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An empirical study of the pathology of organizational communications based on three branches model: A case study

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ABSTRACT

Understanding obstacles in front of communication system has turned into a critical task executed by managers. Present study analyzes major vulnerabilities to organizational communication from structural, behavioral and contextual aspects. The statistical population includes employees and managers in the headquarters of National Iranian Oil Company. After assessing the validity and reliability of a conceptual model, we used Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, T-test and F-test for analyzing our data. The results show that priority of communication barriers are as follows: structural elements like centrality and formality. Contextual elements like cultural and technical barriers and finally behavioral elements like perceptual and human barriers.

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1. Introduction

Communication and organization are strongly complementary. Neither communication nor organization comes first; they are the same event . . . the process of communicating is the act of organizing, and efforts to organize are communication bound (Peppers & Rogers, 1995). Therefore, by understanding communication and organizational activities as attached topics, it is easier to understand why corporate culture can only be developed and maintained through the support of a communication strategy. Communication is widely used in running almost all organizations effectively. Effective communication is essential for any business or organization to prosper. It cuts out on wasted time and provides both customers and employees with the necessary tools to succeed and find satisfaction. When communication is not effective, the end result is an increase in production time and a decrease in the bottom line. In order to avoid this outcome, effective communication must be in place (Joey, 2002). Effective

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communication is always a significant factor in successful management. Experience shows that miscommunication brings about organizational confusion. In an organization, communication is a process to link parts of a system (Moharamzadeh, 2003: 39-40).

Analysis of this exchange reveals that communication is a two way process consisting of consecutively linked elements. Managers who understand this process can analyze their own communication patterns as well as design communication programs that fit organizational needs (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2006). It is necessary in all levels for personal and organization development (Greenbaum, 1974: 740). Effective communication among high level managers and other employees play a key role in developing collaboration among coworkers (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011). Organizational communication is a measure to prevent uncertainty (Brown, 2007: 372). Communicational methods of a company are a set of formal and informal ways to communicate chosen by employees to contact one or more individuals inside the company. The management is responsible for the effectiveness of the communication system and for employees' access to necessary information in right time (Carrière & Bourque, 2009: 37).

The elements in the communication process determine the quality of communication. A problem in any one of these elements can reduce communication effectiveness (Keyton, 2011). Scholars believe the lack of good communication results in misunderstandings and organizational problems. Solving this problem requires reforms in the patterns of communication (Alvani, 2006: 169). Implementing effective communication systems is a challenging task, demanding much effort especially in large, international organizations (Davis, 2004: 276). Since communication processes occur in the organizational context, it is always hindered by some sort of obstacles or noises. Noise refers to anything that obstructs communication. It might happen from inside or outside an organization. If noise exists in communication process, complete clarity of meaning and understanding does not occur. The author, George Bernard Shaw wrote, the greatest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished (Shaw, 2011).

Because of the importance of communication in large companies, we intend to analyze organizational communications in National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company. The company has operated for over 80 years and occupies a prominent role in economic development of the country. National Iranian Oil Company ranks as the world's second largest oil company, after Saudi Arabia's state-owned Aramco. This company also has more than twenty, which make NIOC even more strategic and prominent in field of economy. Because of a lot of subsidiaries and employees coordination among them is an important turning point. Given the crucial importance of the Company's tasks, its managers and authorities always pay careful attention to the success and efficiency of their communication system. Obviously, a flaw in communication results in poor service. For this reason, the present research tries to find major obstacles to communication in National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company. We used three branch patterns of structural, behavioral and contextual factors to discover the mentioned obstacles. By behavioral factors, we mean the elements linked to the manpower of an organization. Structural factors include the organized relations established in an institute and contextual factors are the situations and conditions that generate behavioral and structural factors (Mirzai, 2000). This kind of categorization helps to better understanding of communication barriers and examine these barriers in an ordered manner.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First the study looks to organizational communication from different point of view and looks for different communication obstacles which mentioned in recent studies and literature, the finding enhance our comprehension of organizational communication and the barriers in front of it. Second this is the first study which analyzes communication issues in one of the biggest companies in region, and the finding emphasize in every company no matter how wealthy it is, there are communication issues and should pay attention to them. Finally the study categorizes these obstacles in three dimensions which is new perspective and would be helpful in understanding and solving these problems.

Here, we studied theoretical principles and previous researches to find communication obstacles and identify the distinct category each belongs to. Then, assessing the validity of our findings, we suggest a pattern of obstacles to organizational communication. Finally we will study the obstacles to communication in National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company.

2. Literature review

Communication is a key factor for organizational effectiveness (Downs & Adrian, 2004; Hargie & Tourish, 1993; Quinn & Hargie, 2004; Robson & Tourish, 2005; Verčič, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2012). Communication can be defined as the "exchange of information between a sender and a receiver, and the inference (perception) of meaning between the individuals involved (Bowditch, Ben-Ner, & Jones, 1997). It happens when a thought affects someone else and creates the same experience in his/her mind as it did in the mind of the first person (Anata, 2009, 1). Communicational interruption is a major managerial problem (Gizir & Simsek, 2005: 201). According to Scott (2005), communication is about sending, receiving, and understanding information and meaning. He claimed that "receiving" and "understanding" are the most important operations in the communication process, since the response of the receiver defines whether the communication attempt is successful or not. He further defined two types of communication that are related to workplace communication; the effective and the efficient communication (Scott, 2005). Effective communication might be considered as the foundation of a modern organization (Mazruee, Bazargani, Ghazanfari, & Bozenjani, 2010: 52). Organizational communication is an essential tool for performance management (Wang & Liu, 2009: 209). It takes on a higher importance in more complicated workplaces (Marquse, 2010: 47). The interruption might originate from either the main components of communication (message source, encoding and decoding the message, Interpretation; message taker and the feedback) or probable noise on the message. Communication obstacles have been studied from the viewpoint of different researchers. Each

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