



## **PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION ON JOB PERFORMANCE OF SECRETARIES IN BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS**

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### **Abstract**

This study examined the perceived influence of effective business communication on employee job performance in business organization in Ebonyi State. Three research questions in line with research purpose and hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of one 47 secretaries from commercial banks in Ebonyi State. The entire population was used as the sample. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection using a four-point rating scale. Data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic. Findings revealed that upward business communication has a significant impact on the level of employee performance in an organization, effective downwards communication in an organization helps employees to share information, ideas or knowledge and skills which enable them to effectively perform to the expectations of the employer and businesses rely on communication as the best mechanism or channel for enhancing interactions between the employees and customers or clients which greatly influences employees' performance and improves the level of business profitability in the long run. Hypotheses test show that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female business education students on the perceived influences of effective communication on employee job performance in business organization. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that Management of tertiary institutions should consider the adoption of university-wide Learning Management Systems for increased acceptance of blended learning approach in the teaching and learning of courses like business education.

**Keywords:** Business communication, Employee performance, Horizontal communication, downward communication and upward communication

### **Introduction**

Communication is an important element in Human society and in every living thing in general. Society's survival and growth demand among other things in a system of communication. In the past several years, communication has been the major condition for survival and social development. It is considered as people's specific activity and necessary when building relationships, sharing ideas, delegating responsibilities, managing a team and much more. Al-Tokhais, (2016) described communication as a process of sending messages through different platforms and it is normally comprised of verbal or nonverbal sentiments. Communication is the process of exchanging information between people in different ways to achieve a certain purpose. According to



Seiler and Beall (2022), communication has also been defined as sharing and giving meaning occurring at the same time through symbolic interactions. Communication is conducted through linguistic communication systems (speech and writing) and non-verbal communication (facial expressions, voice, gestures, postures, etc.).

Stavros (2020) defined communication in business entities as the general process of disseminating or transmitting business information from one employee to another or from one business stakeholders to another. Stavros noted that effective business communication is considered very important in enhancing the general performance of different business entities since it influences proper co-ordination between the employees and the employer or between the entity and its customers. Effective communication also helps to build teamwork in the organization and consequently enhances employee performance. This also helps to reduce the rate of turnover redundancy in the organization. Bernstein, (2017) opine that business communication affects the general confidence of employees which has a negative impact on both the productivity of employees and performance of the business entity. Through proper business communication, business entities are able to enhance their organizational management, improve employee commitment, enhance profitability and consequently boost the overall performance of organizations. Speaking, listening and having the ability to effectively or efficiently understand both verbal and nonverbal meanings are among the most important skills that managers must possess in order to support or maintaining effective communication in organizations which is a prerequisite for both improved performance and business growth. Basic business communication skills are normally learned or developed through observing other competent people and consequently modelling individual behaviors based on what is observed on other professionals. Stavros, (2020) noted that business information has no relevance if it is not effectively communicated across different stakeholders in an organization. Stavros further noted that communication in every business organization flows from upward, downwards and also horizontal levels.

Upward communication according to Wang, (2022) and is the mode of communication that involves transfer of information from subordinates to their managers or superiors in an organization. Studies conducted by Odine, (2021) and Rukmana, et al (2018) revealed that under upward communication, the different essential messages and information are shared from the bottom to top along the defined hierarchy of a particular organization. Upward communication is normally utilized when subordinates request for different opinions or information from their superiors. Research indicates that upward communication helps to trigger different decisions from the top leadership or management of an organization. The different aspects of upward communication improve the levels of cooperation between the employees and the top management or superiors. Tian, Shuja Iqbal, Qalati, Anwar, and Khan, (2020) noted that upward communication in any business entity allows employees to freely express their opinions or feelings concerning the nature of the job and other pressing issues at the workplace. Wang, (2022) opine that upward communication gives employees an opportunity to discuss their grievances or careers and other pressing issues with other superiors which helps to motivate employees towards being committed in the job. This implies that upward communication has great impact on their ability to perform efficiently on their different task or obligations.

Downward communication is associated with messages being transmitted right from superiors to the different subordinates in the organization (Rukmana, MM, & SE, 2018). In this case information flows from the top management to lower level employees. The transmission of messages under downward communication is done from top to bottom along the organization's hierarchy. Under this form of communication, employees are able to share knowledge and information with other different superiors at the different levels of management. Osborne & Hammoud (2018) indicate that interacting and sharing ideas with the most experienced and qualified managers or superiors motivate employees to perform better in an organization.

Horizontal communication is associated with exchange of information or ideas across the same level or departmental unit in an organization. Otoo (2016) noted that with horizontal business communication, the message is effectively transmitted along a specific or defined level in an organization hence may not move beyond that particular level. Horizontal communication helps



employees to directly share essential information, actively participate in problem solving processes and collaborate to ensure successful execution of different assigned duties and responsibilities. Effective horizontal communication normally results in a higher quality of information exchange in an organization. This is based on the fact that it occurs directly between the different employees working in the same departmental or at the same level in the organization. Research indicates that most organizations rely on horizontal communication to ensure proper coordination of the different activities in the various departments of the organization. Osborne, and Hammoud, (2017) noted that importance of horizontal communication is that it helps in the development stronger relationships among the employees. This in the long run will improve the general productivity and performances of the entire employee group in an organization.

Employee performance is commonly defined as the behavior exhibited by an employee while performing a particular task assigned by the employer (Stavros, 2020). It also relates to the outcome produced by a particular employer in an organization. Fuertes, Alfaro, Vargas, Gutierrez, Ternero and Sabattin, (2020), indicates that employee performance is associated with the achievements of every employee in accordance with the different rules, regulations or expectations of the organization or employer. According to Jiang, Du, Zhou, and Cui, (2020), the nature of employee performance reflects the abilities and capabilities of each individual employee in an organization. In this case, most competent and skilled employees tend to exhibit a high level of expertise and commitment on the job which leads to greater employee performance as compared to those with less expertise and skills. However, most scholars assert that there are additional factors that influence the level of employee performance other than skills, competence and expertise or professionalism, effective communication in an organization is among the most essential factors that influence employee performance and productivity levels. Fuertes et al. (2020) assert that excellent employee performance is essential in the creation of high-quality services for customers and higher profitability for the organizations. These benefits of enhanced employee performance tend to lead to sustainable competitive advantage in the long run. The zeal and commitment of employees is normally boosted when the other employees or managers on the organization are undertaking their jobs effectively. The nature in which the organization interacts or communicates with the employees plays a key role in improving employee performances since it acts as a source of motivation and new knowledge, or skills (Jiang, et al, 2020) According to Otoo (2016), most effective leaders or managers are those that clearly understand the different aspects of communication and its general impact on the organization's setting or structure. Possession of knowledge on the relevance of business communication enables managers to improve the nature of communication in the organization which in the long run yields positive results most especially concerning employees' productivity performance. Odine (2021) indicates that effective communication is a very reliable vehicle that helps employees to fulfill their organizational obligations. To enhance productivity in an organization, managers must be willing to promote free-flowing communication across the different departmental units in the organization. Jiang et al. (2020) also noted that effective communication helps to build trust between employees and the top leadership of the organization which encourages the former to perform efficiently on the job. Maintaining a desirable level of effective communication between managers and employees helps the former to successfully control and monitor progress of the different activities being undertaken by employees in the organization. Otoo (2016) suggests that good flow of information across the entire workforce in the organization helps in achieving the different strategic goals and objectives. Odine (2021) revealed that communication is not necessarily about talking, listening, and writing but rather involves people interacting and understanding each other as well as sharing knowledge or ideas about different issues. Various studies have revealed that effective communication enables managers to share goals with other stakeholders of the organization both internally and externally. However, most of these business searchers have confirmed that the relevance of business communication on employee performance is normally ignored which forms the basis for this current study.



### **Statement of the Problem**

Communication is considered an essential tool for organizational performances and growth. Most business relies on effective communication with both customers and employees to improve sales and enhance business growth. Poor or ineffective communication normally leads to mismanagement of an organization and undesirable business results. Organizations that are so deficient in their means of communication rarely achieve greater performance as compared to those that possess high level of effective business communication. Business scholars such as AlTokhais (2016) indicated that the rationale of business communication is organizations is majorly to maintain a good relationship between the organization and its different stakeholders that cut across employees, shareholders and business partners among others. However, most of these business searchers have confirmed that the relevance of business communication on employee performance is normally ignored which forms the basis for this current study. Business scholars have also confirmed that different components of communication most particularly, horizontal communication, upward communication and downward communication render a great influence on the level of employee commitment on the job. This study seeks to bridge the existing research gap in the business communication research by testing the perceived influence of effective business communication on employee job performance in business organization in Ebonyi State.

### **Research Question**

1. What are the perceived influences of upward communication on employee job performance in business organization?
2. What are the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in business organization
3. What are the perceived influence of horizontal communication on employee job performance in business organization

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female business education students on the perceived influences of effective communication on employee job performance in business organization.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female business education students on the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in business organization

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female business education students on the perceived influence of horizontal communication on employee job performance in business organization

### **Method**

The design for this study was descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in commercial banks in Abakaliki Urban, Ebonyi State. The study covered the seven commercial banks in Abakaliki Urban, Ebonyi State. The population of the study was made up of 47 secretaries in the seven commercial banks in Ebonyi State. The entire population was used for the study; therefore, no sample size was drawn. Structured questionnaire titled "Perceived influence of effective business communication on job performance (PIEBCJPQ)" was designed and used for data collection. The questionnaire was structured on 4 – point likert scale as follow: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree; D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by two experts from Business Education. The questionnaire was made up of two parts, A and B. Part "A" was designed to elicit information on the background of the respondents while part B has three sections. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the questionnaire was distributed to employees outside the studied area. Their responses were correlated using Cronbach Alpha, a reliability coefficient of 0.83 was established. Forty seven (47) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents with the help of research assistants who were brief on the purpose of the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the



hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Any item with a mean rating of 2.50 or above was regarded as accepted while mean rating less than 2.50 was regarded as not accepted. For the hypotheses, any item with t-calculated value greater than critical value was rejected, otherwise the hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted.

**Results**

**Research Question One:** What are the perceived influences of upward communication on employee job performance in business organization?

**Table 1: Mean Rating Responses of on the Perceived Influences of Upward Communication on Employee Job Performance in Business Organization**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Seek essential information from top management make employee to perform efficiently on their different task or obligations	3.12	0.92	Agree
2	Interacting with manager in any business entity allows employees to freely express their opinions concerning the nature of the job	3.10	0.98	Agree
3	Listen to the advice from top management improves job performance	3.06	0.84	Agree
4	Seek essential information from top management in my department improves job performance	3.21	0.83	Agree
5	Sharing knowledge with management on the job requirements boost the overall performance of organizations	3.10	0.98	Agree
6	Discussing with superiors encourage employee to work better	3.30	0.76	Agree
7	Communicating with superiors on what to change in the organization boost the overall performance of organizations	3.03	0.98	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.13</b>	<b>0.89</b>	

Table 1 shows the view of students regarding the perceived influences of upward communication on employee job performance in business organization. From the table, it could be observed that shows that all the nine item statements achieved mean score ratings from 3.03 to 3.13 all of which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that upward communication improves employee job performance in business organization.

**Research Question Two:** What are the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in business organization

**Table 2: Mean Rating Responses of on the Perceived Influences of Downwards Communication on Employee Job Performance in Business Organization**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
8	The flow of information from top management team improves job performance	3.12	0.92	Agree
9	Providing knowledge on the nature of official tasks by manager improves job performance	3.13	0.98	Agree
10	Providing ideas by top management on job requirements improves job performance	3.23	0.76	Agree
11	Communication from manager helps to reduce the rate of turnover redundancy in the organization	2.90	1.00	Agree
12	Providing easy access to essential information on job requirements improves job performance	3.21	0.87	Agree
13	Communication from with the top management team	2.73	1.01	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.05</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 shows the view of students regarding the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in business organization. The results in Table 2 showed that all the six items (8-13) obtained the mean scores above 2.50. The grand mean of 3.05 revealed that the respondents agree that influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in



business organization. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range indicating that respondents are homogenous in their mean ratings.

**Research Question Three:** What are the perceived influences of horizontal communication on employee job performance in business organization?

**Table 3: Mean Rating Responses of on the Perceived Influences of Horizontal Communication on Employee Job Performance in Business Organization**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
14	Interacting with fellow colleagues improves job performance	3.32	0.99	Agree
15	Share knowledge with my colleagues on essential issues improves job performance	3.16	1.00	Agree
16	Discussing with my colleagues on the job requirements improves job performance	2.97	1.08	Agree
17	Listen to the advice from my fellow employees improves job performance	3.05	1.04	Agree
18	Seek essential information from my colleagues in my department improves job performance	3.08	0.84	Agree
19	Sharing information keeps employees motivated to perform better	2.93	0.97	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.21</b>	<b>1.02</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 3 shows the view of students regarding the perceived influence of horizontal communication on employee job performance in business organization. The analysis shows that items 14-19 obtained mean scores above 2.50. From the results displayed in Table 3, the grand mean of 3.21 revealed that horizontal communication influence employee job performance in business organization. The standard deviations indicate that respondents are homogenous in their mean ratings.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis one:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female employee on the perceived influences of effective communication on employee job performance in business organization.

**Table 4 T-test Analysis on the difference between the responses of male and female regarding the effect of techno-stress on the job performance of Secretaries in business organizations**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	Alpha	t.Cal	t.crit	Decision
Male	20	3.25	0.85	45	0.05	1.76	2.687	Not Significant
Female	27	3.54	0.59					

The data in the Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value of (1.76) is less than the critical t-value of 2.687 at 45 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female employee on the perceived influences of effective communication on employee job performance in business organization.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female employee on the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in business organization

**Table 5 T-test Analysis on the difference between the responses of male and female employee on the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in business organization**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	Alpha	t.Cal	t.crit	Decision
Male	20	3.25	0.85	45	0.05	1.62	2.687	Not Significant
Female	27	3.54	0.59					

The data in the Table 5 reveals that the calculated t-value of (1.62) is less than the critical t-value of 2.687 at 45 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significance



difference in the mean responses of male and female secretaries regarding the effects of techno-stress on the job performance of secretaries in business organizations.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female employee on the perceived influence of horizontal communication on employee job performance in business organization

**Table 6 T-test Analysis on the difference between the responses of male and female employee on the perceived influence of horizontal communication on employee job performance in business organization**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	Alpha	t.cal	t.crit	Decision
Male	20	3.37	0.70	45	0.05	0.50	1.96	Not
Female	27	3.32	0.70					significant

The data in the Table 6 reveals that the calculated t-value of (0.50) is less than the critical t-value of 2.687 at 45 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significance difference in the mean responses of male and female employee regarding the influence of horizontal communication on employee job performance in business organization.

### Discussion

The findings of this study in respect to the first research question identified perceived influence of upward communication on employee performance in business organizations. They include seeking essential information from top management make employee to perform efficiently on their different task or obligations, interacting with manager in any business entity allows employees to freely express their opinions concerning the nature of the job, Listen to the advice from top management improves job performance, seeking essential information from top management in my department improves job performance, sharing knowledge with management on the job requirements boost the overall performance of organizations, discussing with superiors encourage employee to work better and communicating with superiors on what to change in the organization boost the overall performance of organizations. This implies that upward business communication has a significant impact on the level of employee performance in an organization. Sharing of knowledge and information between superiors or managers and employees reduce uncertainties about the top management. This further helps employees to clearly understand the different reasons for the decisions undertaken by the top management. The finding is supported with the study of Wang, (2022) opine that upward communication gives employees an opportunity to discuss their grievances or careers and other pressing issues with other superiors which helps to motivate employees towards being committed in the job. This implies that upward communication has great impact on their ability to perform efficiently on their different task or obligations.

The findings in respect to the second research question identified the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in business organization. They include the flow of information from top management team improves job performance, providing knowledge on the nature of official tasks by manager improves job performance, providing ideas by top management on job requirements improves job performance, communication from manager helps to reduce the rate of turnover redundancy in the organization, providing easy access to essential information on job requirements improves job performance and communication from with the top management team. The findings of this study on the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance agreed with Wang (2020) confirm that emphasizing effective downwards communication in an organization helps employees to share information, ideas or knowledge and skills which enable them to effectively perform to the expectations of the employer. A positive and significant relationship between downward communication and employee performance was confirmed. The literature also revealed that effective downward communication enhances the level of leadership based communication majorly through routine updates about the operations of an organization. Al-Tokhais



(2016) who indicated those interactions between superiors and their subordinates helps to solve the different problems affecting the commitment of employees on their jobs.

The findings in respect to the third research question identified the perceived influence of downwards communication on employee job performance in business organization. The respondents agree that interacting with fellow colleagues improves job performance, sharing knowledge with my colleagues on essential issues improves job performance, discussing with my colleagues on the job requirements improves job performance, listen to the advice from my fellow employees improves job performance, seeking essential information from my colleagues in my department improves job performance and sharing information keeps employees motivated to perform better. This findings agrees with Wang (2022) who confirm that businesses rely on communication as the best mechanism or channel for enhancing interactions between the employees and customers or clients which greatly influences employees' performance and improves the level of business profitability in the long run.

### **Conclusion**

The study confirms the impact of business communication on the general performance of employees in an organization or business entity. The different components of communication most particularly, horizontal communication, upward communication and downward communication render a great influence on the level of employee commitment on the job. This therefore indicates that the different forms communication has a great impact on employee performance and organization growth in the long run. Appropriate business communication is a very essential tool for attaining greater performance and consequently maintaining desirable working relationships in an organization. The general trust among employees can build up in an organization if every person is committed to engage in effective communication. It is important to note that clear or effective business communication helps to enhance the productivity and cooperation between employees thereby encouraging teamwork on which employees base to improve their performance.

### **Recommendations**

1. Business managers should maintain a good flow of information across the organization so as to improve employee performances and business profitability in the long run.
2. The business organization should map out the standard method of communication between superiors and subordinate. In view of this, the management should adopt a system that would help the employees to communicate freely the information they want to transmit.
3. Managers should be willing to listen patiently to subordinates without premature evaluation and judgment.
4. Management should ensure that communication system is in line with organizational structure of the company which will involve different departments.
5. Finally, manager of an organization should also, see a communication feedback as effective tool to an employee's productivity

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