that using multiple channels poses a challenge to some members of the organization. This is so because they are not able to differentiate which ones are official and which ones are unofficial.

Solutions were given for the organization to be more serious and specify its official communications. One respondent indicated that official communication should be through memos, official office emails, staff meetings, letters, notice boards, announcements, publications on the organization's websites, Catholic media houses, and social media channels. All respondents indicated these communication channels are used to pass on important information to the employees every day, both during working hours and off hours.

Verbal communication had the highest number of respondents. The respondents indicated that the organization uses verbal communication in the form of announcements and face-to-face interactions between managers and employees. These announcements are made during morning assembly

prayer meetings, where the staff members share information. But these announcements and face-to-face interactions do not provide a platform for feedback and dialogue.

Written communication is passed on using letters, emails, memos, and social media. Some respondents indicated that most communication is done through WhatsApp. The limitation was on the gadgets that are used to access information. The use of smart phones posed a challenge to the junior members.

The respondent indicated that for communication to be effective, the organization has to use official communication channels. This can enhance communication within and outside organizations. The organization should come up with official emails for staff members.

4.10.3 Challenges of communication

All respondents admitted that there are challenges in communication that affect effective communication in the organization. The respondents indicated that short notice, looking down on the others, no dialogue, no provision of feedback, and holding on to information by managers affect the employees work.

Solutions were provided, including that the managers should be good listeners. Platform for regular meetings, which can allow the employees to provide feedback. As well as respect for other people's opinions. One of the respondents indicated that "managers should be good listeners to employees and that there should be good working relationships between management and employees."

Some respondents indicated that "lack of knowledge and lack of communication skills bring conflict and misunderstandings among the employees." Which leads to a lack of trust and low morale among the workers.

The respondents also indicated that there is no grievance handling technique, which leaves people frustrated when there is a breakdown of communication.

4.10.4 Strategies to improve communication

According to the respondents of the research, it has been noted that 24 respondents out of 27 indicated that there are no strategies for effective communication. This means that the respondents are not able to recognize the strategies that can enhance effective communication. The respondents were given a chance to provide strategies to improve communication.

The respondents indicated that the organization should develop a communication



strategy. Another point that was suggested is to popularize communication policies. To help the employees understand the policy. The communication strategy was pointed out as one of the ways to improve effective communication.

The respondents also pointed out the importance of communication training by both the managers and the employees, which can assist the organization in improving communication. These training sessions and seminars, as indicated by the employees, will assist the people involved in sharing information quickly.

Regular meetings, which can assist the employees in interacting with the managers, are another area that was pointed out by the respondents. These meetings will provide room for dialogue and instant feedback from both parties.

Another important area was the procurement of a communications system. It was pointed out that procurement of a communications system, including the installation of intercoms, would help reduce movements between offices, and thus, this was proposed as a strategy that should be adopted.

V. Summary of Discussions and findings

This researcher concentrated much on the impact of effective communication in a Christian organization. According to the objectives of the study, the researcher was exploring the communication channels, communication challenges and strategies for effective communication. Hence, it has been discovered that the objectives of the study were achieved in researcher.

5.1 Objective one: To find out the channels of communication that are used for managers to communicate with subordinates.

It was discovered that the organization uses verbal and written communication. Verbal communication scored the highest in the results, in the form of announcements and face to face interactions between managers and employees. Written communication was in a form of emails, MEMOs, Social media (WhatsApp's), and letters. The respondents described the existence of multiple channels which affects the credibility of the information. The respondents mentioned that sometimes the information is distorted in the process and in the end causes misunderstandings and chaos. It has also been noted that the employees are to identify the official communication. They respondents indicated that there is no proper channel which they can identify as official and unofficial.

5.2 Objective two: To explore challenges that employees face due to lack of effective communication from management and supervisors

According to the findings of the research all the respondents of the research admitted that there are challenges in communication. All challenges were much similar from both the managers and the employees. They respondents admitted that there is delay by the managers in providing information to the juniors. Unwillingness by managers to listen to employees. Looking down on others. There is no dialogue between managers and employees. The use of technical language which affects the juniors in understanding the message conveyed to them. As well as limited technology.

5.3 Objective three: Suggest appropriate strategies that could lead to effective communication between managers and employees in a Christian organization.

The researcher provided room for the respondents to suggest appropriate strategies to enhance effective communication. The following areas were pointed out by the respondents such as provision of training sessions on communication, coming up with a communication strategy, timely communication, provision of feedback and dialogue, constant regular meetings and procurement of the communication system to enhance inter-communications.

5.4 Recommendations

The researcher found out that 24 respondents out of 27 admitted that there are no strategies for effective communication. It was discovered that most junior staff members are not given the opportunity to provide feedback. There is no dialogue between managers and employees, which affects the process of communication. The Majority of the respondents felt that the managers do not provide a platform where the employees can be heard. The highest score was on the delay by managers in providing important information, which usually comes out on short notice. The following recommendations were given by the researcher as an effort that could help to enhance communication at the work place:

- The organization has to develop a communication strategy and popularize the communication policy
- In order for communication to be effective the organization has to provide communication training to equip employees with skills and knowledge on effective communication.
- The organization has to provide a platform for dialogue between managers and employees



- Timely provision of important information to juniors is necessary and should be pursued
- The managers have to be good listeners
- The organization has to procure and install a communication system in order to enhance communication
- There has to be a culture of respect among all stakeholders despite the difference in the levels of education

5.5 Areas for Further Research

The researcher discovered that, despite employees having the basic knowledge of communication, they are unwilling to put what they know into practice. The level of knowledge about communication differed according to the level of education background. Those with a higher education background provided a handful of details on the concept of communication. But the results of the challenges gave the researcher another insight: most junior members complained about the managers holding on to important information. The information is delivered at a later stage and is received on short notice by the employees. There is room to discover why managers delay conveying important information to employees. There is also a need to discover why the Christian nature of an institution poses a challenge to other employees in an organization.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, managers with communication skills perform better in a Christian organization. The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of effective communication in a Christian organization. The research had three objectives, which the researcher was investigating: the channels of communication, the challenges of communication, and strategies for effective communication. The research followed the qualitative method. Interviews and questionnaires were used as instruments for collecting data. Qualitative data analysis was applied in the form of thematic analysis, which involved the coding system and reporting on the findings. AtlasTI software was used to analyze the data. A quantitative aspect was applied using Excel to come up with the tables, graphs, and figures. The three objectives of the research were met. The researcher recommends that organizations need to consider adopting effective and clear communication strategies. Constant communication training for both new and old employees will help in achieving this goal. There should be an open dialogue and room for feedback. Managers should also be good listeners. For all these

strategies to be applicable, a manager has to have communication skills in order to communicate effectively. This objective can be achieved through organizing regular communication skills trainings at the work place.

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