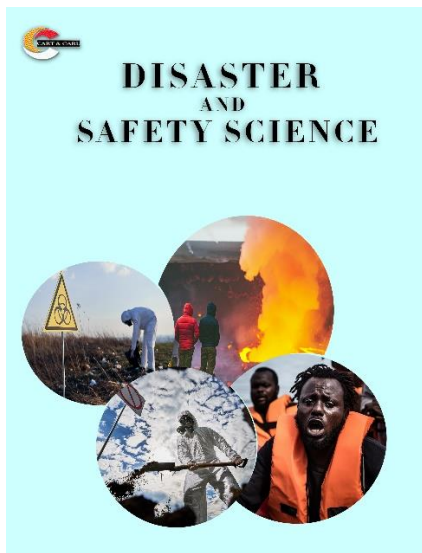




Impact of Effective Communication on Employee Safety Among Selected Companies in Eleme, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Communication is one of the critical factors that can either increase or decrease people's vulnerability to hazards. The study examined the impact of effective communication on employee safety and vulnerability to hazards among selected companies in the Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The study engaged fifteen organisations (companies), and a well-structured questionnaire was used for data gathering among staff (379) from the selected organisation based on Taro Yamane. The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency count and person correlation. The finding revealed that the communication policy of the organisation influences effective communication on the safety of employees (50.7%), safety procedures (48.3%), adherence to the chain of command (74.9%), effective feedbacks (54.4%), active listening, and concerns (51.7%) and teamwork (49.3%). The hypothesis testing indicated no significant relationship between the effective communication and employment educational profile of workers ($p = 0.067, 0.603, 0.623, 0.293$ and 0.179), and the relationships are insignificant. The study concluded that the communication system adopted by the selected organisations ensures effective communication exchange and alleviates performance and safety.

Keywords: Communication, Safety, Hazard, Eleme, Rivers State

Introduction

Being productive in the workplace is an integral part of the business in the organization. Employees should produce and deliver quality outputs at the end of the working hour (Asio, 2021). The impact of effective communication by managers has become a topic of interest in the literature because of how it impacts both the employee experience and organisations. Communication is a "basic function of all managers' jobs" (Greenberg, 2010; Abdulelah, 2016) because managers spend 80% of their daily duties communicating with others to drive the organization's success (Lolli, 2013; Abdulelah, 2016). Voineaer et al. (2015) and Abdulelah (2016) pointed out that managerial communication is a tool for understanding information and making management decisions to achieve organizational objectives. Failures in effective communication have direct and indirect impacts on individuals and organizations (Rudd & Mills, 2015). For this reason, an appropriate communication model is critical for effective organizational behaviour due to the use of open communication in leader and member interaction to increase the level of engagement (Hsiung, 2012; Abdulelah, 2016), mainly when managers influence subordinates' expected outcomes (Lolli, 2013; Abdulelah, 2016).

Communication is one of the critical factors that can either increase or decrease people’s vulnerability to hazards. For crisis and disaster managers, communication is primarily a management tool that serves various functions and purposes (Coombs, 2018; Hansson et al., 2020), such as awareness raising about risks and encouraging protective behaviour among people in preparation for hazardous events (i.e., risk communication), and giving warnings and triggering particular behavioural responses by people at risk during hazardous events (i.e., crisis communication). Communication involves meaning-making for disaster-affected people (Hansson et al., 2020). It covers gathering information on the hazard (i.e., knowledge, facts, news) that helps to make sense of the situation and potentially take steps to minimise the impact of the risk.

Related studies regarding effective communication, such as Vinazor (2020), Zakari (2020), Yolanda et al. (2018), Bergman et al. (2016) and Mutuku and Mathooko (2014) pointed out that managers are recommended to pay close attention to the communication system of an organisation to promote efficient management when working with a diverse workforce (Vasquez, 2014). To break through the barriers of managing a diverse workforce, effective communication should be thoroughly investigated to improve employees’ outcomes that positively impact organisational outcomes. Considering this, the present study examines the impact of effective communication on employee safety and vulnerability to hazards among selected companies in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study area was Eleme, a local government area (LGA) in Rivers State, Nigeria. Eleme is located between latitude 4° 44'0" N and 4°50'0" N and longitude 7°6'0" E and 7°12'0" E (Figure 1) (Afolabi & Adesope, 2022). Eleme is part of the metropolitan city of Port Harcourt, and it covers an area of 138 km² and, as of the 2006 census, had a population of 190,884. Eleme is bordered on the north by Obio/Akpor and Oyigbo Local Government Areas, on the east by Tai Local Government Area, and the south by Ogu/Bolo and Okrika Local Government Areas. The Eleme people live in ten significant towns, including Akpajo, Aleta, Alesa, Alode, Agbonchia, Ogale, Ebubu, Ekporo, Eteo and Onne (Afolabi & Adesope, 2022).

Study Design and Sample Size

The survey research method was adopted to carry out the study. Survey research is a specific type of field study that involves collecting data from a sample of elements drawn from a well-defined population through a questionnaire (Visser et al., 2002). This method was adopted because it is a suitable and efficient way of studying large populations. The study’s population comprised companies and their employees within the Eleme LGA, Rivers State, Nigeria. A list of registered companies operating within the LGA was sourced from the trade and commerce department of the Eleme LGA administrative office, and to get a true representative sample of the target population, the Taro Yamane (1964) formula for sample size determination was used based on 6876 staff across the selected companies (15).

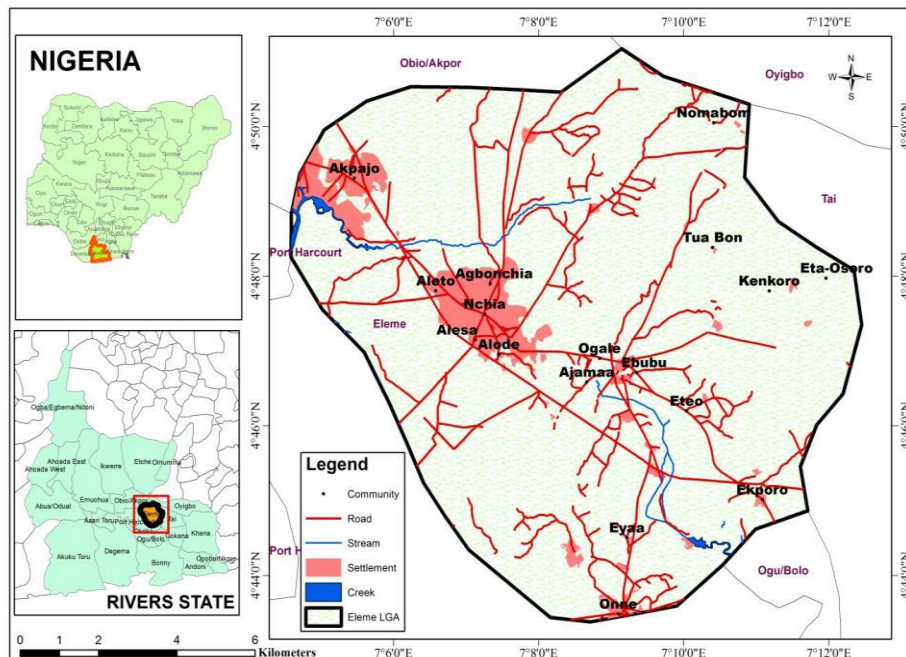


Figure 1: Overview of the Eleme LGA showing the major settlement

401 copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered using a simple random sampling technique in respondents' selection; however, 379 questionnaires were filled correctly and subjected to further analysis.

Data Analysis

The retrieved copies of the questionnaire were coded and subjected to statistical analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-21) for proper analysis. The study data were analysed through descriptive statistics tools such as frequency counts and percentages of responses for the analysis. Using such statistics allows the researcher to present the evidence of the study in a way that can be understandable and concludes the study variables. The research hypothesis was tested using Pearson product-moment correlation (PPMC) Analysis. As inferential statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis allows for exploring the statistically significant relationships between two variables. The analysis was carried out at a 95% confidence level.

Result and Discussion

Socio-Demographic Details of the Respondents

The socio-demographic details of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The finding indicated that 63.6% of the respondents were male, while 36.4% were female. The age categories showed that 24.8% of the respondents were below 30 years of age, 43.0% of the respondents were within the age 30-40years, 23.0% and 9.2% of the respondents were within the age range of 41-50years and 51years and above, respectively. Considering the level of education, 22.7% of the respondents indicated possessing a diploma certificate, 37.7% of the respondents possess a Bachelor's degree, 22.4% possess a master's degree, and 10.6% and 6.6% of the respondents indicated possessing a doctorate and professional certification respectively. Considering the years of experience, 29.6% of the respondents noted that they have experienced less than 5 years, 49.1% of the respondents indicated 5-10years of experience, while 12.9% and 8.4% of the respondents indicated 11-15years and 16years and above experience, respectively.

Effective Communication on the Employee Safety and Injurious Hazard

The influence of effective communication on employee safety and injurious hazards was examined, and the outcome was presented in Table 2. On the existing communication policy in your organisation that influences effective communication on the safety of employees, 50.7% of the respondents agreed, while 8.4% and 40.9% of the respondents were undecided and disagreed, respectively. 48.3% of the respondents agreed that the organisation policy allows for regular meetings on safety procedures, while 8.7% and 40.0% of the respondents were undecided and disagreed, respectively.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Details of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n=379)	Percentage (%)
Sex of Respondents		
Male	241	63.6
Female	138	36.4
Age (years)		
Below 30 years	94	24.8
30-40 years	163	43.0
41-50 years	87	23.0
51years and Above	35	9.2
Level of Educational		
Diploma Certification	86	22.7
Bachelor Degree	143	37.7
Master Degree	85	22.4
Doctorate Degree	40	10.6
Professional Certification	25	6.6
Years of Experiences		
Below 5years	112	29.6
5-10years	186	49.1
11-15years	49	12.9
16years above	32	8.4

74.9% of the respondents agreed that effective communication ensures adherence to the chain of command, while 9.9% and 15% were undecided and disagreed that effective communication ensures adherence to the chain of command, respectively. 54.4% of the respondents agreed that the communication strategies allow for effective feedback, while 3.4% and 42.2% of the respondents were undecided and disagreed, respectively. Considering the communication policy allows for active listening and concerns, 51.7% of the respondents agreed, while 5.8% and 42.5% of the respondents were undecided and disagreed, respectively. 49.3% of the respondents agreed that communication styles ensure teamwork among employees, while 6.9% and 43.6% of the respondents were undecided and disagreed that communication styles ensure teamwork among employees, respectively.

The influence of effective communication on employee safety and injurious hazard indicated that the respondents agreed that the existing communication policy in your organisation influences effective communication on the safety of employees, the policy allows for regular meetings on safety procedures, effective communication ensures adherence to the chain of command, the communication strategies allow for effective feedbacks, the communication policy allows for active listening and concerns and the communication styles ensure teamwork among employees.

The outcome supported the notion of Hansson et al. (2020), who noted that some forms of communicative inaction by people may increase their vulnerability or that of the people around them.

Table 2: Influence of Effective Communication on the Employee Safety and Injurious Hazard

SN	Influence of Effective Communication	U	SD	D	A	SA	Total	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The existing communication policy in your organisation influences effective communication and the safety of employees.	32 (8.4)	21 (5.5)	134 (35.4)	136 (35.9)	56 (14.8)	379 (100)	3.45	1.02	Accept
2	The policy allows for regular meetings on safety procedures	33 (8.7)	28 (7.4)	135 (35.6)	138 (36.4)	45 (11.9)	379 (100)	3.35	1.07	Accept
3	Effective communication ensures adherence to the chain of command	37 (9.9)	24 (6.3)	33 (8.7)	122 (32.2)	162 (42.7)	379 (100)	3.91	1.32	Accept
4	The communication strategies allow for effective feedback	13 (3.4)	31 (8.2)	129 (34.0)	164 (43.3)	42 (11.1)	379 (100)	3.11	0.99	Accept
5	The communication policy allows for active listening and concerns	22 (5.8)	121 (31.9)	40 (10.6)	168 (44.3)	28 (7.4)	379 (100)	3.18	0.95	Accept
6	The communication styles ensure teamwork among employees	26 (6.9)	29 (7.7)	136 (35.9)	157 (41.4)	31 (8.2)	379 (100)	3.29	0.97	Accept

Undecided (U), Strongly Disagreed (SD), Disagreed (D), Agreed (A), and Strongly Agreed (SA)

Table 3: Tests of Significance Relationship for Effective Communication and Educational Profile

S/N	Influence of Effective Communication	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Remark
1	The existing communication policy in your organisation influences effective communication and the safety of employees.	1		379	
2	The policy allows for regular meetings on safety procedures	0.094	0.067	379	NC/H ₁ Rejected
3	Effective communication ensures adherence to the chain of command	0.075	0.603	379	NC/H ₁ Rejected
4	The communication strategies allow for effective feedback	-0.025	0.623	379	NC/H ₁ Rejected
5	The communication policy allows for active listening and concerns	0.054	0.293	379	NC/H ₁ Rejected
6	The communication styles ensure teamwork among employees	-0.069	0.179	379	NC/H ₁ Rejected

NC-No Correlation

The outcome shared similarity with Lay et al. (2016), which indicated that the correct information and communication can reduce occupational-related safety vulnerability. Osborne and Hammoud (2017) noted that effective communication is the basis for employee engagement.

Research Hypothesis

From Table 3, the study's hypothesis was tested using the PPMC analysis. The hypothesis was tested based on the following statement:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between effective communication and the employment educational profile of workers in the study area.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the influence of effective communication and the employment educational profile of workers in the study area.

In explaining the outcome from the multivariate tests of significance, the Pearson correlation (r) was used in ascertaining the extent of a possible relationship between the influence of effective communication and the employment educational profile of workers, while the p-value was adopted to establish either to accept or

reject the hypothesis statement (where $P \leq 0.05$ reject the null hypothesis). The outcome revealed no significant relationship between the influence of effective communication and the employment educational profile of workers of selected organisations (where $p > 0.05$, $p = 0.067, 0.603, 0.623, 0.293$ and 0.179) and the relationships are insignificant. Also, the test for the relationship between effective communication and the employment educational profile of workers revealed no significant relationship, indicating that effective communication is not necessarily based on the academic profile of the respondents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Communication is one of the critical factors that can either increase or decrease people's vulnerability to hazards and serves as a tool to improve safety among employees. The study examined the impact of effective communication on employee safety and vulnerability to hazards among selected companies in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria, and based on the outcome of the study,

it was concluded that the selected organisation adopted effective communication exchange through regular meeting and their downward communication alleviates organisational performance and safety. Therefore, employees were recommended to be under the chain of command and various communication channels to prevent misinformation and follow through on safety practices.

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