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## The Influence of Communication Climate on Employee Performance in Selected Large Manufacturing Businesses in Eritrea

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### **Abstract:**

*Manufacturing businesses, particularly the manufacturing businesses in Eritrea, face challenges in terms of increasing productivity in which their products are competitive in the market. The contribution of the manufacturing businesses to the GDP of Eritrea is Low and thus affecting to the economy of the country. Therefore, to increase productivity, the manufacturing businesses in Eritrea need to ensure that their employees are performing as intended. In this case, suitable communication climate can play a role since it can support to have effective communication among employees in an organization that actually supports employees to achieve the required level of performance. It was therefore that the objective of this study was to determine whether communication climate influences employee performance in selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. The target population for this study was employees of the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea with a population size of 4175 employees. The sample size of this study was 365 employees, which was determined using Taro Yamane formula. They were selected from each selected large manufacturing businesses using proportionate random sampling technique. Data was then collected using questionnaire and analyzed using both the descriptive (percentage) and inferential statistical analysis (correlation, regression and ANOVA) methods. SPSS was used as a tool to conduct the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. This study was a quantitative research study based on a quantitative data. The study considered communication climate as independent variable and employee performance as a dependent variable. The study findings indicate that there was a healthy communication climate in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea and thus there was a significant positive relationship between communication climate and employee performance. The study concluded that communication climate did have influence on employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea.*

**Keywords:** *Communication, communication climate, opens communication, closed communication, employee performance, and manufacturing businesses*

### **1. Introduction**

Communication is becoming an important factor for the overall functioning and success of an organization (Rajhans, 2012). There is no organization without communication (Spaho, 2011). It is therefore that employees of the manufacturing businesses would have to communicate among each other in order to exchange the needed information that is pertinent to their specific work so that they can achieve the desired level of performance. However, in order to achieve the required level of performance, the communication among employees should be so effective because employee performance couldn't be enhanced without effective communication or interactions with one another in manufacturing businesses (Nwata, Umoh & Amah, 2016). One of the elements of communication that promote or hinder to have effective communication is the communication climate of an organization.

As Pace (as cited in Nordin, Sivapalan, Bhattacharyya, Hashim, Wan Ahmad & Abdullah, 2014) stated that communication climate is conceptually consisting of employees' perceptions of the information flow and the climate in which the communication occurs. This implies that communication climate can determine the flow or exchange of the required and pertinent information among employees. This is because, according to Poole (as cited in Ahsanul, 2013), communication climate links the organizational context to the concepts, feelings, and expectations of members of an organization and helps explain the behavior of the organization's members. It is therefore that through knowing about the climate of an organization, employees can better understand what impels organization members to behave in particular

ways when they communicate (Ahsanul, 2013). This implies that employees communicate by considering the existed communication climate of their organization. Hence, suitable communication climate is becoming important and a pre-requisite for effective communication in organizations so that employees can achieve the required level of performance. According to Femi (2014) and Rajhans (2012), business organizations all over the world are facing challenges. They face challenges on how to increase productivity in terms of producing the required quantity and quality of products that are competitive in the global market (Kovacic & Luzar, 2011). Particularly, the contribution of the manufacturing sectors to the GDP of Eritrea is as low as 5.9% and affecting the economy of the country (Nyende & Mugisha, 2017). Therefore, to stay profitable in the highly challenging and competitive market economy, business organizations need to ensure that employees are performing as intended (Femi, 2014; Rajhans, 2012). To ensure and achieve high level of employee performance in the manufacturing businesses, effective communication is becoming necessary (Nwata, et al., 2016). However, to have effective communication, it is necessary to have suitable communication climate because the way employees communicate is reflected in employee performance (Rajhans, 2012). Therefore, when there is suitable communication climate in the manufacturing businesses in Eritrea, then the performance of employees will increase. Consequently, the manufacturing businesses can play their role in stabilizing the economy of the country.

Actually, little research has been conducted in relation to communication climate and employee performance in manufacturing sectors. Most of the past studies were not specifically related on the direct influence of communication climate on employee performance in manufacturing sectors. In order to address such gaps, it was therefore relevant to conduct a research on the direct influence of communication climate on employee performance by considering the large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. Hence, the main objective of this study was to determine the direct influence of communication climate on employee performance in selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. Thus, the main research hypothesis of this study was that communication climate is not significantly influence employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea.

This research would help the manufacturing sectors to have an understanding or awareness on the importance of having a suitable communication climate for improving employee performance. Above all, they would have an understanding that communication climate has a direct influence on employee performance in manufacturing sectors so that they would work to have a healthy communication climate in their sectors. By having such understandings, the manufacturing businesses would then consider communication climate as one of the elements of their internal communication strategies.

This research article discusses first the previous relevant literature studies on communication climate and employee performance. It then discusses the methodology followed and the data analysis techniques used. Next, the findings of the study are presented and discussed. At last, the conclusion of the study is provided.

## 2. Literature Review

Communication climate was defined precisely in the works of various scholars such as in the works of Buchholz (2001), Lee (2014), Kamasak & Bulutlar (2008), Nordin, et al. (2014). According to Buchholz (2001), communication climate is the internal environment of information exchange among people through a communication networks (Buchholz, 2001). Jones & James; Pruyn & Riel (as cited in Lee, 2014) also stated that communication climate is a psychological term offering to how individuals interpret their working environment in terms of communicative components, such as receptivity and trustworthiness of information being disseminated in the organization. These definitions imply that communication climate, according to Pace (as cited in Nordin, et al., 2014), conceptually consisting of employees' perceptions of the information flow and the climate in which the communication occurs. It is therefore that communication climate, according to Jones & James (as cited in Lee, 2014), resides on group level as sum of the shared individuals' perceptions and interpretations. This means that employees of an organization communicate according to such shared perceptions and interpretation that actually produce and reproduce the communication climate of their organization.

According to Structuration Theory (ST), communication climate is produced and reproduced through the interaction of members of the organization. It develops out of interaction between features of an organization and the individual's perceptions of those features (Ahsanul, 2013). Similarly, Abdussamad (2015) pointed out that it develops from interaction among attitudes of an organization and individual perception of those attitudes. Abdussamad further explained that it is the people way of interacting toward the aspects of an organization to create a communication climate to enables them to react variously toward the organization through communication processes. Therefore, as Ahsanul (2013) clearly described that communication climate is different from organizational climate in that communication climate involves perceptions of messages occurring in the organization

Communication climate of an organization is becoming so important. This is because, according to Poole (as cited in Ahsanul, 2013), it links the organizational context to the concepts, feelings, and expectations of organization members and helps explain the behavior of the organization's members. Through knowing about the climate of an organization, employees can better understand what impels organization members to behave in particular ways when they communicate (Ahsanul, 2013). Thus, employees behave according to the existed climate during communication among each other in the organization.

Hoewan & Franssen; Pruyn & Riel (as cited in Lee, 2014) pointed out that communication climate consists of openness, the degree of receptivity of employees' opinion being accepted, trustworthiness, the degree of trustworthiness of disseminated information and participation in decision-making, the employees' experiences of their opinion being heard and taken seriously. In line with this, Pace & Faules (as cited in Abdussamad, 2015), identified six factors that need

to be considered in communication climate of an organization. These factors are: trust, honesty, openness, willingness to listen, collegial decision, and performance oriented. Taking these factors into consideration, communication climate can be described by two perspectives: open and closed communication climate (Nordin et al., 2014).

Smidts et al. (as cited in Hewitt, 2006) explained that open communication climate is built upon strong relationships between the organization and its employees. It occurs where two-way communication is prevalent, which in turn is dependent upon openness, mutual respect and trust, as well as where employees feel that they have a voice and that their views are taken seriously. In an open communication climate, according to Buchholz (2001), information flows freely and employees feel free to express opinions, voice complaints, and offer suggestions to their superiors or colleagues. Employees talk freely among themselves about work related issues. In open climate, information flows and passes without distortion throughout the organization. This also increases the sense of belongingness and self-worth for each employee (Ergen, 2010). It is therefore that open communication, according to Rosenberg & Rosestein (as cited in Nordin, et al., 2014), enhances productivity as well as profitability toward an organization and thus influences employee performance. In line with this, Neves & Eisenberger (as cited in Nebo, Nwankwo & Okonkwo, 2015) described that employees who have open lines of communication are more likely to build effective work relationships among themselves. As a result, employees' performance can be enhanced that lead to more contribution and increase productivity in terms of producing the required quantity and quality of products.

In closed communication climate, however, information is blocked and there is no free flow of information (Buchholz, 2001). In this environment, the basic characteristics of open communication climate, and the six factors of communication climate identified by Pace & Faules have no grounds. Instead, closed communication environment is characterized by defensive and barriers to open communication environment. A barrier to open communication ultimately spring from an individual's unfavorable past experiences as well as by our nature and background since they shape our values, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and expectations (Buchholz, 2001). In relation to defensiveness climate, employees close down open communication for their own self-interest and advantages and holds critical information that is important for executing specific tasks. Becker, Halbesleben & O'Hair (as cited in Eadie, 2009) further explained that defensiveness involves a self-perceived flaw that an individual refuse to admit to another person, sensitivity to that flaw, and an attack by another person that focuses on the flaw. It is therefore that in defensive climate, there is no open and honest information exchange and thus ultimately affects employee performance in the organization. In line with this, in defensive communication climates, employees have the tendency to abstain from communicating their needs, as they become very cautious in making statements, and may have low level of motivation to communicate (Nordin et al., 2014). Consequently, it influences employees negatively and may not perform as required because of lack of required information to execute their tasks.

It is therefore that the factors identified by Pace and Faules can be incorporated into the two perspectives of communication climate (open and closed communication climate). However, this study considered openness, trust, honesty, freedom, willingness to communicate and listen as factors that characterize the existence of open communication climate. If these factors are not achieved, then there will be closed communication climate. Thus, closed communication climate is characterized by defensive and barriers to open communication. Therefore, it is quite acceptable to look at the communication climate of manufacturing businesses from these two perspectives.

A suitable communication climate (open communication) can have a paramount importance in manufacturing businesses since it contributes to the success of those businesses. The communication climate of manufacturing businesses may influence the atmosphere in the organization which either encourages or hinders communication among employees (Nordin et al., 2014). Because communication climate, according to Muchinsky (as cited in Lee, 2014), is formed based upon the context constructed with a sum of employee's interpretations and thus affects employees. Moreover, communication climate significantly influences performance of the organization, because climate affects the effort of an employee (Ahsanul, 2013).

According to the Human Relation Theory, employees are the main assets of an organization because they do play a great role in organizational performance. Organizational performance can't be achieved without ensuring the individual employee performance. This is because, according to Hikmah (2015), the performance of an organization is the accumulation of the performance of all organization units and thus it is the summation of every employee performance. This indicated that employee performance is crucial for an organization to achieve the intended performance.

Actually, performance means work achievement achieved by someone (Abdussamad, 2015). Similarly, Beirut (as cited in Nebo et al., 2015) described that performance is about doing the work and about the results achieved. However, Prabu (as cited in Hikmah, 2015) stated that performance is the result of the quality and quantity of work achieved by an employee in carrying out their duties in accordance with the responsibilities assigned. This implies that performance is measurable. According to Nebo et al. (2015), measurement of performance is the process of quantifying the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization. Thus, it is the degree of efficiency and effectiveness (Hikmah, 2015). However, Low (as cited in Bartusevicienė & Sakalyte, 2013) stated that employee performance can be measured in terms of the quantity and quality of products that characterize the efficiency and effectiveness of the work respectively.

Employee performance, however, can't be achieved without effective communication among employees in the organization. Nwata et al. (2016) stated that effective communication is important to employee performance. But effective communication is dependent on suitable communication climate. It was therefore important to conduct a research study to determine the direct influence of communication climate on employee performance in selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea.

### 3. Methods

Since this study was dealt with communication climate and employee performance in selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea, the study area was in the country Eritrea. The study considered 14 large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea for the actual study and one manufacturing businesses for pilot study. In addition, the unit of analysis for this study was the individual employee of the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. Therefore, the target population of this study was employees of the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea, with a total population size of 4175 employees. A total sample size of 365 employees was considered. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane formula, which is a simplified formula to calculate a sample size (Israel, 1992). Then, using the proportionate stratified random sampling techniques, the sample sizes for each selected large manufacturing business were determined.

Actually, the research design of this study was a quantitative research design and thus the study was based on quantitative data. It was therefore that a cross-sectional survey was conducted. For the survey, a questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. The questionnaire was basically focused on the independent and dependent variables of this study. The questionnaire was designed carefully to be relevant, appropriate, intelligible, precise, and unbiased so that it can yield valid information and measures what is supposed to measure (Bolarinwa, 2015). All the questions in the questionnaire were prepared in Likert Scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree). To ensure the validity of the questionnaire further, a pilot test was done on 30 employees of Saba Shoe Factory that were selected randomly because 30 is a reasonable number for piloting (Perneger, Courvoisier, Hudelson, & Ageron, 2014). Employees of this Factory were not part of the final sample for the actual study. In addition, a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was used to measure reliability of the questionnaire since it is the most widely used to measure reliability (Bolarinwa, 2015) and it is also appropriate for the reliability measure of the instrument in Likert-type items (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). The calculated Cronbach's alpha values were 0.712 for communication climate and 0.843 for employee performance. These values are acceptable since they are above 0.6 (George & Mallery, 2003). Hence, there was a good internal consistency (reliability) of the items in the Likert-scale.

This study was based on a quantitative research study. Therefore, both the descriptive and inferential statistical measurements were considered for data analysis. For the descriptive analysis, percentage was used. For inferential analysis, correlation, regression and ANOVA were used. SPSS was used as a tool for the descriptive and inferential data analysis. Actually, the parametric statistical measures assume that the sample distribution follows normality (Razali & Wah, 2011; Mordkoff, 2016). Therefore, the normality of the distributions was determined since it influences how data are described and analyzed (Sainani, 2012). Normality of the data was checked using the formal normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Shapiro-Wilk test) and the numerical method (Skewness and Kurtosis). The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that communication climate was not normal since  $p=0.003 < 0.05$ , which means the data distribution is skewed, but the data for employee performance was normal since  $p=0.08 > 0.05$ . Then, the skewness test for the communication climate was conducted to determine how serious the skewness was. The skewness value for communication climate was 0.225, where  $-0.5 < 0.225 < 0.5$ . This indicates that the skewness was acceptable and thus the distribution was approximately normal. Lehman (as cited on Pett, 2015), if  $-0.5 < \text{Skewness} < 0.5$ , the distribution is approximately normal. Hence, it was possible to move forward to conduct the statistical data analysis using the parametric measurements of statistics: correlation, regression and ANOVA.

### 4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the analyses related to communication climate and employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. It first presents the descriptive findings in relation to the status of the communication climate of the selected large manufacturing businesses. It then provides the findings of the inferential analyses of the study. However, it is important to look first on the response rate of the study.

#### 4.1. Response Rate of the Study

Initially the study considered 14 large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea with a total sample size of 365 employees. However, two of the considered manufacturing businesses were not cooperative and one manufacturing business was not functioning during the data collection period. Therefore, data was collected only from the 11 large manufacturing businesses with total respondents of 267 employees. Thus, the response rate was 73.15%, which is acceptable response rate because the reasonable acceptable response rate that can contribute to the validity of the study is 60% +/- 20 (Baruch, 1999).

#### 4.2. Status of the Communication Climate in the Selected Large Manufacturing Businesses

The first analysis was related to the status of the communication climate in the selected large manufacturing businesses. Thus, to determine whether the communication climate of the selected large manufacturing businesses was a healthy climate in terms of honesty, openness, trust, freedom, and willingness to communicate. According to the findings in Table 1, a majority of employees of the manufacturing businesses confirmed that the communication climate of the manufacturing businesses was a healthy climate. Thus, Table 1 indicates that a total of 55.1% strongly agree and agree, 24.7% neutral (neither agree nor disagree), and a total of 20.2% disagree and strongly disagree.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	50	18.7
Agree	97	36.4
Neutral	66	24.7
Disagree	40	15.0
Strongly Disagree	14	5.2
Total	267	100

Table 1: Status of the Communication Climate

#### 4.3. Correlation Analysis for Communication Climate and Employee's Performance

A correlation analysis was conducted to determine whether there is a significant relationship between communication climate and employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. The findings in Table 2 show that the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.618 with  $p$ -value of 0.000 ( $r=0.618$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Therefore, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between communication climate and employee performance because  $p<0.05$ . Thus, there is relatively strong positive relationship since  $r=0.618$  approaches to  $r=1$  at which there is a strong positive relationship.

		Communication Climate	Employee Performance
Communication climate	Pearson Correlation	1	.618**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	267	267
Employee performance	Pearson Correlation	.618**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	267	267

Table 2: Correlation Analysis for Communication Climate and Employee Performance

\*\* Correlation Is Significant At the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed)

#### 4.4. Regression Analysis for Communication Climate and Employee's Performance

A linear regression analysis was also conducted in order to determine whether communication climate significantly predicts employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses. The findings of the regression analysis in Table 3 reveal that there is a relationship between communication climate and employee performance in which the adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.38. This implies that 38% of the employees performance can be explained by the communication climate. The remaining 62% of the employees performance are due to other factors which are not included in this model.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.618 <sup>a</sup>	.382	.380	.42795

Table 3: Regression Analysis Model Summary for Communication Climate

a. Predictors: (Constant), Communication Climate

In addition, Table 4 shows that the test of beta coefficient reveals that communication climate significantly predicted employees performance since  $B=0.71$  with  $P=0.000$ . Thus, the model is statistically significant since  $p<0.05$ . Therefore, the model can be expressed as  $Y=0.077+0.71X$ , where  $Y$ =Employee performance and  $X$ =Communication climate. This indicates that increase in the improvement of the communication climate leads to increase employee performance by 0.71 in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.077	.089		.873	.383
	Communication climate	.710	.055	.618	12.800	.000

Table 4: Regression Analysis Coefficients for Communication Climate

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

#### 4.5. ANOVA Analysis for Communication Climate and Employee Performance

An ANOVA analysis was conducted to test the significance of the model at better predicting the dependent variable than the mean (Sawyer, 2009; Field, 2013). Thus, it was conducted to determine whether communication climate significantly influences employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. Therefore, the findings in Table 5 indicate that the model significantly fitted to adequately predict the dependent variable since  $F_{1,265;0.05}=3.88<163.83$  and  $p=0.000<0.05$ . Hence, communication climate did have influence on employee performance in the selected manufacturing businesses in Eritrea.

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.004	1	30.004	163.830	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	48.533	265	.183		
	Total	78.537	266			

Table 5: ANOVA for Communication Climate and Employee Performance

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Communication. Climate

## 5. Discussion

The descriptive findings of this study reveal that a majority of employees (55.1%) confirmed that the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea did have a healthy communication climate in terms of honesty, openness, trust, freedom, and willingness to communicate. This indicates that employees of the selected large manufacturing businesses communicate and able to get the required information to execute their given tasks. This is because employees communicate according to the existing communication climate. This implies that if there is an open communication climate (healthy climate), employees can communicate with honesty, openness, trust, and freedom. Above all, they can develop a feeling of willingness to communicate. The existence of open communication climate or having a healthy communication climate in the selected manufacturing businesses actually enabled employees to exchange the required information and enabled them to execute the given tasks. Thus, it was supporting employees to perform as required in terms of producing the required quantity and quality of products. However, the findings of this study also indicate the existence of closed communication climate. According to the findings, a total 20.2% of employees disagree and strongly disagree the existence of a healthy communication climate. This finding cannot be ignored and it implies that there is no absolutely a healthy communication climate in the selected large manufacturing businesses. Such existence of closed communication climate can have an adverse effect on the exchange of information and thus affect the execution of tasks. This is because the existence of closed communication climate blocks the exchange of pertinent information among employees that ultimately affect employee performance.

In addition to the descriptive findings, the inferential statistical analysis reveals that there is a significant and relatively strong positive relationship between communication climate and employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. The regression findings also reveal that communication climate fits to adequately predict employee's performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses. It was therefore that the ANOVA analysis confirmed that communication climate did have influence on employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses. These statistical findings agreed with the findings of Ahsanul (2013) and Abdussamad (2015) that communication climate significantly influences employee performance. Therefore, communication climate did significantly influence employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. The inferential statistical findings reveal how much communication climate is a decisive factor for employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses. This is because the study reveals that 38% of the employee performance can be explained by the communication climate. This is because communication climate determines the actual and required flow or exchange of information among employees to execute their tasks. It is therefore that the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea should consider and improve their communication climate to increase their employee performance. Thus, they should work diligently to have a maximum of open communication climate. They should encourage open communication. At the same time, they should reduce the existence of closed communication climate or barriers to open communication climate to its minimal although it is difficult to avoid it because of the background and interests of individual employees. Actually, this study was limited on large manufacturing businesses located in the central region of the country. The study was based on internal communication and not external communication. In addition, the study was based on non-experimental quantitative research. It is therefore important to conduct further research based on experimental research or in-depth qualitative research considering many manufacturing businesses that include medium and small manufacturing businesses. The researcher believes that these types of research would further strengthen the findings of this non-experimental quantitative study.

## 6. Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea have a relatively a healthy communication climate in terms of honesty, openness, trust, freedom, and willingness to communicate. In addition, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between communication climate and employee performance in the selected large manufacturing businesses in Eritrea. Thus, communication climate influences employee performance in relation to the production of the required quantity and quality of products in selected large manufacturing businesses. It is therefore that the communication climate of the large manufacturing businesses should remain to be a healthy communication climate that is characterized with an open communication climate so that employee can able to perform as required by having the pertinent information when they need it from any angle of the manufacturing businesses. Otherwise, the communication climate would be a closed communication climate that blocks the exchange of the required information among employees that ultimately influences their performance negatively.

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