



## Effective Communication and Staff Commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali - Rwanda: An Experimental Study

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between Effective Communication and Staff Commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali - Rwanda. A cross-sectional survey design was used with the target sample size of 97 out of 130 parent population. The total number of questionnaires that were filled and returned was 78, giving a high response rate of 80.5 percent. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the population, the researchers used stratified sampling and random sampling. Descriptive analysis involving frequencies, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for inferential statistics were carried out. The correlation between the two variables was weak at 0.355, and significant at 0.001 value. The results were linearly correlated and this implied that Effective Communication is positively correlated with staff commitment; whenever employers are effective in communication, staff are likely to be more committed and vice versa.

**Keywords:** Effective Communication and Staff Commitment.

### Introduction

The study aimed at investigating the relationship between Effective Communication and Staff Commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali - Rwanda. This chapter presents the background, problem statement, purpose, objectives, research questions, hypotheses, scope and the significance of the study.

The background is broken into four perspectives, namely; the historical, theoretical, conceptual and contextual perspectives.

### Historical Perspective

The Government of Rwanda has various objectives that act as the point foci in its policy formulation and implementation. Among these is one of devising and implanting policies that promote the welfare of all its citizens. It was in pursuit of this objective that the School of Finance and Banking (SFB), a public institution of higher learning, was established in June 2002 and took up its training mandate in 2004, offering Masters in Business Administration (MBA), with specializations in Banking, Finance, Project Management and ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) programme, a professional course in accountancy. In addition, tailor-made short-courses and professional programmes were designed in various management disciplines to meet the changing needs of business leaders and managers. In 2005, a Cabinet meeting decided that the Management Faculty that was part of Kigali Institute of Technology (KIST) was to be transferred to the School of Finance and Banking (SFB) with effect from January 2006. Therefore, in addition to Master of Business Administration (MBA), SFB started offering Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programme in Accounting, Finance, Human Resources Management and Marketing specializations. Today, various undergraduate programmes and short- courses are being implemented to cater for the needs of Rwandan and regional labor market so as to transform the SFB into an international business school.

According to National Council for Higher Education of Rwanda (NCHE, 2010) report on public higher institutions, School of Finance and Banking was among the leading institutions where staff commitment was reported to be low, this situation was worse during 2008 & 2009 academic years.

### Theoretical Perspective

Since time immemorial, effective communication as an aspect of leadership has been based on numerous theories that have been categorized into historically distinct approaches that focus either on traits, behaviors, situational contingencies and transformational leadership. These theories attempt to simulate reality and thereby show interrelationship of the various factors that are perceived to be involved in communication as an aspect of leadership process which takes place between leaders and followers (Woodcock, 2010). The study was guided by perceived organizational support theory (POS). The theory encompasses the degree to which employees believe that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2002). According to Eisenberger & Rhoades (2002), this theory holds that in order to meet socio emotional needs and to assess the benefits of increased work effort, employees develop beliefs of perceived organizational and perceived supervisor support. Due to the norm of reciprocity, this support makes the employee feel obligated to exhibit beneficial organizational commitment; all these are realized through effective communication. Additionally, research has shown collectivism to be an individual level trait (Woodcock, 2010). Collective individuals are more group oriented and therefore, more committed to social groups. In short, POS theory arouses employees' sense of obligation to help organizations to reach objectives, enhancing employees' emotional commitments to organizations, and make employees dedicate to organizations willingly. In this study, the researcher examined the extent to which perceived organizational support relates with employee commitment

in an attempt to identify a mechanism by which, effective communication as an aspect of leadership exerts its effect on staff commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali.

### **Conceptual Perspective**

Conceptually, effective communication as an aspect of leadership is one of the world's oldest and most topical issues. Researchers usually define leadership according to their individual perspectives and the aspects of the phenomenon of most interest to them. Gerber, Nel & van Dyk (1996), for example, define leadership as an interpersonal process through which a leader directs the activities of individuals or groups towards the purposeful pursuance of given objectives within a particular situation by means of communication. Gardner (1990) & Vecchio (1997) describe leadership as the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation. In this study, leadership practices were used to refer to the process of guiding the behavior of others towards the goals of an organization and these included effective communication, which form the particular concern of the study, hence, the conceptualization of the variable.

The study adopted Caldwell's (1993) definition of communication in which he defines the concept as one in which information is widely-dispersed and there are uninhibited flows of communication up, down and across the organization. The researcher hypothesized that information provided to employees which is narrow in scope, restricted to the task at hand, or disjointed and unrelated does not assist in the promotion of commitment to the staff. On the other hand, communication which is open, interactive, persuasive, coordinated, and integrated is much more likely to promote staff commitment.

With regard to commitment, Pfeffer (1998) looks at this concept as the social and psychological processes whereby members of an organization develop and maintain an attachment to the organization. In other words, commitment occurs when the interests of an individual merge with the interests of an organization, resulting into creation of identifications, based on those interests. This study however adopted Meyer and Allen's (1991) conceptualization of commitment as a form of psychological attachment to an employing organization. While it is imperative that efforts are made to elicit staff commitment, it is equally imperative that the leaders of education institutions demonstrate the practices necessary to be successful leaders, specifically, through effective communication.

### **Contextual Perspective**

Although many institutions claim that their employees are their greatest asset and agents of their success, the notion of staff commitment is often overlooked, yet it is of great importance to organizational functioning. Given the fact that institutional leaders usually work in unpredictable situations where they often experience stress and frustrations, the question is what factors prevent their employees from being committed to the goals and values of their organizations. In many developing countries, Rwanda making no exception, initiatives for improving education systems have often been short-lived. Individuals implementing such initiatives seem to lack an understanding of effective leadership practices, including, effective communication, ultimately resulting in lack of commitment from subordinates. According to NCHE for Rwanda (2010) report on public higher institutions, School of Finance and Banking was among the leading institutions where staff commitment reported to be low. This situation was worse during 2008 & 2009 academic years. A study by Public Service Commission (2010) found that 68 percent of public sector employee had changed institutions more than once between 2008 & 2009. One of the main causes of low staff commitment was poor management of human resources, according to this report.

It is believed that leaders must, among other things, put in place adequate mechanisms of communication, as a way of empowering their subordinates for commitment to occur. This study aimed at determining the extent to which effective communication affect staff commitment in the SFB since no study had been conducted in Rwanda, with particular reference to the SFB, to find out whether effective communication has an influence on staff commitment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Like other organizations, educational institutions have long recognized human capital as a competitive advantage for their effectiveness. Where there is effective communication amongst these most critical organization resource, there are usually commitment of the staff, which leads to an effective organization with high level of output. In interaction with some members of staff, the researchers have noted with concern that most of the employees are not committed to their work with many of them expressing a strong desire to leave if they happen to get employment elsewhere, claiming that they stand nothing to lose if they left the school and demonstrating low signs of commitment to the school and many other expressions of discontent. In corroboration, according to NCHE (2010) report on public higher institutions, School of Finance and Banking was among the leading institutions where staff commitment was reported to be low, this situation was worse during 2008 and 2009 academic years. To date, no empirical study has been conducted to find out the factors that explain the above phenomenon, but the researchers suspect effective communication as an aspect of leadership practice, to exert a significant influence in accounting for low staff commitment. Accordingly, this posed the need to inquire about the relationship between effective communication, as an aspect of leadership practice and employee commitment in the School of Finance and Banking, Kigali in order to deal effectively with the problem.

### **Specific Objectives**

To establish the relationship between effective communication and staff commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali

### **Scope**

Geographically, the study was carried out in the School of Finance and Banking which is one of the higher public institutions in Rwanda. It was legally established under School of Finance and Banking statute law No. 21/2002. It is

located at Mburabuturo in central Kigali City in Kicukiro District. The content scope of the study focused on effective communication, as an aspect of leadership practices and staff commitment in the study arena.

## Conceptual Framework

The researchers conceptualize the independent variable (IV) as effective communication, which is a leadership practice, while the dependent variable (DV) is staff commitment. The researchers postulate that in organizations where there is effective communication, the level of staff commitment to their jobs is likely to be high and vice-versa. The extraneous variables that are likely to compete with the independent variable to explain the dependent variable include level of funding and remuneration; the researchers ensured they are held constant as a way of controlling their influence in explaining the variability on the dependent variable.

## Methodology

This section highlights the research design, target population, sample and sampling techniques that were used in the study. The section also presents the instruments used in data collection, quality control techniques, research procedure and analysis of data by various appropriate techniques.

The research adopted a cross sectional survey design. The rationale for this choice was to enable the researchers to collect a lot of information from a number of respondents at one point in time and its results to be generalized to a larger population within defined boundaries (Amin, 2005) and the use of both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms were to allow methodological triangulation to enrich the findings with more credibility. The study population composed of both the 70 teaching and the 60 non-teaching staff of the School of Finance and Banking, all together totalling 130 employees.

From the parent population of 130, a sample of size of 97 was chosen as determined by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), as cited by Amin (2005). However, the total number of questionnaires that were completely filled and returned was 78 respondents which gave a highly satisfactory response rate of 80.5 percent. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the population, the researchers used stratified random sampling where from each sub population, a proportionate sample was obtained in order to ensure that all groups had fair representation in the study. Random sampling was then used because of the advantage it has in avoiding bias in that, each member in the target population has an equal opportunity of being chosen (Amin, 2005).

The researchers used both primary and secondary methods of data collection. For the case of primary methods of data collection, field data was collected with the help of a self-administered questionnaires and an interview as explained in the following paragraph.

Questionnaire was used in collecting data pertaining to the objectives of the study. The literature review revealed that for most of the organization commitment, researchers have used questionnaires as an instrument of data collection. For this study, the questionnaire survey was selected because it was specifically developed to reach several respondents at the same time. This made it ideal to explore the correlation between effective communication as a leadership practice and staff commitment in an academic setting. The questionnaire included items that elicited information on effective communication. Similarly, items on the dependent variable (staff commitment) were formulated. Specifically, this research used a closed-ended questionnaire, based on a five point Likert scale responses that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with codes ranging from 1 to 5. Subsequently, overall scores for each respondent were computed from the results of the raw data by obtaining the average of all valid responses intended to obtain each respondent's opinion in relation to the independent variables and the dependent variable. The closed-ended questionnaire was particularly preferred because they are easy to quantify and analyze (Amin, 2005).

The researchers also carried out interviews with some administrators of the SFB. According to Trochim (1996) interviews are useful in data collection because they contain probing questions that allow flexibility in asking and obtaining in-depth information from respondents. This allowed the researchers to triangulate the quantitative findings of the staff with the qualitative data from the administrators.

For the secondary data, the study begun with a review of relevant literature sources that were published in the same field such as research reports, journals and other relevant library materials. Data quality was ensured by checking the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

Critical validation of the instrument was also done by the experts who rated the degree to which the instrument actually measures the traits for which it was designed to measure as recommended by Amin, 2005, following the study objectives. The researchers then computed the validity coefficient using the Content Validity Index (CVI). This was established by the proportion of number of items declared valid over the total number of items. The CVI of 0.7 indicated that the instrument was valid since it was not below the minimum recommended value of 0.7 (Amin 2005).

The reliability coefficient was computed using Cronbach's alpha formula coefficient. This was done in order to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. This method was deemed appropriate because most of the items in the questionnaire were closed ended and since Cronbach's alpha coefficient gives the average correlation of all items in the questionnaire, the researcher considered it more suitable to compute the overall reliability of the instrument. Table 1 presents a summary of the reliability coefficient.

**Table 1 summary of the reliability coefficient**

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.894	36

From Table 1, the average correlation between the items in the questionnaire was .894 which was above 0.7, the normal degree for accepting reliability of instruments (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), implying that the questionnaire was reliable for use in data collection.

Permission to carry out the research was obtained from relevant Officials of the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali. Data was collected, coded and entered into computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive analysis was done involving the presentation of findings in form of frequency tables with their respective percentages. Inferential analysis involved the use of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. For qualitative data, the researchers used a critical assessment of each response, examining it using thematic interpretation in accordance with the study objectives. These were presented qualitatively in form of quotations.

## Results

In this research, the contention of the researchers was that in organizations where effective communication is the norm, commitment of the staff is likely to be higher. As such, statements were formulated in the questionnaire on which participants were independently asked to rate the communication aspects used by the institution. These responses were based on a five-point Likert scale on which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each of the items. The responses to these statements provided a basis on which the researchers rated the way communication was perceived by institutional staff which were later correlated with the responses on the level of commitment among the staff. Table 2 presents the frequency counts of respondents' opinions as regards effective communication as well as their corresponding percentages.

**Table 2 Responses on effective communication**

		Frequency	Percent
I always receive supportive communications with immediate supervisor & upper management	Strongly disagree	2	2.6%
	Disagree	10	12.8%
	Neutral	20	25.6%
	Agree	38	48.7%
	Strongly agree	8	10.3%
I have a free exchange of ideas & views affecting the employees & the institution	Strongly disagree	2	2.6%
	Disagree	26	33.3%
	Neutral	26	33.3%
	Agree	18	23.1%
	Strongly agree	6	7.7%
I am regularly provided with feedback from the meetings	Strongly disagree	8	10.4%
	Disagree	24	31.2%
	Neutral	14	18.2%
	Agree	28	36.4%
	Strongly agree	3	3.9%
I always hold meeting with my boss to discuss my duties & responsibilities	Strongly disagree	7	9.0%
	Disagree	10	12.8%
	Neutral	19	24.4%
	Agree	33	42.3%
	Strongly agree	9	11.5%
I always get feedback from supervisors	Strongly disagree	3	3.9%
	Disagree	19	25.0%
	Neutral	19	25.0%
	Agree	28	36.8%
	Strongly agree	7	9.2%
Communication in the institution helps employees to develop greater trust for their bosses	strongly disagree	4	5.3%
	Disagree	8	10.5%
	Neutral	19	25.0%
	Agree	27	35.5%
	Strongly agree	18	23.7%
My leader/ supervisor is good at negotiating with his subordinates	Strongly disagree	6	7.8%
	Disagree	16	20.8%
	Neutral	20	26.0%
	Agree	32	41.6%
	Strongly agree	3	3.9%
I am given regular, accurate information about my job	Strongly disagree	2	2.7%
	Disagree	13	17.6%
	Neutral	16	21.6%
	Agree	34	45.9%
	Strongly agree	9	12.2%

In relation to how the staff of the School of Finance and Banking perceived effective communication, the frequency counts show some of the major areas in which communication was favourably or unfavourably rated or where respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Specifically, most of the staff indicated that they always received supportive communications with their immediate supervisors and management. This was reported by a total of 46 (59.0%) participant who agreed 38 (48.7%) and strongly agreed 8 (10.3%). However, notwithstanding the above revelation, the information received hardly/rarely involved a free exchange of ideas and views that affected the employees and the institution. This indicates that according to 28 (35.1%) respondents, the communication was mainly directives from the supervisors with little or no input of the subordinates which factor is not healthy for the well-being of the institution because if the staff are not involved, they may feel sidelined in making institutional programmes which factor may lead to a loss of commitment.

Relatedly, although feedback from the meetings are important as a way of keeping employees abreast with the operations of the institutions, some respondents totaling 32 (41.6%) pointed out that they were not regularly provided with this feedback although a look at the findings indicates that almost the same number were regularly provided with the feedback as indicated by 31 (40.3%) of the respondents. The different ways in which feedback was provided to subordinates included:

Through “*written communication, meeting arrangements or mails or text messages on their phones or through meetings and office notes*” as revealed by Interviewees from Academic services unit, Finance unit and Students’ affair unit.

In the same Table 2, the findings revealed that meetings were always held to discuss the duties and responsibilities of subordinates and in view of this revelation, most of the staff maintained that this communication goes a long way in helping employees to develop greater trust for their bosses. This is further demonstrated by among others, supervisors skills at negotiating with their subordinates together with regular provision of accurate information about their staff, which all play a vital role in enhancing, not only trust, but also helpful in relation to enhancing employee commitment in an organization and in this context, the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali. This assertion is verified using a Pearson correlation coefficient summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3: Correlation between effective communication and staff commitment**

		Effective communication	
		Staff Commitment	
Effective communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.355(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	78	78
Staff Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.355(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	78	78

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the results of the correlation between the responses on effective communication and those on staff commitment. Computed from a sample of 78 respondents, the value of the correlation for the two variables was equal to 0.355. Since this value was positive, the findings imply that in instances where the staff perceived communication as being effective, there was also likelihood for them to respond favorably on items relating to employee commitment. The sig. value for this correlation was given at 0.001 which was less than 0.01. This indicates that effective communication is significantly correlated with staff commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali. The results therefore suggest that the level of staff commitment is significantly correlated with how the staff perceive communication. In other words, whenever communication channels are perceived as being effective the staffs are likely to be committed to the organizations they work for than when they are unfavorably perceived, hence, a linear correlation exists between the independent and the dependent study variables.

## Discussion

This section entails the discussion of the findings in relation to the research objectives that guided this study. The literature reviewed have been used to discuss the findings of this study to show the gaps that this study has filled. Following the discussion are the conclusions and recommendations.

The objective of this study was to find out the relationship between effective communication and staff commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali. The inferential statistics given by the Pearson Correlation coefficient revealed that the two variables are positively correlated. This suggests that if the SFB wants to foster greater commitment from its staff, must first provide evidence of effective communication to their employees. However, considering the significant relationship between effective communication and staff commitment in the SFB with the rate of this correlation that equal 0.355, the findings indicate that the relation between these two variables is not so intense. This implies that there are other factors which affect staff commitment and this points to the directions in which future researches should take, much as effective communication has its share in staff commitment.

With regard to the significant correlation between effective communication and staff commitment, the findings corroborate with most of the recent empirical studies such as Putti, et al (1990) who explored the impact of communication on organizational commitment and the analysis of the results showed a positive relationship between communication and organizational commitment. It is also in tandem with the finding of Potvin (1991) who as well established a definite positive relationship between communication satisfaction and employees' organizational commitment. Similarly, the results match with Varona's (1996) findings whose research showed an explicit positive relationship between communication satisfaction and employees' organizational commitment. Therefore, in addition to

other factors that were beyond the scope of this research, the valuable benefits of employee commitment can be achieved through high levels of effective leader communication. Accordingly, it is the way HRM practices are communicated that is a key concern in attaining staff commitment in the SFB. Specifically, when organizational practices are communicated, the result has been the development of affective commitment as in Acas (2000), cited by Nakitto (2009).

Organizational loyalty is best nurtured when communication practices take place in an organizational culture that places high value on and engenders trust in employees. In support of this contention, Reina and Reina (1999) identified communication trust as one of the major components of cultures that embody trust in the workplace. Equally important, these authors theorize that culture and communication practices have an interactive influence with each other. Most communication experts agree that active listening is a major factor. Active listening includes such behaviors as empathetic body language (eye contact, appropriate gestures and expressions), posing helpful questions, validating employee expression through considerate conversation turn-taking, and paraphrasing to ensure mutual understanding.

Seldom does an employee work in absolute isolation, instead, workers interact with peers, and management on a daily basis; this makes effective communication in the workplace to be imperative and an essential skill for both employers and employees. An effective workforce is necessarily one in which co-workers are able to work together as a team and effective communication has a critical role to play. In this study, it has been established that effective communication is one of the most important ways in which managers can foster a culture of commitment in their staff. In line with the findings obtained, institutions of higher learning and other organizations should communicate and discuss how their decisions were made together with their staff. All in all, good communication and openness is vital and the role of staff should be recognized and positively supported, as it is a vital component in the creation and maintenance of employee commitment. An organization which ignore the importance of effective communication is likely to crash-land in no time.

## Conclusions

In this study, it was envisaged that for staff commitment to occur, effective communication in the SFB should, among other factors, improve. Specifically, the findings necessitated the rejection of the null hypotheses. Consequently, the rejection of the null hypotheses implied that there was reasonable proof to believe there was a significant relationship between effective communication and staff commitment. Therefore, arising from the research findings and subsequent discussion, it is concluded that effective communication is significantly and positively correlated with staff commitment in the School of Finance and Banking in Kigali; hence, it requires that leadership should improve on communication if staff commitment is to improve to give its share, in staff commitment.

## Recommendations

Since a significant relationship has been established between staff perceptions about effective communication and their commitment towards the SFB, it is important for administrators of the SFB to consider effective delivery of communication to their staff. This communication needs to establish credibility and to be practiced consistently if it is to become effective. Credibility will develop from the integration between communication strategies and practices and other institutional strategies, as well as from perceptions about managerial behaviours in general. Three of the principal items are the extent to which superiors are open to ideas, the extent to which they listen and pay attention to their subordinates, and the extent to which supervisors offer guidance to their employees in solving job-related problems this recommendation applies to SFB, but not limited to it, as it can be generalized to all educational institutions with similar characteristics like Muni University, especially given the infant stage which places it in a position to learn more from other similar institutions.

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