

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT IN FEDERAL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN
RIVERS AND BAYELSA STATES**

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the internal communication and employee engagement in Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States. The objectives of the study were among others to investigate the kind of internal communication that exists between employees and management of Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States. The study aimed to explore internal communication in four Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa states, anchored on stakeholders, system and relational dialectics theories, using descriptive survey method. The population included staff and management from the four institutions, totalling 9,095 participants, with a sample size of 387 determined by the Keyton determinant table. The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique, data were obtained using questionnaire and analysed using the weighted mean score based on a four-point Likert scale. The findings revealed that, the kind of internal communication that existed between employees and management of federal institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States were mainly memos, emails, newsletters, meetings, suggestion boxes and employee forums. The study concluded that the predominant internal communication methods in federal tertiary institutions include memos, emails, newsletters, meetings, suggestion boxes and employee forums. The study recommended that tertiary institutions should explore integrating digital platforms and fostering more interactive communication channels.

Keywords: Internal Communication, Employee Engagement, Federal Tertiary Institution

INTRODUCTION

Communication gaps can be devastating for any business in today's competitive and fast-paced environment. It is a fundamental principle that no organization can exist effectively and profitably without effective internal communication and employee engagement. Internal communication and employee engagement have been largely acknowledged as the lifeblood of any organization. The task of sustaining mutual understanding among interdependent groups such as individuals, organizations, communities and nations is not only limited by the negative consequences of conflicts but also because frequent conflicts weaken relationships and reputations, among other consequences. Since good understanding and enduring stakeholders' cooperation are highly prized by all social systems, conscientious efforts are sustained by the leadership of both social and organic societies to maintain greater stakeholders' cooperation through communication and genuine engagement.

For an organization, one of the conditions that constrain the stakeholder paradigm is the dynamism of the highly competitive business environment which affects operational processes, policy framework, market and competition, and human and material resources. By implication,

the changing corporate environment is the anticipation of unusually perplexing situations by corporate organizations time and again. It equally suggests that corporate organizations need to develop methods that can functionally respond to events and times. The articulation of certain management strategies without a careful and continuous stakeholders' engagement and profiling could make such strategies illusive in the face of the unexpected. This is because of the significance of engaging different stakeholders of an organization and their differing opinions in the organization and its operation (Allen & Semeniuk, 2012). However, without an internal communication channels and employees whose interests can affect or be affected by the activities of an organization, it will be pretty difficult to assess the management strategies that could promote mutual understanding and cooperation with such groups.

In line with the above, Bisel (2010) suggests that, in order for the organizing of any organization, communication is necessary, it is also suggested that more communication is the recipe for better communication. Communication in the workplace is seen as a sense making process which is bound by formal or informal context related situation, relationships and cultures. Communication behavioural between employees and management are not just a communication that happens at work; it is in fact the work itself, or at least part of the process through which work gets done successfully. "Talk in organizations drives actions within organizations" (King 2003, p.1206). Communication is "a symbolic process in which individuals act to exchange perceptions and ultimately to build a knowledge bank for themselves and for others, for the purpose of shaping future actions" (Bratton *et al.*, 2007). The exchange of information is imperative for any work to take place in any organization. In contrast, communication in the workplace is a much more complex process than just passing information from one individual to another (Bratton *et al.* 2007).

Meanwhile, internal communication has changed significantly over time and is still seen to be changing today. It has various terms or eras, which have changed overtime, each period trying to satisfy a different element of life in the organization. These iterations include, entertaining employees, informing employees, persuading employees and finally open communication between employees and management. Internal communication in the modern-day world of business is focused on challenging and stimulating employees, managing the ever-changing work environment and gaining employee engagement and commitment (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). A shift has occurred over time that has seen the objective of internal communication change in an organization. The mindset has moved from controlling and directing employees through the provision of information, making of announcements and supporting industrial relations to supporting the development of a malleable work environment which adapts to change, seeks to improve, share information and involves employees in generating ideas and making decisions (Keenan & Hazelton, 2006). Management needs to understand their employees and know how to influence their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. L'Etang (2008) elicits that, management must be able to measure an organization's communication climate appropriately that cultural, political and relational dimensions of the organization must also be analysed effectively in order to tailor internal communication.

Also, internal communication has been described as the communication between the organization's leaders and one of its main stakeholders; the employees. It is a social interaction through messages; it reflects a manager's ability to build relationships between internal stakeholders at every level within the organization. In past theory and practice, it has been postulated that management and employees' "communication is the undoubted lubricant to prevent the corporate machinery from self-destructing from the fringe of change" (D'Aprix,

2009, p. 23). The internal communication is to “illuminate the connections between different pieces of information and its job is to provide employees with the information they need to do their job” (Quirke, 2008, p.15). This study is all about exploring the internal communication in building relationships between employees and management.

It would be in the best interest of organizations to focus on internal communication within the organizations, which may bestow the organization with many benefits. According to Kitchen and Daly (2002), internal communication is vital for both the organization and for its day-to-day existence. Internal communication has the power to engage employees within the organization and allows the organization to work more successfully. The question remains, however, how management is responsible for ensuring that communication occurs internally and that its effectiveness is evaluated appropriately. The more transparent an organization is, the more widely its internal information is shared. Internal communication is a vital aspect of how relationships between the organization and its stakeholders are evaluated, which means that open communication indicates a stronger relationship.

In today’s lexicon, engagement is the ability to harness an employee’s enthusiasm, for their roles at work. In engagement, people express themselves in a physical, cognitive and emotional way during the performance of their work. In relation to internal communications, there have been a number of definitions as to what an engaged employee actually means. “Feeling a strong emotional bond to their employer, recommending it to others and committing time and efforts to help the organization succeed” (Quirke, 2008, p. 102). From this definition, employees who are engaged are much more likely to contribute to a high-performance organization. Engaged employees are more likely to positively talk about the organization outside of the workplace, stay loyal and remain in the organization and help the organization to perform at its optimum potential on a daily basis. In a recent study, it was found that engaged employees are deeply committed to their employer, leading to key improvements in organization outcomes, including reductions in absenteeism, turnover, shrinkage, safety incident and product deficiencies” (Robson, 2012, p.1).

There is a huge need to communicate consistently and clearly in order to achieve engagement; internal communication is considered crucial for achieving employee engagement. Communication between management and employees and reliable information sharing is critical in promoting a sense of commitment and belonging as well as helping employees to successfully understand the goals of the organization. Various strategies can be employed by organizations to engage employees such as leadership communication, internal communication and communication from management (Watson Wyatt Worldwide, 2009). Employee commitment and trust between employees are key results of successful internal communication. a positive employee attitude can be formed early and within the confinement of the organization itself through the use of internal communication. This provides evidence that there is a need for management to use effective internal communication with their employees in order to become a trusted source of information for internal stakeholders. What this means is that effective internal communication and employee engagement can actually endear the reputation of an organization of an organization, reduce management employee conflicts and forestall the escalation of conflicts.

Many management-employees’ conflicts across industrial societies have been traced to the absence of genuine policy communication, effective internal communication and employees’ engagement in decision-making and conflict management. The result of conflicts arising from

poor or ineffective internal communication and employees' engagement is often a strike, lockout or protest, depending on the stakeholders involved. Federal tertiary institutions-Universities and Polytechnics which are basically non-profit organizations are not excluded in management employee (stakeholder) conflicts. The staff and student that are regarded as key stakeholders of tertiary institutions constituted major sources of conflicts to many Federal tertiary institutions across the world.

Statement of the problem

Effective internal communication and employee engagement are critical factors for the success and performance of organisations, including federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States, Nigeria. However, studies have indicated that many federal tertiary institutions in these states face challenges in maintaining effective internal communication and fostering high levels of employee engagement. One of the key problems is the lack of a well-developed and efficient internal communication system within these institutions. Inadequate or ineffective communication channels, insufficient information-sharing, and poor feedback mechanisms, resulting in low morale, reduced productivity, and a lack of alignment with organisational goals.

There are concerns about the level of employee engagement in these federal tertiary institutions. Low levels of employee engagement can be attributed to factors such as poor leadership, limited opportunities for professional development, inadequate recognition and reward systems and a lack of employee involvement in decision-making processes. The consequences of poor internal communication and low employee engagement can be far-reaching, affecting the overall performance, efficiency, and competitiveness of federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States. This in turn, can have a negative impact on the quality of education and the institutions' ability to fulfil their mandate of providing high-quality tertiary education to the communities they serve. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the current state of internal communication and employee engagement in federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States, identify the underlying challenges, and propose effective strategies to address these issues. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of these important organisational dynamics and provide decisions and management practices in the tertiary education sector in these states.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to evaluate the internal communication and employee engagement in Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate the kind of internal communication that exists between employees and management of Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States
2. Determine ways internal communication affects engagement level of employees of Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa states,
3. Evaluate the constraints to internal communication and employee engagement in Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States.

Scope of the Study

The study was delimited to managements and staff of Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States. Other stakeholder groups such as students, host communities, government agencies, parents, council, contractors and vendors will be excluded from the study. The study was carried out in Federal tertiary institutions such as University of Port Harcourt, Federal University Otuoke, Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Ekowe in Bayelsa state and Federal College of Education Technical Omoku, Rivers State. It investigated the internal communication and employee engagement of these institutions between 2020 to 2023. The choice of this time frame was based on the fact it was the period witnessed by employees' protests and disengagements in Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

In this section, some concepts were reviewed as they concern the work at hand, some of these concepts include concept of organizational stakeholders, stakeholders' communication and engagement, internal communication and employee engagement.

Concept of Organizational Stakeholders

Organizational stakeholders are individuals or groups who can assert either legal claims of ownership or other forms of stakes in an organization (Kotler *et al.*, 2012). Stakeholders can be located within and outside the organization, they include shareholders, employees, management, investors, host communities, customers, the mass media, regulatory authorities, government, financial bodies, competitors, etc. following the stakes these individuals or groups hold, they can affect or can be affected by the activities of the organization.

Stakeholders' Communication and Engagement

Stakeholders' communication and engagement are always done within the context of corporate communication (Tench & Yeomans, 2009). The centrality of communication in engaging different stakeholders of an organization lies in the fact that all functions and aspects of organizational communication are performed using communication. This condition makes stakeholders' communication a big business in genuine engagement. Stakeholders' communication involves the process whereby stakeholder information is exchanged among organizations and their different publics (Argenti, 2007). What makes this communication process in exchange is that information flows from and to both the organization and its stakeholders. This information that is exchanged may be decisions, plans, complaints, demands, etc. this exchange is based on the policies and processes that concern organizational or national development strategies (Pisano *et al.*, 2015).

Internal Communication

Internal communication is the communication between the organization's leaders and one of its main stakeholders; the employees (Dolphin, 2005). It is a social interaction through messages. On this note, Welch and Jackson (2009) elicit that, it reflects management's abilities to build relationships between internal stakeholders and at every level within the organization.

Internal communication has been and remains central to building relationships between management and employees. Communication is the undoubted lubricant to prevent the corporate machinery from self-destructing from the fringe of change (D'Aprix, 2009). Quirke (2008) indicates that, internal communication is to illuminate the connections between different pieces of information and its job is to provide employees with the information they need to do their job.

According to Kitchen and Daly (2002), internal communication is vital for both the success of the organization and for its day-to-day existence. Kennan and Hazelton (2007), mention the need for organizations to consider employees as a distinct stakeholder who deserve individual attention through the means of internal communications systems. Internal communication has the power to engage employees within the organization and allows the organization to work in a more successful fashion.

Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) conceptualized the term engagement, which he defined as the ability to harness an employee's enthusiasm on their roles at work. Khan suggests that, in engagement, employees express themselves in a physical, cognitive and emotional way during the performance of their work roles. In relation to internal communication, Quirke (2008) describes employee engagement as feeling a strong emotional bond to their employer, recommending it to others and committing time and efforts to help the organization succeed while Hewit Associates (2009) says that, employee engagement is the measure of employee's emotional and intellectual commitment to their organization and its success. Welch and Jackson (2007) posit that, internal communication is crucial for achieving employee engagement. They suggest that open communication between management and employees and reliable information sharing is critical in promoting a sense of commitment and belonging as well as helping employees to successfully understand the goals of the organization.

Theoretical Framework

A theory is a set of ideas which provides explanation for communication phenomena. Like all theories, communication theory is selective (Ifedayo, 2003). This study anchored on stakeholder, system and relational dialectics theories. The justification for these theories is that stakeholder theory is relevant to this study as it focuses on the various stakeholders involved in the internal communication and employee engagement within federal tertiary institutions. These stakeholders may include administrators, faculty members, staff, students, and the broader community. Stakeholder theory emphasises the importance of understanding the interests, needs, and relationships among these different stakeholders, which can significantly impact the effectiveness of internal communication and employee engagement. The system theory is applicable to this study as it views the federal tertiary institutions as complex and interdependent systems. Internal communication and employee engagement are not isolated phenomena but are influenced by and influence various subsystems within the larger system of the institution.

Systems theory helps to examine the interconnections, feedback loops and dynamic interactions between different components of the institution, such as different departments, units and levels of hierarchy, and how these influence the internal communication and employee engagement. Relational dialectics theory is relevant to this study as it focuses on the

dynamic and contradictory nature of relationships within organisations. Internal communication and employee engagement involve complex relationships and interactions between individuals and groups, such as between different departments. Relational dialectics theory can help to understand the tensions, contradictions, and negotiation processes that occur in these relationships, and how they impact the effectiveness of internal communication and employee engagement.

Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory is generally concerned about what an organization should be and how it should be conceptualised. It is an extension of the General System and resource Dependence perspectives. The theory was propounded by Edward Freeman in 1984. The theory emphasises the establishment of mutual understanding between corporate organizations and their stakeholders. On this premise, Oso and Semiu (2012) contends that, an organization should be thought of as grouping of stakeholders and the organization's purpose should be to manage the stakeholders' interests, needs and viewpoints. Internal communication in an organization has been found to be a veritable instrument for engaging the various stakeholders and eliciting social support. It is necessary to monitor public opinion, collect and analyse relevant information which forms inputs into decision making process of an organization. The stakeholder theory is relevant to this study because it emphasises the importance of engaging and establishing a favourable rapport with different stakeholders or publics in order to reduce organizational conflicts. Hence, organizational growth and development can only be sustained when there is mutual understanding between an organization and its stakeholders.

System Theory

Von Bertalanffy is said to be the one that gave the fullest formulation of a general theory of systems. He is generally regarded as the father of the systems theory. The system theory is said to be one of the contemporary approaches to organizational communication. it sees an organization as a system (made up of subsystems) within a larger or super system (that is the larger society). The theory therefore focuses on issues of synergy, interdependently and interconnections within an organization and between the organization and the danger environment (Laszlo & Krippner, 2003).

The system theory (like the situation theory) has been described as a theory of relationship as it gives us a way of thinking about relationships (Rakeshkr, 2011) within organizations and between organizations and their larger environment, such relationships can be initiated and managed through effective internal communication. this means that communication mechanisms must be in place for the organizational system to exchange relevant information within and with its environment. It is the duty of the management to monitor relationships within and outside organizations. This duty is called boundary spanning. Relating this theory to the study, the theory holds that organizations have recognisable boundaries within which there must be an internal communication structure that guides the parts of the organization to achieve employee engagement. According to the theory, the onus lies on the management of the organization to create and maintain these internal structures. This internal communication structure may refer to an effective management communication practice established by organizations.

Relational Dialectics Theory

The relational dialectics theory was propounded by Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery in 1996 (Griffin, 2006). The theory is concerned with the complexities and conflicting pulls or tugs that characterize relationships and stakeholders' cooperation due to differences in individuals' or groups' dispositions. What this means is that relationships are built around the changing interplay of opposing forces. These forces represent stakeholders' differing stakes-claims, interests, etc in an undertaking or activity. Proponents of relational dialectics theory draw attention to the distressing nature of relationships accounts for the lamentation of Barter and Montgomery (1996) that whatever the form of intimacy, relationships are indeterminate processes of ongoing flux (Miller, 2000).

The implication of the distressing nature of relationships is that the desire and effort to maintain a relationship with different stakeholders presupposes the understanding and anticipation of stakeholders' disagreement over given issues. These disagreements represent what Griffin (2000) identifies as contradictions that try organizational job objectives and relationship with its stakeholders due to the continual interplay of unified oppositions. Since management-stakeholder relationships continually encounter tensions due to contradictions. Miller (2006) elucidates that the ensuing relationship between these groups will enhance efficiency and productivity in the workplace. The relational dialectics theory is relevant for this study because it emphasises the task before corporate organization and their different stakeholders to manage the pulls or tugs which represent conflict situations that try stakeholders' relations. Such pulls or tugs can be addressed through internal communication and employee engagement.

Empirical Review

McMahon (2014) carried out a study on "Internal communication: Does it help to create employee engagement and trust in single Irish retail." This study builds on research carried out in the area of internal communication which investigates a large segment of the public relations industry. This research aims to investigate a smaller segment of the retail industry in order to gain a greater insight into the role that internal communication plays in a business. This is a qualitative study and interviews with six employees from a chosen Irish retail company were carried out in order to answer the main research question. Explanatory research design was adopted for the study. The data were collected and coded.

The findings of the study revealed that the employees had knowledge of internal communication and they were aware that such a system existed in their workplace. Respondents found that technological communication was too anonymous and it was hardly to really get a full understanding of information from reaching an e-mail. The respondents agreed that dealing with colleagues and management through face-face communication made it feel that information was being passed in more of a personal sense and this made them feel happier. Also, the study found out that internal communication plays a role in creating trust between employees and management. The themes that were discovered in the findings were personal problems and empathy. Respondents found that they could approach them with their problems. The relationship between the study carried out and the current study is that both are concerned with internal communication and employee engagement. However, some gaps were left with reviewed study; the study did not investigate the constraints to internal communication and employee engagement and did not investigate non-profit organization. These gaps would be addressed by the current study.

Also, Njomo, (2013) studied the “Challenges of internal communication: A solution for Spier Resort management.” Contemporary organizations are faced with the challenge of effectively communicating with their employees. More challenging is the ability to respond to specifics of communication breakdown and to develop an effective internal communication strategy. The study sought to establish a sustainable approach to Spier’s internal communication challenges. The study was carried out on a convenience sample of 150 employees through the distribution of structured questionnaire.

The result confirmed that, Spier’s internal communication mechanism needs a thorough overhaul for it to be successful. The findings suggested that, internal communication at Spier needs to be strategically designed, implemented and managed to enable the organization to understand its lapses and to provide signposts for actions to redress its challenges. The study contributed to enhance understanding and importance of internal communication to organizational growth and success. That is, it has established a framework that organizations can use to design, implement and evaluate an effective internal communication strategy to the needs of the organization. The reviewed study and the current work are related as both are concerned with the internal communication in an organization. The reviewed study did not investigate employee engagement. This gap would be addressed by the current study.

Pungus et al. (2017) did a study on “The role of internal communication in driving employee engagement: A study of PT. Sinar Galesong Prima Manado.” The purpose of the research was to know how was the role of internal communication in driving PT. Sinar Galesong Prima employee engagement. The study was qualitative analysis interview, the population was the employee of PT. Sinar Galesong Prima, and the sample method used snowball sampling. The data were gathered through interview with informants and examination of the literature review from previous researcher. The result was all the informants explained that the role of internal communication was very important in driving employee engagement. The conclusion was Employees at PT. Sinar Galesong Prima think that Internal Communication is important, formally and informally. The reviewed study did not focused on the tertiary institutions and differed from the methodology. This gap will be handled by the pioneer study.

Pongton et al. (2019) carried out a study on “Communication satisfaction, employee engagement, job satisfaction and job performance in higher education institutions.” The study investigated the relationships and impacts of communication satisfaction, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and job performance in higher education institutions in Thailand. Survey data were collected from 400 faculty members and staff who work in public and private universities in Thailand. The results from simple and multiple regression analyses showed that, communication satisfaction has a positive impact on job satisfaction and employee engagement; job satisfaction has a positive impact on employee engagement and job performance; and employee engagement has a positive impact on job performance. However, there is no evidence supporting a significant relationship between communication satisfaction and job performance. The reviewed study and the present study are related as both studies focus on employee engagement in higher education institutions. The area of divergence is on the scope, objectives and methodology.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey method. A descriptive survey design is used to document existing attitudes (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The choice of the

descriptive survey research design was informed by the need to evaluate internal communication and employee engagement. The population of this study consisted of the management and staff of University of Port Harcourt, Federal University, Otuoke, Federal College of Education Technical, Omoku and Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Ekowe. Information sourced from the office of the Registrar of each of the institutions indicated the population as summarized in the table below:

Table 3.1 Population of the Study

Institutions	Academic staff	Non-academic staff	Total
UNIPORT	1,500	3,257	4,757
FUO	504	1,612	2,116
FCET	428	983	1,411
FPOG	285	526	811
Total			9,095

Hence, the population of the study is 9,095 (nine thousand, ninety-five).

A total of 357 respondents formed the sample size for this study. The sample size was based on the sampling system developed by Keyton (2001). The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique. The first stage involved the cluster sampling technique which divided the population into clusters – University of Port Harcourt, Federal University, Otuoke, Federal College of Education Technical Omoku and Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Ekowe. The second stage introduced the stratified proportionate sampling technique that allocated samples to the different clusters based on their percentage representation in the overall population. The next stage was the stratification of the population of each cluster into Academic staff, Non-teaching staff and Management. The percentage representation of individual strata determined the allocation of samples to the different clusters. The actual administration of copies of the questionnaire to each cluster involved accidental sampling techniques. The stratified proportionate sample allocation to Federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa states was presented in the tables below:

Table 3.2 Stratified Proportionate Sample Allocation to Federal Tertiary Institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States

Total Population of Study	Population per Institution	Total sample Size	Proportionate Calculation Per Institution	Sample Per Institution
9,095	UNIPORT 4,757	357	$4,757 \times 357 \div 9,095$	187
	FUO 2,116		$2,116 \times 357 \div 9,095$	83
	FCET 1,411		$1,411 \times 357 \div 9,095$	55
	FPOG 811		$811 \times 357 \div 9,095$	32

The presentation in table 3.1 indicates that the institutions received samples in the following order: University of Port Harcourt 187 samples; Federal University Otuoke 83 samples; Federal

College of Education Technical Omoku 55 samples; and Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas Ekowe 32 samples, respectively.

Table 3.3 Proportionate Sample allocation to Staff of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States

Population Per Institution	Sample Per Institution	Academic Staff Population	Sample	Non-Academic Staff Population	Sample
UNIPORT 4,757	187	1500 (32%)	59	3,257 (68%)	128
FUO 2,116	83	504 (24%)	20	1,612 (76%)	63
FCET 1,411	55	428 (31%)	17	983 (61%)	38
FPOG 811	32	285 (34%)	11	526 (66%)	21

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into section A and B. Section A contained demographic items while section B contained 24 items which was used to answer research questions. The questions were formulated from the objectives of the study and used to obtain data from the management of federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States. The questionnaire was administered on the staff of the federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States in offices. Data obtained with the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively in statistical tables using the weighted mean score based on a four-point Likert scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Kind of Internal Communication between Employees and Management of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	StD	Rank	Remark
Memos, emails, newsletters, meetings are commonly adopted between management and employees in my institution.	200 (800)	164 (492)	10 (20)	0 (0)	3.50	0.8	1 st	Accepted
Management in my institution engages employees in informal face-to-face communication and impromptu conversation on a regular basis	160 (640)	204 (612)	6 (12)	4 (4)	3.39	0.82	4 th	Accepted
Suggestion boxes, employee forums, open-door policies to allow feedback, ideas or concerns to the	180 (720)	190 (570)	4 (8)	0 (0)	3.47	0.89	2 nd	Accepted

management in my institution.									
WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are used in my institution.	160	184	20	10					
	(640)	(552)	(40)	(10)	3.32	0.93	6 th	Accepted	
Grand Mean					3.42			Accepted	

Data in Table 1 show that, the kind of internal communication that existed between employees and management of federal institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States were mainly memos, emails, newsletters, meetings, suggestion boxes and employee forums.

Table 2: Ways Internal Communication affects Engagement Level of Employees of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	StD	Rank	Remark
Frequency of sufficient communication between management and employees	170	204	0	0				
	(680)	(612)	(0)	(0)	3.45	0.5	3 rd	Accepted
Clarity and relevance of information sharing through internal communication channels.	170	194	10	0				
	(680)	(582)	(20)	(0)	3.42	0.89	4 th	Accepted
Opportunities for employees to provide feedback and input internal communication processes	190	180	0	4				
	(760)	(540)	(0)	(4)	3.48	0.94	2 nd	Accepted
Level of transparency and openness in internal communication practices.	170	190	13	2				
	(680)	(570)	(26)	(2)	3.41	0.99	5 th	Accepted
Leadership styles and practices	210	160	4	0				
	(840)	(480)	(8)	(0)	3.55	0.67	1 st	Accepted
Grand Mean					3.46			Accepted

Table 2 indicates that, the ways internal communication affects engagement level of employees of federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States were through leadership styles and practices, opportunities for employees to provide feedback and input internal communication processes among others.

Table 3: Constraints to Internal Communication and Employees Engagement in Federal Tertiary Institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States

ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	StD	Rank	Remark
Inadequate communication infrastructure such as out-dated technology, limited access to communication platforms	180 (720)	190 (570)	0 (0)	4 (4)	3.45	0.89	4 th	Accepted
Lack of clear communication policies and protocols	230 (920)	134 (402)	10 (20)	0 (0)	3.58	0.66	1 st	Accepted
Poor leadership communication skills and practices	210 (840)	150 (450)	10 (20)	4 (4)	3.51	0.76	3 rd	Accepted
Hierarchical organisational structure and bureaucratic decision-making processes	220 (880)	144 (432)	10 (20)	0 (0)	3.56	0.62	2 nd	Accepted
Cultural and attitudinal barriers such as resistance to change and lack of trust	170 (680)	190 (570)	12 (24)	2 (2)	3.41	0.93	5 th	Accepted
Grand Mean					3.50			Accepted

Table 3 reveals that, the constraints to internal communication and employee engagement in federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States were lack clear communication policies and protocols, hierarchical organisational structure and bureaucratic decision-making processes, poor leadership communication skills and practices.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From Table 1, the findings revealed that, the kind of internal communication that existed between employees and management of federal institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States were mainly memos, emails, newsletters, meetings, suggestion boxes and employee forums. These findings uphold the study done by McMahon (2014) which stated that, the employees had knowledge of internal communication and they were aware that such a system existed in their workplace. Respondents found that technological communication was too anonymous and it was hard to really get a full understanding of information from reaching an e-mail. The respondents agreed that dealing with colleagues and management through face-to-face communication made it feel that information was being passed in more of a personal sense and this made them feel happier. The stakeholder theory upon which this study is anchored gives backing to these findings. The theory posits that the need to balance the interests and expectations of different stakeholder groups, including employees. The use of various communication methods such as memos, emails and newsletters, allows management to tailor their messaging and approach to different employee demographics, ensuring that the

information is effectively conveyed and understood by the diverse stakeholder group within the tertiary institution.

Table 2 showed that, the ways internal communication affects engagement level of employees of federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States were through leadership styles and practices, opportunities for employees to provide feedback and input internal. These findings are in tandem with the study by McMahon (2014) when found out that, internal communication plays a role in creating trust between employees and management. The themes that were discovered in the findings were personal problems and empathy. Respondents found that they could approach them with their problems. The system theory anchored in this study is relevant to these findings. The theory elicits that internal communication within tertiary institutions is viewed as a complex system, where various elements such as leadership, feedback mechanisms and employee participation are interconnected and interdependent. The institutions can recognise the holistic nature of internal communication and how it influences the engagement and performance of employees as part of the larger organisational ecosystem.

Finally, Table 3 revealed that the constraints to internal communication and employee engagement in federal tertiary institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa States were lack of clear communication policies and protocols, hierarchical organisational structure and bureaucratic decision-making processes, and poor leadership communication skills and practices. These findings align with the study of Njomo, (2013) that, Spier's internal communication mechanism needs a thorough overhaul for it to be successful. Internal communication at Spier needs to be strategically designed, implemented and managed to enable the organization to understand its lapses and to provide signposts for actions to redress its challenges. The relational dialects theory highlights the importance of managing the inherent tensions and contradictions in organisational communication, such as the need for openness and privacy, autonomy and connection, and stability and change, in order to facilitate effective internal communication and employee engagement.

Conclusion

The predominant internal communication methods in federal tertiary institutions include memos, emails, newsletters, meetings, suggestion boxes and employee forums

Internal communication affects employee engagement levels in tertiary institutions through leadership style and practice, as well as opportunities for employees to provide feedback and input, highlights the crucial role of effective communication in fostering a motivated and engaged workplace.

The barriers to effective internal communication and employee engagement in Federal Tertiary institutions is crucial for fostering a collaborative and productive work environment that supports the institution's goals and objectives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to proffer solution.

1. To enhance internal communication effectiveness, institutions should explore integrating digital platforms and fostering more interactive communication channels.
2. Tertiary institutions should prioritise the development of a communication strategy that focuses on promoting transparent and inclusive leadership. Creating multiple channels for employees to actively participate in the decision-making process, thereby, enhancing employee engagement and contributing to the success of the institution.
3. Educational institutions should implement clear communication policies and protocols, flatten the organisational structure to reduce bureaucratic decision-making and provide training to improve leadership communication skills.

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