EdinBurg Peer Reviewed Journals and Books Publishers
Journal of Strategic Management
Vol. 3||Issue 3||pp 16-23||August||2023
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2789-4851

Assessment of Strategic Communication and Medical Employees' Performance of County Referral Hospitals in Central Region Economic Bloc, Kenya

[1]Eunice Nkatha Karatu, [2]Stephen Laititi Mutunga, [3]Nancy Rintari
[1,2,3]Kenya Methodist University
Corresponding Email: blessednkatha@gmail.com

How to cite this article: Karatu, E. N., Mutunga, S. L., & Rintari, N. (2023). Assessment of Strategic Communication and Medical Employees' Performance of County Referral Hospitals in Central Region Economic Bloc, Kenya. *Journal of Strategic Management, 3*(3), 16-23.

Abstract

Employees play a critical role in achieving firms' objectives. However, most Kenyan hospitals are suffering from low medical employee performance due to communication failure. The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of strategic communication on medical employees' performance in county referral hospitals in the central region economic bloc, of Kenya. Explanatory research design was used to collect data from a target population of 10 referral hospitals in Tharaka Nithi, Embu, Nyeri, Meru, Kiambu, Murang'a, Nakuru, Nyandarua, Laikipia, and Kirinyaga. The respondents were 1,804 medical employees including medical officers, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, specialists, and therapists. A sample size of 327 medical staff was selected using a simple random method, who were issued with closed. Piloting was conducted at Machakos County referral hospital whereby 33 medical officers took part in answering the questionnaires. In relation to reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the suitability of the research instruments. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, mean, and standard deviation. An inferential statistic like Pearson correlation was determined and the results presented using tables and explanations. The study established that strategic communication optimizes the performance of medical employees in county referral hospitals. Therefore, the study concluded that by encouraging employees to adopt innovative work practices, healthcare organizations can enhance individual performance and maximize the overall impact of strategic communication. The recommendations are that hospital leaders should provide timely feedback, foster effective vertical communication channels, and utilize various communication channels and technology.

Keywords: *Strategic Communication, Medical Employees' Performance, County Referral Hospitals, Central Region Economic Bloc, Kenya.*

1.0 Introduction

Employee performance is regarded as backbone of a firm because it effectively contributes towards its development and overall performance. Human resource plays a critical role in achieving firms' objectives. Employees are firm assets responsible for completing the organization's tasks, and the performance of such personnel is comparable to the organization's performance (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). The accomplishment of medical employees' tasks

highly depends on the kind of strategic leadership available in maintaining quality of hospital services among other factors like availability of funds.

Hospitals have failed in meeting the target and attaining their mission due to mismanagement, lack of clear communication channels, and knowledge of strategic leadership skills (Drew and Pandit, 2020). Recently, there has been a global health challenge and if a hospital has to survive in increasing healthcare competition, they require leaders with ability, expertise, strategy, and skills that improve performance of medical employees (Asbari, 2020). Strategic leaders use their communication abilities to disseminate knowledge that is innovative to help their subordinates comprehend the importance of normatively suitable behaviors through successful communication tactics. These communication practices boost staff interaction and sharing of information to identify issues, identify opportunities for improvement, design noble ideas, and offer pertinent possibilities before coming to a decision (Jiang & Gu, 2015).

1.1 Problem Statement

Medical employees' output became a major concern all over the world during the emergence of pandemics such as Covid-19. Medical employees are at the forefront of developing and executing strategies such as consistent communication, mitigating, and improving the provisions of quality health services. Thus, it is paramount to assess performance of medical employees and its determinants to maintain quality of service offered and achieve organizational goals (DarmaYanti & Bahauddin, 2021).

Most referral hospitals in the central region economic bloc (CEREB) are suffering from low medical employee performance due to communication failure. According to Mandago and Anusu (2022), about 40% of medical employees in Kenyan referral hospitals are not satisfied with their work resulting in low job performance. This is because most of the referral hospitals lack effective leadership which has resulted in poor communication strategies, inadequate and low-quality equipment and proper infrastructure, and a lack of development of skilled and effective human resources.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

To determine the influence of strategic communication on medical employees' performance in county referral hospitals in central region economic bloc, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

$H_0$1: There is no significant influence of strategic communication on medical employees' performance in county referral hospitals in central region economic bloc, Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The development of social information processing theory by Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) contains a model of social information processing that defined intricated connections between social contexts of communications, attitudes, behaviors, and perception. Social information processing theory shows how employees' job behavior and attitudes are modeled by leaders' way of communication and how the exchanged information makes sense to them (Hu et al., 2018).

As per the theory, an employee acts based on information received based on their knowledge of the communicated information, which affects their cognitive and behavioral responses."(Marmat, 2021). Strategic leaders through their communication skills, cultivate both creative self-efficacy and psychological safety, and that has an impact on employee

performance (Hu et al., 2018). As a result, the social information processing theory describes how significant persons, such as colleagues and leaders, influence behavioral and cognitive responses through communication.

2.2 Empirical Review

Lee et al. (2021) examined the effect of strategic communication efforts on employees' views of their workplace connections. According to this study, interacting with employees openly and honestly can help to reduce biased attitudes, improve perceived organizational fairness, establish effectiveness of obtaining resources and improve returns on investments. As suggested by Robbins and Davidhizar (2020) strategic leadership has the most influence on all leadership communication styles, when facilitating meetings and departmental focus on communication concerns and methods. Employees display more satisfaction, higher productivity, and deeper organizational engagement when managers use excellent management communication techniques. Mutiso (2017) investigated the role of communication in organizational change, by using a national petroleum company as a study case, and discovered that significant effects were found as a vital link between the change initiative and the workforce. Mutisya (2016) looked into the importance of communication in strategy execution utilizing 64 top management in Kenya's healthcare companies and noted that interaction plays a variety of crucial roles, such as information sharing, acquiring knowledge, and developing a sense of and harmonious interactions between staff and employers.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted an explanatory research design to collect data from a target population of 10 referral hospitals in Tharaka Nithi, Embu, Nyeri, Meru, Kiambu, Murang'a, Nakuru, Nyandarua, Laikipia, and Kirinyaga. The respondents comprised 1804 medical employees who included medical officers, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, specialists, and therapists. Further, Slovin's (1960) formula was used to generate a sample size of 327 medical staff in the ten referral hospitals selected using a simple random method. Additionally, there was the employment of both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires to the sampled medical staff members to get quantitative data. A pilot study was conducted at Machakos county referral hospitals in South Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc (SEKEB) whereby 33 medical officers took part in answering the questionnaires. In relation to reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the suitability of the research instruments. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Additionally, inferential statistics were also determined and the results were presented using tables and explanations.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Reliability Test

The study measured the reliability of the questionnaires using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Employee performance	0.826	12
Strategic communication	0.847	9

Table 1 reveals that strategic communication had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.847 while financial performance had 0.826. According to Hair et al. (2010), the data should only be trusted if the

EdinBurg Peer Reviewed Journals and Books Publishers
Journal of Strategic Management
Vol. 3||Issue 3||pp 16-23||August||2023
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2789-4851

composite reliability values are greater than 0.7. All the constructs depicted that Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.7.

4.2 Response Rate

The participants were presented in terms of medical employees from where the respondents were drawn. The response rate was analyzed as per questionnaire as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Response Rate

Responses	N	Percentage
Instruments distributed	327	
Instruments returned and usable	269	82.26%

From Table 2, out of total of 327 distributed questionnaires to medical employees, 269 instruments were returned (82.26%). According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), response rates of 50% are acceptable, 60% are good, and 70% or more are very good. Therefore, a response rate of 82.3% was deemed sufficient to carry out the analysis and present the results.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Employee Performance

Employee performance was evaluated using a scale, where S.D-strongly disagreed, D-disagree, N-neutral, A-agree, and SA-strongly agree. A detailed statistical overview of this variable can be found in Table 3.

Table 3: Employee Performance

Statements N=269		SA	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
The hospital has a low turnover of medical employees	%	4.8	14.9	19.0	34.2	27.1	3.64	1.17
Medical employee service delivery is recommendable	%	1.1	3.3	13.0	50.6	32.0	4.09	0.82
Most medical employees have received recognition for their work	%	4.1	10.4	20.8	32.7	32.0	3.78	1.13
Hospital employees give personalized care to patients	%	0.0	4.8	14.5	51.3	29.4	4.05	0.79
Hospital employees are willing to serve patients	%	0.0	1.9	12.3	52.0	33.8	4.18	0.71

According to Table 3, the medical employee service delivery was recommendable (mean = 4.09, SD = 0.82). This is because they consistently provided personalized care (mean = 4.05, SD = 0.79), and were willing to serve patients (mean = 4.18, SD = 0.71). The lower standard deviations (less than 2) in most categories indicated that there was relatively low variation in the employees' performance, suggesting a consistent level of quality across the hospitals in the region. the findings conform with Lyubykh et al. (2022), classification of employee performance into contextual, task, and adaptive performance.

EdinBurg Peer Reviewed Journals and Books Publishers
Journal of Strategic Management
Vol. 3||Issue 3||pp 16-23||August||2023
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2789-4851

4.4 Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Communication

Strategic communication was evaluated using a scale, where S.D-strongly disagreed, D-disagree, N-neutral, A-agree and SA-strongly agree. A detailed statistical overview of this variable can be found in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Communication

Statements N=269		SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
The hospital top leadership provides timely feedback efficiently.	%	3.7	0.4	10	55	30.9	4.09	0.87
The hospital's top leadership has a vertical communication channel for employees' inputs	%	0.7	4.8	10.8	56.5	27.1	4.04	0.8
The hospital's top leadership's immediate actions are accomplished through effective communication.	%	1.5	3	17.1	43.5	34.9	4.07	0.88
The hospital top leadership communication is passed through recommended channels	%	0.0	5.9	12.3	44.2	37.5	4.13	0.85
The hospital's top leadership integrates technologies such as mobile phones, Video, Conferencing, etc. in its communication	%	0.7	4.8	14.5	50.2	29.7	4.03	0.84
Failure to respond to official communications attracts disciplinary action.	%	1.5	5.2	21.2	43.9	28.3	3.92	0.91

Table 4 shows that the hospital's top leadership was efficient in providing timely feedback (mean = 4.09, SD = 0.87). This suggests that most medical employees are receiving feedback from their leadership in a timely manner, which could positively impact their performance. Further, the hospital's top leadership communication was passed through recommended channels (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.85). This reveals that leaders adhere to communication guidelines and protocols, ensuring information reaches its intended recipients efficiently and feedback is given. Finally, the failure to respond to official communications attracted disciplinary action (mean = 3.92, SD = 0.91). This suggests that there is a system in place to hold employees accountable for their communication responsibilities. The leaders demonstrate expertise in offering timely feedback, promoting employee engagement, and utilizing contemporary communication technologies to improve organizational effectiveness. This aligns with the viewpoint put forth by Banwart (2020) that communication plays a crucial role in enhancing the performance of subordinates.

4.5 *Pearson Correlation Analysis*

According to Kothari (2015), this coefficient spans from -1 to 1, with the absolute value of r shows the strength of the relationship between the two variables. The correlation between strategic communication and employee performance is indicated in Table 5.

EdinBurg Peer Reviewed Journals and Books Publishers
Journal of Strategic Management
Vol. 3||Issue 3||pp 16-23||August||2023
Email: info@edinburgjournals.org||ISSN: 2789-4851

Table 5: Pearson Correlation

			Strategic Communication	Employee Performance
Pearson	Strategic Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	. .718**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	269	269
	Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	. 718**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	269	269

As evidenced in Table 5, R = .718, p<0.001. Therefore, the study rejected the null hypothesis since there was a strong positive relationship was found between strategic communication and employee performance. Similarly, Zorlu & Korkmaz (2021) found a direct link between strategic communication methods and employee performance.

4.6 Regression Coefficients for Strategic Communication and Employee Performance

The study had a model whereby Y= C+β1X1. Y was employee performance, C was constant, β1 was the coefficient, and X1 was strategic communication as explained in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for Strategic Communication and Employee Performance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	0.798	0.157		5.087	0.000
Strategic communication	0.252	0.06	0.274	4.180	0.000

Dependent Variable: employee performance

Table 6 reveals that strategic communication a regression coefficient values (β=0.252, p<0.05). This means that a one-unit increase in strategic communication is associated with a 0.252 unit increase in employee performance, given that all other independent variables held constant. Comparatively, Gachungi (2014) espoused that effective strategic communication significantly reduces resistance to change.

Summary of the Findings

The findings on strategic communication revealed that the hospital's top leadership is efficient in providing timely feedback, ensuring employees receive the necessary guidance and direction to improve their performance. Moreover, the hospital's top leadership was effective in using various channels and leveraging technology for seamless communication, including mobile phones, video conferencing, emails, and instant messaging platforms. The study observed that the hospital enforced disciplinary action in situations where official communication was not appropriately addressed. The regression analysis showed that strategic communication had a positive and statistically significant impact on the performance of medical employees in county referral hospitals in the central region economic bloc, Kenya. As a result, the hypothesis stating that strategic communication had no substantial impact on medical employees' performance was rejected.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that strategic communication optimizes the performance of medical employees in county referral hospitals. Notably, effective strategic communication fosters a collaborative and well-organized environment, ultimately leading to improved performance outcomes among medical employees. Besides, by encouraging employees to adopt innovative work practices and contribute creative ideas, healthcare organizations can enhance and maximize the overall impact of strategic communication.

6.0 Recommendations

The recommendations are that hospital leaders should provide timely feedback, foster effective vertical communication channels, ensure clarity of ideas and strategies, and utilize various communication channels and technology. Furthermore, they should encourage employees to adopt innovative work practices and contribute creative ideas, creating a culture of innovation within the hospitals. By implementing these recommendations, healthcare organizations could effectively navigate the complexities of the sector, leading to better patient outcomes, increased hospital efficiency, and a more productive workforce.

References

Asbari, M. (2020). Is transformational leadership suitable for future organizational needs? *International Journal of Social, Policy, and Law*, *1*(1), 51–55. https://doi.org/10.8888/ijospl.v1i1.17

Banwart, M. (2020). Communication studies: effective communication leads to effective leadership. *New Directions for Student Leadership, 2*(165), 87-97. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20371

Gachungi, P. (2014). Conflict management styles and their relationship with individual and organizational outcomes. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 22*(1), 1-19.

Darmayanti, T., & Bahauddin, A. (2021). The Narrative of Indonesian Cultural Heritage: Peranakan Houses in Pecinan Lasem, Indonesia. *International Journal of Design, 1*(2), 43-56. https://doi.org/10.34010/injudes.v1i1.4857.

Drew J., & Pandit M. (2020). Why healthcare leadership should embrace quality improvement. *BMJ, 3*(6), 8-18. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m872

Hair, J., Sarstedt, M., Hopkins, L., & Kuppelwieser, V. (2014). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM): *An Emerging Tool for Business Research. European Business Review,* 26(2), 106-121. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-10-2013-0128

Hu, Y., Zhu, L., Zhou, M., Li, J., Maguire, P., Sun, H., & Wang, D. (2018). Exploring the influence of ethical leadership on voice behavior: how leader-member exchange, psychological safety and psychological empowerment influence employees' willingness to speak out. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *9*(1718), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01718

Jiang, B., & Gu, J. (2015). The moderating influence of self-efficacy on the relationship between task complexity and job satisfaction. *Social Behavior and Personality, 43*(6), 1037-1045.

Kothari, C. R. (2015). *Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques (3rd Ed.).* New Age International Publishers Ltd.

López-Cabarcos, M. Á., Vázquez-Rodríguez, P., & Quiñoá-Piñeiro, L. M. (2022). An approach to employees' job performance through work environmental variables and leadership behaviours. *Journal of Business Research, 140,* 361-369. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.11.006

Lyubykh, Z., Bozeman, J., Hershcovis, M. S., Turner, N., & Shan, J. V. (2022). Employee performance and abusive supervision: The role of supervisor over-attributions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 43*(1), 125-145. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2560

Marmat, G. (2021). Online brand communication and building brand trust: Social information processing theory perspective. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*, *71* (6/7), 584-600. https://doi.org/10.1108/gkmc-12-2020-0195

Mugenda, O.M., &Mugenda, A. G. (2013). *Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* Acts Press.

Mutiso, B. (2017). The effect of human resource management practices on employee retention: A study of the national oil corporation of Kenya. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies, 7*(4), 1-12.

Mutisya, D. (2016). The effect of human resource management practices on employees' retention in an organization. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies, 6*(3), 1-12.

Robbins, B., & Davidhizar, R. (2020). Transformational leadership in health care today. *The Health Care Manager, 39*(3), 117-121. https://doi.org/10.1097/HCM.0000000000000296

Salancik, G. R., & Pfeffer, J. (1978). A social information processing approach to job attitudes and task design. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 23*(2), 224-253. https://doi.org/10.2307/2392498

Slovin, E. (1960). Slovin's formula for sampling technique. https://www.scirp.org/%28S%28351jmbntvnsjt1aadkozje%29%29/reference/referencespapers.aspx?referenceid=2771421

Wadei, K., Chen, L., Frempong, J, Appeinti, W.A. (2021). The mediation effect of ethical leadership and creative performance. *A social information processing perspective, 55*(1), 241-254. https://doi.org/10.1097/HCM.0000000000000296

Zorlu, K., & Korkmaz, F. (2021). *Organizational communication as an effective communication strategy in organizations and the role of the leader. In management strategies to survive in a competitive environment (pp. 305-320).* Springer