

ROLE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF AL-QALAM UNIVERSITY KATSINA

Abubakar Abdulkadir Abuabdin*

Federal University Gusau,
Zamfara State, Nigeria.
aabdulkadir@fugusau.edu.ng

Bello Ibrahim

Al-Qalam University
Katsina, Katsina, Nigeria
bello.ibrahim@auk.edu.ng

* corresponding author

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ABSTRACT.

Background: Managerial communication significantly influences employee participation by enhancing organizational identification, job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and performance, even in Al-Qalam University Katsina's multicultural and developing context. **Aims:** This study examines the impact of communication strategies on employee engagement, employing Self-Determination Theory, Job Demands-Resources Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Communication Satisfaction Theory. **Methods:** A qualitative design was used, focusing on a pluriphenic analysis of existing literature. The study utilized Al-Qalam University as a case to analyze feedback systems, cultural intensity, and openness, without direct data collection. **Sample:** A comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather academic insights into communication issues and solutions in organization-focused communication within multicultural settings. **Results:** Key barriers identified include organizational culture, political barriers, and cultural differences. Effective communication strategies, such as decentralized communication, culturally appropriate training, and robust feedback mechanisms, enhance motivation by fulfilling the psychological needs of autonomy, mastery, and relatedness under the Self-Determination Theory. **Conclusion:** Employee engagement emerges as a product of managerial communication, particularly where decentralized communication, culturally tailored training, and optimal feedback systems are implemented. **Implications:** The findings underscore the importance of internal communication as an engagement strategy, with implications for multinational organizations and providing a theoretical basis for future empirical research.

Keywords: Internal communication strategies, Employee Engagement, Internal communication.

JEL Classification: M12, O32

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Introduction

There are conditions that facilitate increased employees' productivity including the factors under the analysis for the employees of the academic institutions including Al-Qalam University Katsina. Every time the employees are motivated or want to achieve something for the university, which is helping students attain better results and fulfilling institutional goals and objectives, there is a lot of improvement. At Al-Qalam University Katsina, it is also evident that there is a positive correlation between high Employee Engagement (EE) level and better teaching standards, enhanced performance from the student's side and esprit de corps within the academic neighborhood. Hines (2022) has used the words dedication, absorption, and vigor in an educational context identifying the employees who are dedicated and absorbed are vigor. Furthermore, Sefahvand et al. (2021) have identified that participation is positively related to both elevated levels of engagement level and organizational retention, performance which is crucial for sustaining the university's functions and reputation.

This research work identifies several challenges that influence employee engagement in Al-Qalam University Katsina which include; The provision of few or little professional development programme available to the employees, lack of adequate recognition and rewards, and no proper work and life balance support. These challenges lead to low staff morale, high turnover and average performance among the staff. For instance, Skaalvik (2020) noted that a lack of job resources as well as requisite support will lead to burnout which lowers motivation. In addition, problems with engagement are aggravated by organizational institutions, for example, subordinate employees, as well as bureaucratic processes, because they set limitations on how employees can approach organizational requirements (Ohemeng et al., 2021).

However, based on the engagement challenges highlighted above, the following has been done by staff at Al-Qalam University Katsina: Departmental Management Team, the formation of the union by faculties and student populace. As for staff development, the administration has introduced training and developmental programs to improve the needed skills and future employee promotion. Children of the faculty have advocated for better faculty conditions, employment remuneration, and work, family requirements proposals. Also, students have been taking time to present their demands to the administration because staff-related matters affect the quality of service rendered. However, there are challenges many of which relate to resource constraints and the inherent nature of systems in large institutions which can take long to adapt.

From the research conducted in the previous sections, Al-Qalam University Katsina maintains some common issues affecting the engagement of employees even with all stakeholders involved. Such challenges may be due to; inadequate funding where the support of engagement activities is not fully and effectively implemented, the cultural and belief system of the institution, which discourages the adoption and sustenance of quality improvement reforms (Adeoye & Ainnubi, 2023). It also produces conflicting and ambiguous messages between various organizational levels, adding another layer to the administration's goals and aims and employees' perceptions of them.

Staff motivation concerns at Al-Qalam University Katsina can be seen to present an exciting research area in internal communication processes. Better communication between the administration and staff – employees will be more appreciable and listened to and the results will prove it. These include daily/weekly/monthly contact, receiving feedback, and consultations which play an important role in Enhancing the staff's trust. In addition to the above, establishing frameworks that enable the employees to express their input in decisions, formulation processes will ensure workforce commitment. The authors Mishra, Boynton & Mishra describe internal communication as a central tool in building a strong organizational culture, which ensures that employees remain actively engaged all the time.

Thus, the purpose of the present research is to investigate the practical issues related to employee engagement at Al-Qalam University Katsina and to assess the role of internal communication management in increasing levels of employee engagement. Finally, the study will offer recommendations that will enable enhancing employee engagement to help the university succeed in its mission and thus be successful.

Theoretical background

This review aims to synthesise the extant literature in regard to the place and contribution of internal communication strategies in framing engagement among employees with specific reference to the educational context of Al-Qalam University Katsina. Internal communication may be defined as the flow of communication, interpersonal, interaction and relation within or among employees in a

particular organization (Qin & Men, 2023). It includes official written communication like emails, newsletters, meetings and intranets forms in addition to the oral word of mouth communication (Okolo, 2024). Proper internal communication helps to create unity of purpose, maximises organisational commitment, supports open communication, and overall increases interaction leading to improved engagement (Mmutle, 2022).

Compared to engagement, which is understood as the emotional attachment workers show to their organization, the relationship between EE and DEM and job performance is highly positive (Ampofo, 2020). Connected people display passion, accept accountability for work, and perform beyond set standards (Gupta et al., 2022). Engagement elements such as job satisfaction, motivation, organization commitment, and productivity are positively correlated with positive organizational outcomes such as; increased innovation, decreased turnover, and enhanced organizational efficiency (Yadav et al., 2022). Internal communication plays an important role in this process; employees learn about organizational goals and objectives, build trust, and create a sense of the organization's inclusions (Lubis, 2024). In this case ineffective communication results in disengagement, confusion to members and low morale can be identified (Ibeh et al., 2024).

Modern strategic theories offer sufficient grounds for understanding the connection between internal communication and the level of employee engagement. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) introduced by Deci and Ryan (2021) is embedded with three fundamental psychological requirements that include autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As for the needs that internal communication that aims at the transparency and participatory decision-making directly target; this guarantees engagement as well as motivation (Bah et al., 2024). According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model by Bakker et al., (2023), internal communication is an important job resource. In this way, communication works as a buffer of job demands that, in turn, helps decrease burnout and increase engagement (Bakker, 2023).

Social Exchange Theory appreciates the employee-organisation exchange where mutual and timely communication creates value and reciprocity that leads to positive engagement (Lensatsi, 2020). Moreover, the Communication Satisfaction Theory introduced by Heath Bryant relates employees' satisfaction with communication with other outcomes involving job satisfaction, employees' commitment to their organizations, and their trust in the leaders (Alsayed, 2022). This adds to the underlined necessity of the properly developed communication strategy (Špoljarić, & Tkalac Verčič, 2022).

Several studies emphasize the importance of internal communication in fostering employee engagement and organizational performance. Kimani (2024) highlighted the significance of transparent, two-way, and leadership communication in increasing employee engagement while recommending strategies such as training and technology investments to address challenges like information overload and language barriers. Meirinhos et al. (2022) and Lauren (2023) also found that effective communication tools, leadership involvement, and cultural sensitivity were crucial for improving employee satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, Mbhele & De Beer (2022) and Mmutle (2022) stressed the role of participative organizational culture, high-quality information, and transparent communication in enhancing employee engagement. Balakrishnan et al. (2023) further noted the importance of balanced communication practices to maintain engagement, cautioning against asymmetrical communication.

Other studies focused on the broader application of communication strategies. Ify (2024) and Bao et al. (2020) demonstrated the positive relationship between inclusive communication approaches and employee productivity, while Bosco (2024) explored how marketing techniques like brand management and gamification could enhance engagement. Letlatsa (2023a, 2023b) examined communication in higher education, identifying challenges in implementation and the need for comprehensive, employee-inclusive strategies. Collectively, these studies suggest that organizations should prioritize transparent, participative, and culturally sensitive communication strategies to foster collaboration, trust, and improved performance.

This review lays out previous knowledge and understanding about internal communication and engagement from an academic insider view with a focus on context and culture especially in non western countries.

Methodology

This conceptual research paper engages an analytical research method to analyze internal communication impact on employee engagement in Al-Qalam University Katsina employing Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Social Exchange Theory

(SET), and Communication Satisfaction Theory. To draw the conceptual framework, this study reviews previous literature to argue how internal communication enhances engagement through the psychological needs, job resources, reciprocity, and communication satisfaction. The paper outlines the key trends and shifts with regard to communication strategies and its correlates to engagement. The study therefore is more of theory-based, without any initial data collection and aspires to give sharper perception of how internal communication as a construct could be utilised in various settings which include the Al-Qalam University in the non- western countries and the findings may be used as a pilot study for future empirical research.

Results

As a result of the conceptual research conducted in this paper, it is evident that internal communication is an important factor for EE at Al-Qalam University Katsina, for which the use of SDT, JD-R, and SET is recommended. Engagement according to SDT is fostered by employee autonomy, competence, as well as relatedness. Hence, internal organizational communication that provides employees with insight and engages them in the decision-making process goes a long way in fostering their emotional attachment to the organization (Yue et al., 2022). Likewise, based on the JD-R theory, while highlighting job demands and resources needed to explain effective internal communication as the means where employees get critical information and support to lessen stress and confusion while enhancing their interest (Bakker et al., 2023). Last, SET highlights bi-directional communication between the organization and employee; when management reciprocates employees' engagement with appropriate, consistent, and comprehensive communication, they become more emotionally committed, and, therefore, gain increased engagement (Cortez & Johnston, 2020).

Several communication strategies will help Al-Qalam University to enhance its levels of employee engagement. Continued newsletters, town hall meetings, and the effective functioning of the internal website may help to maintain the description of the goal and progress of the institution while instilling a sense of the employees' contribution (Saeed et al., 2022). Moreover, the implementation of surveys and suggestion boxes would allow employees to have decision-making input, as suggested by SDT, which, if implemented, allows workers to engage and therefore increase job satisfaction (Yuspahrudin et al., 2020). Another strategy belongs to training, aimed at the equal recognition of cultural and language differences as well as building effective interpersonal communication with a focus on the multicultural nature of the work floor as a main method of coping with issue #2 within the JD-R model by means of lessening the job demand through better development of the communication skills (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). Last, it could be said that the idea of sharing employee's accomplishments with others would support reward management, and overall, lead to higher levels of motivation as per SDT; relatedness, which would boost engagement (Jeeta, 2021). Nevertheless, to achieve these benefits, it is necessary to overcome barriers including bureaucracies and corresponding communication systems, organizational employees' resistance to change, and cultural disparities. The former solutions consist of decentralising communication to include middle managers, implementing change management strategies in which employees are involved in planning, or in providing culturally-sensitive communication training, as underlined by Shrivastava (2020). By overcoming these challenges, Al-Qalam University could improve its internal communication thus increasing the employee's satisfaction and uptake their productivity as well as unifying the institution.

Conclusion

This study investigated internal communication as the antecedent to EE at Al-Qalam University Katsina using conceptual frameworks SDT, JD-R and SET. As these theories will demonstrate, autonomy, competence, and relatedness play a crucial role in creating interest and learning in the work setting; the opposition between demands and resources; and mutuality in communication as the asset in building commitment. The results also suggest that communication processes, feedback and culture-sensitive measures can contribute positively to the matter of engagement. Hierarchical structures, lack of openness to change, and cultural differences were established as difficulties that can be addressed using decentralised communication, integrated change management, and comprehensive comprehension of cultural sensitivity.

This paper integrates SDT, JD-R, and SET to provide the framework through which universities within the Nigerian context improve employee engagement through internal communication. The paper

further offers clear practical recommendations and direction for subsequent studies with the goal of enhancing organizational efficacy in other multicultural, resource-scarce environments.

Even though this research provides valuable information, its limitations lie in the approach taken here as this study does not involve empirical testing of the proposed model, and the study conducted on only one institution can produce limited generalizations. This task suggests that the identification of the strategies for enhancing employee engagement should be empirically examined in various organizations in future research. Co-longitudinal designs could have utility in examining the longevity of engagement enhancements. Further, a comparison of these strategies between Nigerian and other countries' schools and between different Nigerian schools would affirm the generalisation of these strategies. Future qualitative research studies should also focus on the analysis of specific communication tools and technologies for use within multicultural organizations to enhance the effectiveness of the internal communication systems available.

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