

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND PERFORMANCE OF SMES IN LAGOS STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined effective communication as a tool for enhancing SMEs performance in Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The result of the correlation and regression analysis revealed the existence of a positive and statistically significant relationship between timeliness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs ($p < 0.0005$). The result further showed the existence of a positive and statistically significant relationship between correctness aspect of effective communication and business performance ($p < 0.0005$). In addition, a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between specificity aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs ($p < 0.0005$); and a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between effective listening aspect of communication and performance of SMEs ($p < 0.0005$). The study recommended among others that management of the business organization should provide platforms that will improve timely communication among the different stakeholders in the organization.

Key words: Goal attainment, Operational efficiency, Effective communication, Timely information

JEL Classification: F16

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been acknowledged in the literature that communication undoubtedly remains a very crucial tool in carrying out our day-to-day activities (Okwuagwu, Nnoje, Onoh & Ikpezie, 2017). Communication is the human activity that connects people together and creates relationship. This implies that individuals relate with each other by means of communication. It is the glue that binds people together in

an organization. Everyone needs to communicate with people around to share experience, jobs, frustration, hopes and fears from childhood.

Tubs and Moss (2008) argue that communication is at the root of personal administration. It is the transaction and interpretation of information for the efficient operation of an enterprise.

Organizational communication can be described as the sending and receiving of messages among interrelated individuals within an environment or setting to achieve individual and common goals (Ganesh, 2012). Organizational communication is highly contextual and culturally dependent. Individuals in organizations transmit messages through face-to face, written, and mediated channels.

Organizational communication largely focuses on building relationships and interacting with internal organizational members and interested external publics. As Liu and Li (2017) explain, we have two ways of looking at organizational communication. The conventional approach focuses on communication within organizations. The second approach is communication as organization: meaning organizations are a result of the communication of those within them. Communication is not just about transmitting messages between senders and receivers. Communication literally constitutes, or makes up, our social world. Much of our communication involves sending and receiving relatively unproblematic messages and acting on that information.

Organizations seek people who can follow and give instructions, accurately listen, provide useful feedback, get along with colleagues and customers, network, provide serviceable information, work well in teams, and creatively and critically solve problems and present ideas in an understandable manner. Developing organizational communication awareness and effectiveness is more than just having know-how or knowledge. Efficient organizational communication involves knowing how to create and exchange information, work with diverse groups or individuals, communicate in complicated and changing circumstances, as well as having the aptitude or motivation to communicate in appropriate manners (Khabiqheya, 2017).

The importance of organizational communication is often considered in the timely and appropriate decision-making process. In large organizations, which do not have a direct and individual decision-making approach, it is important to use the appropriate communication system in such a way that all people use it appropriately. The communication, on the other hand, is a tool for implementing the organization's basic strategies and approaches. Identifying the organization's perspectives, organizational priorities for employees and motivating them is a prerequisite for the effective implementation of the organization's strategies and plans, which none of them can be developed without designing the appropriate communication mechanism between the organization and the employees as the

main organizational assets. This highlights the role of communication as an essential component of a business mix (Ndubuka, 2014).

In recent years, communication has been tipped as a management function because of its growing importance in large organization and also because it has been realized that communication is not forced but to be learnt to enhance performance of every organization (Okwuagwu et al., 2017).

Communication in the organization is so important that the first and most important task of any manager in the organization is the issue of communication system. Therefore, communication is an important skill and a necessary basis for efficient management through which managers establish and maintain relationships that are essential for the daily routine of their employees. Communication allows employees at all levels in the organization to interact with each other, to achieve the desired goals and to support the organization's formal structure. At the organizational level, communication also creates cohesion between the various components and helps the organization to empower and advance its missions and ultimately improve organizational performance (Norbin et al., 2011).

Effective performance management is essential to businesses, through both formal and informal processes. It helps them align their employees, resources, and systems to meet their strategic objectives. It works as a dashboard too, providing an early warning of potential problems and allowing managers to know when they must make adjustments to keep a business on track (Carpi, Douglas & Gascon, 2017).

Business performance will be greatly hampered where there is lack of effective communication in an organization. Specifically, lack of effective communication can result in low level of workers commitment; workers will be lackadaisical in carrying out their various activities, in doing that, organizational goal attainment will be threatened. It is pertinent to say also that breakdown in communication will affect the performance of an organization. Similarly, many organizations in Nigeria have been faced with an array of problems that seem to be an impediment to their growth. These include mismanagement of funds and resources, poor leadership skills, low level of real income, and poor infrastructural facilities to mention but a few (Ndubuka, 2014).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In business organizations, there are three major levels of management. These include top level management, middle level management, and lower level management (Ganesh, 2012). According to Ganesh (2012), the top-level management formulates policies, programmes and strategies that need enough quantity of data and information. As a result of this, the top-level management needs effective communication to achieve the goals of the organization. Similarly, middle level management formulates mid-term strategies and programs which also

need information and data. Consequently, at the middle level management, effective communication is required for a successful organization. Lastly, the lower level management formulates the programmes and strategies for the day-to-day operations of the organization, thus, at this level, an effective communication is essential. However, in most businesses effective communication is lacking among these various levels of management, and this affects business performance.

Furthermore, communication involves the transference and the understanding of meaning among members of any group (Okwuagwu, Nnoje, Onoh & Ikpezie, 2017). Black (2010) point out that effective communication is when stakeholders are timely communicated with the correct and relevant information and additionally if that is done in a cost-effective manner. They also notice that communication should be simple and duplicable and that asking for feedback is a crucial method of finding out how our message was received.

Muszyńska (2018) observes that communication can only be considered effective if the exact information sent is also understood by the receiver at the appropriate time. Nevertheless, in trying to enhance organization performance through effective communication, Okwuagwu et al. (2017) identified the existence of several limiting factors. These limiting factors have the likelihood of hampering business productivity and performance. Thus, the question as to how timeliness, correctness, specificity, and effective listening aspects of effective communication affect business performance of SMEs needs to be examined.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 SOURCES OF DATA

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews with respondents. The questionnaires were administered to collect data related to the topic and objectives of the study. Before going to the field, these instruments were pretested amongst some selected friends in the study area to ensure its relevance and understanding of respondents. A feedback of the pre-testing enabled a review of the questionnaire and interview guides to ensure that it captured the relevant questions needed to answer the research question.

3.2 MODEL SPECIFICATION

The general and specifics model equation for the current study are as follows:

$$BR_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1TA_{it} + \beta_2CA_{it} + \beta_3SA_{it} + \beta_4EL_{it} + \mathcal{E}_{it} \dots\dots\dots(\text{General model})$$

$$GA_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1TA_{it} + \beta_2CA_{it} + \beta_3SA_{it} + \beta_4EL_{it} + \mathcal{E}_{it} \dots\dots\dots(i)$$

$$OE_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1TA_{it} + \beta_2CA_{it} + \beta_3SA_{it} + \beta_4EL_{it} + \mathcal{E}_{it} \dots\dots\dots(ii)$$

Where:

- BR_{it} = Business Performance
- GA_{it} = Goal Attainment
- OE_{it} = Operational Efficiency
- TA_{it} = Timeliness Aspect of Effective Communication
- CA_{it} = Correctness Aspect of Effective Communication
- SA_{it} = Specificity Aspect of Effective Communication
- EL_{it} = Effective Listening Aspect of Communication
- β_0 = Intercept,
- $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = Slope of the coefficients,
- ε_{it} = Error term.

3.3 TEST OF HYPOTHESES

3.3.1 TESTING HYPOTHESIS ONE

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between timeliness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs.

Table 1: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.911 ^a	.830	.829	.31691	.166

a. Predictors: (Constant), Timeliness b. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author’s Computation, 2021

Table 1 shows the value of ‘R’ (which represents the simple correlation) to be 91.1 percent, meaning that there is a strong relationship between timeliness aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs. The value of ‘R Square’ stands at 83 percent, meaning that 83 percent of the total variation in goal attainment can be explained by timeliness aspect of effective communication.

Table 2: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	51.635	1	51.635	514.138	.000 ^b
	Residual	10.545	105	.100		
	Total	62.181	106			

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment b. Predictors: (Constant), Timeliness

Source: Author’s Computation, 2021

Table 2 shows that the regression model predicts goal attainment (the dependent variable) significantly well. Here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between timeliness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs” is rejected.

Table 3: Coefficients^a

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.024	.224		.107	.915
	Timeliness	.950	.042	.911	22.675	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Furthermore, table 3 presents the Coefficient values which provides us with the necessary information to predict goal attainment from timeliness aspect of effective communication, as well as determine whether timeliness aspect of effective communication contributes statistically significantly to the model. Again, here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between timeliness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs” is rejected. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that there is a significant relationship between timeliness aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs.

Table 4: Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2.1137	5.7232	5.0592	.69794	107
Residual	-.58337	.55999	.00000	.31541	107
Std. Predicted Value	-4.220	.951	.000	1.000	107
Std. Residual	-1.841	1.767	.000	.995	107

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Table 4 present the residual statistics (minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation) of the variables under consideration.

3.3.2 TESTING HYPOTHESIS TWO

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between correctness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs.

Table 5: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.936 ^a	.876	.875	.27124	1.86

a. Predictors: (Constant), Correctness b. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Table 5 shows the value of ‘R’ (which represents the simple correlation) to be 93.6 percent, meaning that there is a strong relationship between correctness

aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs. The value of ‘R Square stands at 87.6 percent, meaning that 87.6 percent of the total variation in goal attainment can be explained by correctness aspect of effective communication.

Table 6: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54.456	1	54.456	740.204	.000 ^b
	Residual	7.725	105	1.074		
	Total	62.181	106			

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment b. Predictors: (Constant), Correctness
 Source: Author’s Computation, 2021

Table 6 shows that the regression model predicts goal attainment (the dependent variable) significantly well. Here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between correctness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs” is rejected.

Table 7: Coefficients^a

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.486	.170		2.857	.005
	Correctness	.861	.032	.936	27.207	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment
 Source: Author’s Computation, 2021

Furthermore, Table 7 presents the Coefficient values which provide us with the necessary information to predict goal attainment from correctness aspect of effective communication, as well as determine whether correctness aspect of effective communication contributes statistically significantly to the model. Again, here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between correctness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs” is rejected. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that there is a significant relationship between correctness aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs.

Table 8: Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.6908	5.6495	5.0592	.71675	107
Residual	-.45562	.43767	.00000	.26995	107
Std. Predicted Value	-4.699	.824	.000	1.000	107
Std. Residual	-1.680	1.614	.000	.995	107

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author’s Computation, 2021

Table 8 presents the residual statistics (minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation) of the variables under consideration.

3.3.3. TESTING HYPOTHESIS THREE

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between specificity aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs.

Table 9: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.959 ^a	.920	.920	.21710	.342

a. Predictors: (Constant), Specificity b. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author’s Computation, 2021

Table 9 shows the value of ‘R’ (which represents the simple correlation) to be 95.9 percent, meaning that there is a strong relationship between specificity aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs. The value of ‘R Square’ stands at 92 percent, meaning that 92 percent of the total variation in goal attainment can be explained by specificity aspect of effective communication.

Table 10: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	57.232	1	57.232	1214.249	.000 ^b
	Residual	4.949	105	.047		
	Total	62.181	106			

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment b. Predictors: (Constant), Specificity

Source: Author’s Computation, 2021

Table 10 shows that the regression model predicts goal attainment (the dependent variable) significantly well. Here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between specificity aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs” is rejected.

Table 11: Coefficients^a

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.849	.123		6.926	.000
	Specificity	.834	.024	.959	34.846	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Furthermore, Table 11 presents the Coefficient values which provide us with the necessary information to predict goal attainment from specificity aspect of effective communication, as well as determine whether specificity aspect of effective communication contributes statistically significantly to the model. Again, here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between specificity aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs” is rejected. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that there is a significant relationship between specificity aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs.

Table 12: Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2.3514	5.8562	5.0592	.73479	107
Residual	-.68471	.31343	.00000	.21608	107
Std. Predicted Value	-3.685	1.085	.000	1.000	107
Std. Residual	-3.154	1.444	.000	.995	107

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Table 12 presents the residual statistics (minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation) of the variables under consideration.

3.3.4. TESTING HYPOTHESIS FOUR

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between effective listening aspect of communication and performance of SMEs.

Table 13: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.910 ^a	.829	.827	.31853	.167

a. Predictors: (Constant), Effective Listening b. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Table 13 shows the value of ‘R’ (which represents the simple correlation) to be 91 percent, meaning that there is a strong relationship between effective listening aspect of communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs. The value of ‘R Square stands at 82.9 percent, meaning that 82.9 percent of the total variation in goal attainment can be explained by effective listening aspect of effective communication.

Table 14: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	51.527	1	51.527	507.844	.000 ^b
	Residual	10.654	105	1.101		
	Total	62.181	106			

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment b. Predictors: (Constant), Effective Listening

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Table 14 shows that the regression model predicts goal attainment (the dependent variable) significantly well. Here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between effective listening aspect of communication and performance of SMEs” is rejected.

Table 15: Coefficients^a

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.289	.239		-1.209	.229
Effective Listening	1.015	.045	.910	22.535	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Furthermore, Table 15 presents the Coefficient values which provide us with the necessary information to predict goal attainment from effective listening aspect of communication, as well as determine whether effective listening aspect of communication contributes statistically significantly to the model. Again, here, $p < 0.0005$, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between specificity aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs” is rejected. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that there is a significant relationship between effective listening aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs.

Table 16: Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2.5528	5.8010	5.0592	.69721	107
Residual	-.88615	.54736	.00000	.31703	107
Std. Predicted Value	-3.595	1.064	.000	1.000	107
Std. Residual	-2.782	1.718	.000	.995	107

a. Dependent Variable: Goal Attainment

Source: Author's Computation, 2021

Table 16 presents the residual statistics (minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation) of the variables under consideration.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the first hypothesis tested revealed that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between timeliness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs. This connotes that when communication is carried out on time, it helps the entire organization in achieving its overall objectives. This result is consistent with the one reported by Bery et al. (2015) in the study that explored the effect of employee communication on organization performance in Kenya's horticultural sector. This result remains consistent even when the measure of business performance changes. Specifically, the study provides empirical evidence to show that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between timeliness aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs. It further established that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between timeliness aspect of effective communication and operational efficiency as a measure of performance of SMEs. Thus, it does not matter how performance of SMEs is measured, it remains constant that timeliness aspect of effective communication enhances performance of SMEs. Therefore, the significance of always sending important official information to those concerned on time, and that of promptly responding to official inquiries and requests whenever such information is received cannot be overstressed as it affects performance of SMEs.

Similarly, the result of the second hypothesis reveals that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between correctness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs. This result is in alignment with the one reported by Nebo et al. (2015) in a study which examined the role of effective communication on organizational performance, of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This shows the importance of communicating correctly among the stakeholders of the organization. Mistakes in spellings, use of ambiguous words will certainly hamper effective communication. Instead, staff members are expected to use short, easy-to-understand words rather than long, obscure words whenever possible. In addition, the need to use dictionary to check for the meaning of difficult words in official communication becomes very important. The result of the relationship between correctness aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs remains consistent even when different measures of performance of SMEs are utilized. Specifically, this study shows that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between correctness aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs. It also shows that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between correctness aspect of effective communication and operational efficiency as a measure of performance of SMEs.

Furthermore, the result of the third hypothesis reveals that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between specificity aspect of effective communication and performance of SMEs. This result is in consonance with the

one reported by Abdussamad (2016) in a study with the main objective of looking at the impact of effective communication on organizational performance. Specifically, the result of this study indicates that effective communication is enhanced if a communication plan is developed for Departments and units within an organization to avoid inconsistency, chaos, and omissions. It also shows that to enhance effective communication, one should avoid using terms and phrases that could mean different things when communicating with other people. Thus, effective communication is facilitated by being specific in our conversations and messages to others. The result of this study remains consistent even when different business performance measured is employed. Specifically, the study provides empirical evidence that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between specificity aspect of effective communication and goal attainment as a measure of performance of SMEs. Similarly, a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between specificity aspect of effective communication and operational efficiency as a measure of performance of SMEs.

The result of the fourth hypothesis indicates that a positive and statistically significant relationship exists between effective listening aspect of communication and performance of SMEs. This result is in harmony with the one reported by Zabihullah and Ataullah (2019) in a study on effective communication as a strategy for enhancing organizational performance and the research was conducted on private universities of Jalalabad City.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings of the study, and in order to promote better performance of SMEs, the following recommendations are proffered:

- i. Management of business organization should provide platforms that will improve timely communication among the different stakeholders in the organization.
- ii. Management should further put machinery in place to ensure that information is disseminated correctly among the various participants within and outside the organization.
- iii. Organizational stakeholders should endeavor to be more specific whenever information is being communicated to other parties within and outside the organizations.
- iv. All parties in the organization should practice effective listening especially whenever someone is communicating with them verbally.

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