

# To understand the Influence of Change in Organizational Communication Processes on Employee Work Satisfaction in Private Higher learning Institutions in Western Kenya.

Author: Kerangani James Mariba

Maseno University, School of Business and Economics

Co-Author: Esther Adhiambo Oyier

Maseno University, School of Business and Economics

Co-Author: Bernard Anjili Ondere

Maseno University School of Business and Economics

Co-Author: Dr. Donald Indiya Gulali

Maseno University School of Business and Economics

Email: [jamesmariba@gmail.co](mailto:jamesmariba@gmail.co)

[nyamodekai@gmail.com](mailto:nyamodekai@gmail.com)

[onderebenard16@gmail.com](mailto:onderebenard16@gmail.com)

[akundonald@gmail.com](mailto:akundonald@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*In 2014, a study was conducted in a selected private university in Kenya which revealed that approximately half of the employees in Kenyan higher education institutions simply fulfill their job requirements without genuine engagement (Makori and Kariuki, 2015). The research indicated that 47% of employees frequently accessed social media platforms during work hours resulting in a high turnover rate of 43%. The exact reasons behind these findings remain unclear. Existing literature offers several potential explanations, including advancements in technology, communication strategies, employee relocations, organizational objectives, sales and marketing efforts, and operational expenses. The extent to which these modifications are linked to decreased employee work satisfaction in private higher learning institutions in Kenya remains uncertain. Thus, this investigation focused specifically on exploring the influence of change in organizational communication processes on employee work satisfaction within private higher learning institutions situated in western Kenya region. The findings of this research could offer significant assistance to various stakeholders within Kenya's higher learning sector. This research was based on Kurt Lewin's model of Change Management. It utilized a correlational research approach and focused on a sample of 313 employees selected from different departments, Selected from a complete target group comprising 1440 faculty members and staff across four chosen institutions. The study employed techniques of stratified random sampling to gather data. Participants were provided with questionnaires to fill out for data gathering purposes. The questionnaires were formulated based on findings from literature reviews. Data analysis was conducted using Excel and SPSS software. Frequency tables and charts were employed for data presentation. Conclusions and suggestions were derived from the results. The results indicated that changes in organizational processes of communication had a negative influence ( $\beta = -.483$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and explained 23% of the noteworthy variation in employee work satisfaction ( $R^2 = .230$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The conclusion drawn was that change in organizational communication processes significantly influence employee work satisfaction. The study suggested that private higher learning institutions should provide advance preparation for their staff before transitions and change in organizational communication.*

**Key words:** *Change in Organizational Communication Processes, Employee Work Satisfaction*

## Introduction

### Change in Organizational Communication Processes

Organization transformation is a universal concern that remains persistent in the corporate world. This evolution can stem from various factors such as relocation, legal matters, restructuring, leadership changes, technological progress, and mergers (Osterman, 2000). Throughout history, business environments worldwide have undergone significant shifts as management ideologies, resources, and technology have progressed. Picardi and Richard (2001) assert that organizational communication involves the exchange of both verbal and non-verbal information within a company. Effective communication within an organization ensures high levels of job satisfaction through careful consideration of the content, frequency, skills, and tools employed in communication.

In 2014, the Oxford Economics Workforce 2020 study highlighted challenges faced by businesses in South Africa, including managing talent, leadership development, employee work satisfaction, and fostering a culture of learning amidst significant organization transformations. Commissioned by the System Application and Product (SAP) association, the study revealed key trends in the South African organizations. These factors comprised the rising presence of millennials joining the workforce (52%), shifts in the workplace atmosphere (55%), and the worldwide expansion of the labor pool (43%) (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

Picardi and Richard (2001) define organizational communication process as the exchange of information within a company, encompassing verbal and nonverbal forms. Successful organization communication contributes to positive work satisfaction, considering factors such as the content, frequency, proficiency, and communication mediums. In Ngari's (2016) investigation into the 'Effect of Employee Relations on the Efficiency of Private higher learning institutions in Kenya,' emphasis was placed on the changes occurring in communication methods and their impact on how well employees understand information. It was stressed that information should be clear and tailored to match the employees' level of comprehension. Participants in the study suggested a link between employee communication and the overall performance of the organization, rating this connection relatively low at 3.10, indicating room for improvement. Furthermore, the study indicated a preference for written communication over verbal, with an average score of 3.33, suggesting a perception of greater reliability associated with written communication.

Higher education across the globe is undergoing significant transformations due to evolving environmental factors. In Kenya, this shift is evident through the adoption of novel technologies, changes in communication processes, marketing strategies, and the recruitment of highly skilled personnel (Mathooko, 2013). According to Boston (2000), five main influences are shaping higher education: growing parental worries about educational quality, intensified attention to college rankings, changes in student demographics, and escalating expenses. Universities are aiming to stay competitive internationally by adopting strategies such as improving quality, incorporating cutting-edge technology, enhancing communication, establishing clear goals, and maintaining competitive pricing, as suggested by Watson (1996).

Despite the endeavors of Mathooko (2013), Boston (2000), and Watson (1996) to elucidate shifts within higher education, including the factors driving these changes and the methods through which they occur, they did not address the correlation between these organization transformations and work satisfaction within higher learning institutions. Furthermore, the authors neglected to specify a particular field of inquiry or the practical application of their findings, particularly whether similar challenges and methods are applicable in both private and public higher education settings. Consequently, this study aimed at investigating the presence of any significant influence of change in organizational communication processes and employee work satisfaction specifically within private higher learning institutions in Kenya.

### Employee Work Satisfaction

Employee work satisfaction is shaped by various factors including their perspective, positive outlook, confidence in themselves and the organization, as well as alignment with the organization's mission and goals, its defined trajectory, daily decision-making processes, and recognition of employees' contributions (Saxena, 2012). Key components of work satisfaction encompass pride in one's work, attitude towards tasks, level of engagement, and interpersonal dynamics in the organization (Linz & Huddleston, 2006).

A survey carried out in one of the private higher learning institutions in Kenya in 2014 highlighted that around half of the university's workforce simply fulfill their basic job requirements without showing enthusiasm to contribute more, thus lacking high work satisfaction (Kariuki, N. & Makori, M., 2015). Moreover, the research revealed that nearly half, or 47%, of workers allocated a substantial amount of their working hours to browsing social media platforms such as

Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. This trend correlated with elevated rates of employee turnover, diminished staff morale, occurrences of social loafing, and a noticeable lack of creativity and dedication, presumably arising from inadequate support for employees and their disengagement from their duties.

The prevalence of complaints, exceeding an average of ten per day, further suggests dissatisfaction among customers. According to Kariuki and Makori (2015), there is untapped potential in other private higher learning institutions in Kenya, warranting thorough investigation. Expanding on this notion, Shuck et al. (2010) contend that comprehending the reasons behind unsatisfactory work experiences within private higher learning institutions necessitates a deeper exploration of the organizational environment within the existing literature on job satisfaction. While these authors have endeavored to illuminate the presence of reduced job satisfaction among employees in Kenyan private higher learning institutions, they have not thoroughly investigated the underlying causes of this phenomenon or examined whether changes in the organizational environment might contribute to this diminished satisfaction. Conversely, Kariuki and Makori's (2015) report on the HRO survey in PUEA extensively discusses the implications of low job satisfaction for both organizations and individual workers but does not pinpoint the underlying factors responsible for these dissatisfaction indicators within Higher Learning Institutions. It is against this backdrop of identified gaps and observations that this study seeks to evaluate the correlation between organizational changes and job satisfaction in private higher learning institutions in Kenya.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is widely recognized that the most important assets within an organization are its human resources. Recently, private higher learning institutions in Kenya have experienced challenges such as high staff turnover, subpar job performance, and diminished levels of service within a dynamic work environment marked by frequent changes. Understanding the root causes of these issues and devising strategies to attract and retain motivated and innovative staff has become a paramount concern. Research on work satisfaction within private higher learning institutions in Kenya indicates a prevailing sense of dissatisfaction among staff, despite considerable expectations from stakeholders. Moreover, there are instances of inadequate handling of customers, students, and the public within these institutions, further emphasizing the need for examination.

While various factors such as digitalization, shifts in management, alterations in communication channels, and changes in physical infrastructure have been proposed as contributing to organization changes in private higher education institutions, their impact on work satisfaction remains uncertain. This study therefore aimed at investigating the influence of change in organizational communication on and employee work satisfaction specifically within private higher learning institutions in western Kenya.

### **The Study Objectives**

This study aimed at understanding the influence of changes in organizational communication processes on employee work satisfaction in private higher learning institutions in western Kenya.

This study was based on the following hypothesis:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant influence of changes in organizational communication processes on employee work satisfaction in private higher learning institutions in western Kenya.

### **Conceptual Framework**

**Changes in organizational Communication processes**

- Change in organizational communication content
- Change in mode of communication
- Change in communication skills
- Change in tools of communication

**Work satisfaction**

- Employee's pride on work
- Employee's attitude towards work
- Employee's job satisfaction
- Employee's organization relationships



## Theoretical Review

### Theory of Change Management

The Kurt Lewin's change management theory, a well-known model in managing change, was developed by Lewin, a distinguished social scientist, in the 1940s. Within this model, Lewin outlined typical human reactions, resistance, and adaptation to change over time. He illustrated this concept through a three-phase model, symbolized by blocks of ice: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. Businesses employ this paradigm to organize and oversee operational changes effectively. Cummings (2016) outlines the events occurring in each stage accordingly.

**Unfreeze:** The initiation of the unfreeze phase occurs when a company decides to make alterations to the regular job duties of its employees. Given that employees are accustomed to their daily routines and established methods of performing tasks, this phase is crucial for introducing changes. It allows employees to mentally prepare and refocus, breaking away from their usual patterns and shifting their perspectives. Despite the natural inclination to rely on defense mechanisms for survival, these must be disregarded during this phase, even though resistance may arise.

**Change Phase:** The transitional period is characterized by the majority or all employees embracing proposed changes and showing readiness to adapt. This stage is marked by confusion and a feeling of transition among employees, who acknowledge that the existing state is being challenged but are unsure about what will replace it. Corporate operations typically slow down as everyone adjusts to new roles, policies, or procedures. Management uses this phase to monitor employee progress.

**Refreeze Phase:** In the refreeze phase, business activities regain momentum as employees adjust to changes in their usual work environment. As the new mindset starts to take shape, employees gradually return to their previous comfort levels. Executives and managers must now solidify the organization to ensure that the implemented changes remain effective. This is accomplished by coordinating the implementation of changes and facilitating their assimilation through policies and procedures.

Lewin's change model simplifies communication between leaders and employees regarding the three phases of change within their organization, while also delineating the roles and responsibilities of both parties. The model enables a smooth transition from one stage to another, allowing change leaders to understand the change process more comprehensively and move towards the desired outcome. The core principle behind the model's final stage, focused on sustaining change, is to give change leaders the opportunity to assess achievements and challenges, and make necessary adjustments as they transition between stages.

Critics have raised concerns about Lewin's change model despite its widespread acceptance. They argue that in today's fast-paced business environment, organizations often revert to their original state after implementing change, rendering Lewin's model inflexible. This criticism stems from the belief that modern businesses operate amidst constant and sometimes chaotic change, necessitating a more adaptable approach (Longo, 2011). This research aims to address several shortcomings in Lewin's model. Firstly, it is deemed simplistic for the intricate nature of contemporary organizations. Secondly, the model's sequential three-stage process fails to align with the concurrent nature of change in today's corporate culture. Thirdly, it predominantly focuses on gradual rather than transformative change, overlooking power dynamics and conflicts within organizations that can impede change implementation.

In the organization, employees often resist change to preserve familiarity and what they perceive as beneficial. The reluctance stems from the dynamics within groups, wherein both collective and individual responses are triggered by alterations in leadership and job frameworks (Spector, 1997). These modifications affect elements such as focus levels, requirements for supervision, and the perceived significance of tasks, thereby affecting levels of job satisfaction (Taber, 1995). Hence, the objective of this research is to investigate the correlation between organizational changes and job satisfaction within private institutions in Kenya.

## Empirical Review

### Change in organizational processes of Communication and Employee Work satisfaction



Picardi & Richard (2001) define organizational communication as the sharing of information within a company, which involves both spoken and unspoken exchanges. Successful communication in organizations enhances job satisfaction by taking into account elements like the substance, frequency, abilities, and methods of communication. Ngari (2016) emphasizes in their research on the 'Effect of Employee Relations on Performance of Private Higher Education Institutions in Kenya' that modifying communication methods affects how well employees grasp information. This underscores the significance of delivering clear and targeted messages tailored to employees' comprehension levels. The study reveals a significant relationship between employee communication and organizational performance, with room for improvement indicated by a mean score of 3.10. Additionally, organizations lean towards written modes of communication due to their perceived reliability, as reflected in a mean score of 3.33.

Sudden (2007) discovers that inundating employees with excessive details can dampen morale, recommending a need-based approach to communication instead of regular superfluous meetings. The study also advocates for timely dissemination of critical information to enhance work satisfaction and engagement. This research underscores the pivotal role of effective communication and highlights the repercussions of altering communication processes.

A recent study conducted by a US staffing agency indicates that a significant portion of HR managers, around one-third, identify communication difficulties as the leading cause of dissatisfaction among employees. Interestingly, communication is also seen as the most favored remedy for addressing low morale. According to the survey, 38% of managers view the implementation of advanced communication systems as the most effective approach to boosting organizational morale, surpassing monetary incentives. Effective communication plays a crucial role in keeping employees informed about company objectives and performance, thereby fostering an environment conducive to inquiries and feedback.

Van Reil and Fombrun (2007) argue that communication holds paramount importance for organizational effectiveness, extending to efforts in social responsibility and exemplary citizenship. They highlight that in today's fiercely competitive talent landscape, proficient organizational communication serves as a strategic asset for enhancing employee engagement, contentment, and retention. Moreover, it directly supports organizational learning, teamwork, safety, innovation, and the facilitation of high-quality decision-making. Baker (2002) defines changes in communication processes as modifications in communication content, methods, skills, and instruments.

While these insights emphasize key components of effective organizational communication and its impact on employee engagement, they overlook the potential negative consequences of altering communication processes. Moreover, there is a lack of theoretical grounding for diverse case studies, such as within educational institutions. Consequently, this research aimed to understand the influence of changes in organizational communication processes and employee work satisfaction specifically within private higher learning institutions.

## Methodology

A correlational research design was employed to study a diverse population of 1440 employees across four universities located in the western region of Kenya. These universities were the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya Highlands University; Great Lakes University of Kisumu and Uzima University. The study involved 140 department heads, 230 supervisors, and 1070 operational workers, including both teaching and non-teaching personnel. To ensure fair representation in the sample, the researcher applied the method of stratified sampling, following the guidelines provided by Kothari (2009) to reduce potential biases. The researcher used Yamane's formula (referenced in Njugi & Muna, 2021) to calculate the sample size, which is formulated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where by n is the size of sample, N is the target population size and e is the margin of error  
(0.05)

$$n = \frac{1440}{1 + 1440(0.05)^2}$$

Hence

$$n = 313$$

Thus, a sample of 313 individuals was selected from a larger population of 1440 workers. Primary data collection aligned with the study's objectives was carried out using a questionnaire employing a Likert scale. The questionnaire was self-administered due to respondents' familiarity with the study's variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). It was determined that all constructs demonstrated reliability, with coefficients ranging from 0.73 to 0.84. Among these, work satisfaction exhibited the highest reliability ( $\alpha=0.84$ ), while employee transfer showed the lowest ( $\alpha=0.73$ ). The overall reliability coefficient was 0.79. According to Kothari (2009), a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient exceeding 0.7 indicates high instrument reliability. Therefore, the current study's instrument was considered reliable for data collection. This assessment aligns with the general research guideline stipulating a minimum reliability threshold of 0.70 (Orodho, 2005), confirming the trustworthiness of the instruments used. Model Specifications

Reference: Adapted from Fairchild and Mackinon (2009) and Whisman and McClelland (2005).

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where; Y = Work satisfaction in private higher learning institutions

$\beta_0$  = The constant of intercept.

$X_1$  = Change in organizational communication processes

$\varepsilon$  = Error term

$\beta_1$  = Corresponding coefficient.

## Findings

### Findings on the influence of Change in organizational communication processes on employee work satisfaction

The research aimed to explore the correlation between shifts in communication patterns and job contentment, conducted through two phases. Initially, participants expressed their agreement levels with communication change statements. Subsequently, the average rating of communication change was correlated with work satisfaction levels.

The purpose of the research was to investigate how alterations in organizational communication relate to employees' job satisfaction. Participants were given a survey with statements about communication changes, and they rated their agreement on a scale of 1 to 4: 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for agree, and 4 for strongly agree. The results are presented in Table 4.9 following this description.

**Table 4. 9 Changes in organizational Communication Practices**

Statement	1	2	3	4	M	STD
Are you in agreement or disagree that unclear communications contribute to employee low morale in private higher learning institutions in western Kenya?	15(5)	31(10.4)	145(48.5)	108(36.1)	3.2	.80
Are you in agreement or disagree that holding important information for long by managers reduces work satisfaction in private higher learning institutions in western Kenya?	21(7)	38(12.7)	131(43.8)	109(36.5)	3.1	.88
Are you in agreement or disagree that using unfavorable skills of communication decreases work satisfaction in private higher learning institutions in western Kenya?	11(3.7)	28(9.4)	205(68.6)	55(18.4)	3.0	.65

Are you in agreement or disagree that use of outdated tools of communication contributes to low work satisfaction in private higher learning institutions in western Kenya? 15(5) 61(20.4) 163(54.5) 60(20.1) 2.9 .77

**Source, (Field Survey, 2022)**

**Key-**1= strongly disagree (SD), 2= disagree (D), 3= agree (A) and 4= strongly agree (SA), M-Mean, STD-Standard deviation

From According to the results, a significant portion of respondents, 145 (48.5%), in private higher learning institutions in the western region of Kenya believe that unclear communication is a major factor contributing to low employee morale. This aspect received a favorable rating (mean = 3.2, standard deviation = 0.80). The research revealed that prolonged withholding of vital information by managers leads to reduced job satisfaction, reflected in a relatively high mean score (mean = 3.1, standard deviation = 0.88). Moreover, inadequate communication skills contribute to decreased job satisfaction among employees in private higher learning institutions in the western Kenya region, as highlighted by a significant majority of respondents, 205 (68.6%), showing a high mean score and narrow standard deviation (mean = 3.0, standard deviation = 0.65). Additionally, outdated communication tools were identified as a factor contributing to low job satisfaction in private higher learning institutions in the western Kenya region, with the majority of respondents, 163 (54.5%), expressing this sentiment. This aspect also had a high mean score and narrow standard deviation (mean = 2.9, standard deviation = 0.77). A mean score above 3.0 indicates a prevalent adoption of communication improvement measures, while a narrow standard deviation suggests a high level of consensus among respondents.

#### 4.7.1 Testing of Hypothesis for study objective: influence of Changes in organizational Communication processes on Employee Work satisfaction

The correlation between changes in communication and job satisfaction was examined using the Pearson product moment correlation. Job satisfaction was measured using a scale, which was compared with changes in communication. Examination of the findings in Table 4.4 indicated a negative correlation between job satisfaction and insufficient changes in communication ( $r = -.483$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Further information from simple linear regression analysis is presented in Table 4.10 following this.

**Table 4. 10 Relationship between Change in Communication and Work satisfaction**

Model Summary												
Model	R	Adjusted Std. Error Change Statistics										
		Square R	Square of the	R Square	F	df1	df2	Sig. F				
			Estimate	Change	Change			Change				
1	.483a	.233	.230	.444	29	1	297	.000				
a. Predictors: (Constant), change in communication												
Coefficientsa												
	Model	Unstandardized			Standardized T		Sig.					
		Coefficients			Coefficients							
B	Std. Error	Beta										
(Constant)		3.333	.059	56.534	.000							
1	change in											



communication	-.196	.021	-.483	-9.496	.0
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## a. Dependent Variable: work satisfaction

**Reference, (Field Survey, 2022)**

From the above research results highlight a clear correlation between alterations in communication and a detrimental impact on job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.483$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests a decline in the quality of communication, resulting in diminished satisfaction at work. Specifically, a one-unit change in communication corresponds to a significant decrease of 0.483 units in job satisfaction, as measured on the employed scale. Additionally, the study reveals that changes in communication account for 23.3% of the variance in work satisfaction ( $R^2 = .233$ ,  $F(1, 297) = 90.178$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Consequently, in line with these results, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis positing a negative and substantial association between changes in communication and work satisfaction.

While acknowledging the potential significance of changes in communication within organizational contexts, the current research underscores a predominantly unfavorable trend in communication alterations, adversely impacting job satisfaction. These findings echo earlier research, such as that conducted by Van Reil and Fombrun (2007), emphasizing the critical role of communication in organizational performance. However, they diverge from the conclusions drawn in studies like Livesey's (2013), which advocated for advanced communication systems as a means to enhance organization morale despite potential communication disruptions.

**The Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to examine how change in organizational communication processes influence employee work satisfaction. It is evident that enhancing communication within an organization can bolster its flow, yet abrupt changes may not be advantageous for employees accustomed to a certain mode of organizational communication. Constructive changes in communication processes, comprehensible to employees and with altruistic intentions, can positively impact their work satisfaction. Thus, it can be inferred that there is a significant influence of change in organizational communication processes and employee work satisfaction.

**Recommendation**

Based on the conclusions drawn from the research objective, it is recommended that private higher learning institutions refine their communication frameworks to consider employees positively, avoiding sudden alterations that might disrupt information dissemination and potentially lower employee work satisfaction. A well-structured communication system is instrumental in enhancing job satisfaction. Additionally, drawing from the findings of the objective, fostering positive changes in organizational communication can motivate employees and contribute to improved work satisfaction. Therefore, implementing flexible work arrangements is crucial for fostering positive work satisfaction.

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