

# INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: AN EXPLORATION OF KEY INFLUENCING FACTORS

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## ABSTRACT

Internal communication significantly contributes to improving organizational effectiveness, employee satisfaction, and institutional performance within higher education institutions. This study seeks to recognize and examine the main factors affecting internal communication within higher education institutions. A structured scale with 16 statements was created following a thorough review of existing literature. Data were gathered from faculty members of higher education institutions and examined through reliability analysis and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Exploratory factor analysis condensed the 16 statements into five key factors: Communication Climate and Institutional Bond, Supervisory Communication, Co-worker (Horizontal) Communication, Communication Satisfaction, and Feedback, which collectively accounted for 69.276% of the overall variance.

The study finds that strong internal communication greatly enhances a favourable workplace atmosphere, staff dedication, and organizational achievement. It highlights the importance of higher education institutions improving internal communication and increasing communication satisfaction among faculty to boost overall organizational effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Internal Communication, Higher Education Institutions, Communication Climate, Supervisory Communication, Communication Satisfaction, Feedback, Factor Analysis.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The internal communication is a process that largely contributes to motivating and retaining employees as “the employees, regardless of the field of activity, are considered to be the foundation of society”. Communication with the stakeholders involved in higher education represents a major step in establishing competitive advantages by identifying their needs and finding the necessary means to satisfy them. (Avram, 2015). If an organization is to achieve its goals, it must not only have the required resources, it must also use them effectively (Yildiz, 2016).

While employees have always been critical to the success of any organization, they have assumed an increasingly greater importance that is being recognized inside and outside work organizations. Spurred on by increasing competition, fast paced technological change, globalization, and other factors; corporations are seeking to understand how one of the last truly competitive resources, their human resources, can be managed to perform to their best and therefore enhance employee performance and competitive advantage (Lydia and Kosgei, 2016).

Internal Communication is therefore a market-oriented activity that is developed within an organization. The aim of internal communication is that the visions of the organization are well communicated throughout the organization so that the employees become more aware of how their work fits in the broader scheme of organizational operations.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Edmiston-Strasser (2009)** analyzed the strategic process of integrated marketing communication (IMC) and its current application in US public institutions of higher education (IHEs). The data for the study was collected from 42 leading US public colleges and universities (as ranked by U.S. News & World Report). The results of descriptive statistics revealed that several variables impact integrated marketing communication (IMC) in US public IHEs to including leadership and formal communication mechanisms.

**Chapleo (2010)** aimed to explore the ‘marketing variables’ associated with branding activity for UK higher education institutions (HEIs) identified as having ‘successful’ brands. Twenty two Interviews were conducted among HEI Heads of Marketing/ External Relations (HOM) and Heads of Careers (HOC) for UK universities over an eight-month period between February and September 2007. Delphi technique was used to analyze the trends followed in higher education institutions (HEIs). The study found clear vision, internal support, support of leadership and marketing communications as important factors determining the success of higher education institutions in UK.

**Avram (2015)** formulated a study to identify the main targets of internal and external communication process in higher educational institutions. The author’s objective was to analyze the student’s perception regarding the impact and importance of internal and external communication on academic visibility in the market. For the purpose of the study, the frequency of course attendance, the frequency of using universities web-sites for informative purposes, the link between environment and university has also been identified. A sample of 246 respondents from three different higher education institutions comprising of 56.5% from University of Bucharest, 22.8% from Bucharest University of Economics Studies and 20.7% from Romanian American University was selected. Simple linear Regression technique was used for data analysis. It was finally found that 66 out of 246 visit the university website for informative purpose once in a month, 60 visit the site once in a week whereas 19 visit it daily. Results indicated that 215 out of 246 attend their courses daily. As far as internal and external communication is concerned most important aspect is communication with students followed by communication with academic staff and in relation to external communication potential students are the main targets followed by communication with graduates. It has also been observed that external communication is more appreciated for ensuring academic visibility in the market. It was concluded that both internal and external communication have their own roles to play for the improvement of employee performance and for ensuring a higher educational institution’s visibility in the market and to provide a competitive edge.

**Sadia et al (2017)** attempted to investigate the major hindrances and problems of communication satisfaction among academic staff of Malaysian public universities and its impact on management function and organizational communication. The authors aim was to determine the patterns of communication system in universities and to analyze various challenges to the communication and to suggest ways of improving communication system. Based on the review of literature, the study concluded that improving of communication satisfaction in academic organizations particularly tertiary institutions would help improve productivity and harmonious working environment in the organization.

**Roy and Mishra (2018)** attempted to investigate various Internal Marketing Communication (IMC) tools used by educational Institutions. Collecting data from social networks like Face book, Twitter and other applications (such as YouTube),the study used descriptive statistics and concluded that for marketing strategy planning for higher-education institutions and universities, there is a need to apply integrated marketing communication. Educational

institutions should create their marketing mix components based on their needs, wishes and expectations before deciding the Internal Marketing Communication (IMC) tools.

**Zainun et al (2020)** attempted to assess the moderating role of internal communication in the technostress and commitment to change relationship. A total of 225 administrative employees in public higher education institutions in the Northern Region of Peninsular Malaysia participated in the study. Using structural equation modeling, the results of the study indicated that techno-invasion and techno-insecurity were negatively associated with commitment to change, while techno-uncertainty was positively related to commitment to change. Internal communication was found to moderate the relationship between techno-uncertainty and commitment to change.

### 3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is:

- To find out various factors affecting internal communication in higher education institutions.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Purposive sampling was employed to choose faculty members from six universities located in Punjab—three from the public sector Panjab University, Chandigarh; Punjabi University, Patiala; Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and three from the private sector Lovely Professional University, Phagwara; Sri Guru Granth Sahib World University, Fatehgarh Sahib and Chandigarh University, Chandigarh in the Private Sector. Higher Education Institutions providing courses in humanities, commerce, science, and engineering were narrowed down, and the oldest universities from amongst the shortlisted universities were selected, three each from both the public and private sector. Data were gathered via in-person visits, emails, and questionnaires conducted on WhatsApp. Out of the 724 responses collected (374 from public institutions and 350 from private ones), only fully completed questionnaires were kept, yielding a final sample of 600 faculty members, including 296 from public universities and 304 from private universities.

### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### 5.1 Formulation of scale and statements

A scale was formulated to find out the factors affecting internal communication in higher education institutions. Items for the scale were formulated on the basis of the review of literature (Schuller & Chalupsky, 2011; Gumus & Hamarat, 2014; Avram, 2015; Brennemann 2018). In all, 16 statements were formulated. Table 1.1 presents the list of 16 statements considered in order to find out the factors affecting internal communication in higher education institutions.

**Table 1.1: Factors Affecting Internal Communication in Higher Education Institutions**

Statements	Factors affecting Internal Communication in Higher Education Institutions
S1	Our institution gives due weightage to internal communication in contrast to other institutions.
S2	There is no effective communication among the staff members and the management.
S3	We are informed about everything in advance in a phased manner in our institution.

S4	In our institution communications are concise.
S5	Internal communication enhances my bond with my institution.
S6	Internal communication leads to complete transparency between staff and the head of our institution.
S7	Our institutional head is always on the forefront in resolving issues of our staff.
S8	Our institutional head communicates clearly in keeping up with the existing brand image of our institute.
S9	Internal communication is spread evenly to all staff members.
S10	Staff at different levels clearly understands the directions and the key priorities of our institution.
S11	Effective internal communication leads to comfortable work environment in our institution.
S12	Communication satisfaction internally strengthens my positive working attitude.
S13	Our institution manages poor staff communication to cease staff burn out syndrome.
S14	My institution regularly defines expectancy levels to be met in our job.
S15	There is a system of complete information sharing between the management and the entire staff.
S16	Our suggestions are always welcomed by our institution.

*Source: Review of Literature*

### 5.2 Sample Adequacy and Factor Analysis -Table 1.2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		<b>.799</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>	<b>3646.966</b>
	<b>Df</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>.000</b>

*Source: Calculated through SPSS.*

**Exploratory factor analysis** has been used to reduce the data i.e. the 16 item scale in order to explore the various factors affecting internal communication in higher education institutions of Punjab. KMO values close to 1.0 generally indicate that the data is fit for running factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The value was found to be 0.799 (as shown in Table 1.2). The following are the factors that have been extracted as shown in Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3: Summary of Factors affecting Internal Communication in Higher Education Institutions**

<b>Table 1.3: Summary of Factors affecting Internal Communication in Higher Education Institutions</b>						
<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Factor Name (Variance Explained %)</b>	<b>Eigen Value</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha</b>	<b>Loading</b>	<b>Statements Included in the Factor</b>	

F <sub>1</sub>	<b>Communication Climate and Institutional Bond</b> (20.548%)	4.395	0.865	.855	Our institution gives due weightage to internal communication in contrast to other institutions.
				.848	There is no effective communication among the staff members and the management.
				.806	We are informed about everything in advance in a phased manner in our institution.
				.736	In our institution communications are concise.
				.684	Internal communication enhances my bond with my institution.
F <sub>2</sub>	<b>Supervisory Communication</b> (13.770%)	2.526	0.811	.840	Internal communication leads to complete transparency between staff and the head of our institution.
				.804	Our institutional head is always on the forefront in resolving issues of our staff.
				.801	Our institutional head communicates clearly in keeping up with the existing brand image of our institute.
F <sub>3</sub>	<b>Co-worker(Horizontal) Communication</b> (12.542%)	1.770	0.732	.834	Internal communication is spread evenly to all staff members.
				.819	Staff at different levels clearly understands the directions and the key priorities of our institution.
				.740	Effective internal communication leads to comfortable work environment in our institution.
F <sub>4</sub>	<b>Communication Satisfaction</b> (12.471%)	1.390	0.739	.847	Communication satisfaction internally strengthens my positive

					working attitude.
				.811	Our institution manages poor staff communication to cease staff burn out syndrome.
F <sub>5</sub>	<b>Feedback</b> (9.945%)	1.003	0.743	.896	My institution regularly defines expectancy levels to be met in our job.
				.876	There is a system of complete information sharing between the management and the entire staff.
				.568	Our suggestions are not always welcomed by our institution.

**Source: Compiled from the results of SPSS.**

On applying factor analysis, 16 statements were reduced to 5 factors that accounted for 69.276% of the variance in the data (Table 1.3) which is above the minimum recommended limit of 60% as recommended by Malhotra and Dash, 2016. Table 1.3 portrays the five factors that were extracted with the help of factor analysis along with the loadings for all statements, cronbach alpha, eigen values and percentage of variance explained by each factor.

The following are the factors that have been extracted after applying factor analysis as shown in Table 1.3:

**Factor 1: Communication Climate and Institutional Bond**

Communication Climate and Institutional Bond is the first and the most important factor of internal communication in a higher education institution. The factor explained 20.548% of the total variance explained. The dimension communication climate and institutional bond included statements namely “Our institution gives due weightage to internal communication in contrast to other institutions (.855)”, “We are informed about everything in advance in a phased manner in our institution (.806)”, “In our institution communications are concise (.736)” and “Internal communication enhances my bond with my institution (.684)”. These statements bring out the fact that the communication climate within a higher education institution and the bond shared by the employees among themselves helps to make the internal communication with the employees in higher education institutions effective. This in turn has a positive influence on organizational identification because it is the faculty’s communicative ability that plays an important role in building the image of the higher education institution among its stakeholders.

**Factor 2: Supervisory Communication**

Supervisory Communication explaining 13.770% of the total variance was identified as the second most important factor of internal communication in higher education institutions. The factor included statements such as “Internal communication leads to complete transparency between staff and the head of our institution (.840)”, “Our institutional head is always on the

forefront in resolving issues of our staff (.804)” and “Our institutional head communicates clearly in keeping up with the existing brand image of our institute (.801)”. The factor focuses on the fact that the involvement and the attitude of the head of the departments in higher education institutions and the guidance given by them to the other faculty members is what determines the effectiveness of the day to day working of the institution.

### **Factor 3: Co-worker (Horizontal) Communication**

Co-worker (Horizontal) Communication comprising of statements namely “Internal communication is spread evenly to all staff members (.834)”, “Staff at different levels clearly understands the directions and the key priorities of our institution (.819)” and “Effective internal communication leads to comfortable work environment in our institution (.740)” was identified as the third most important factor of internal communication practices in higher education institutions. The factor explained 12.542% of the total variance and focused on the need of co-worker communication i.e. the communication of the faculty members of higher education institutions with their peer group which would lead to a comfortable and understanding work environment in the entire institution.

### **Factor 4: Communication Satisfaction**

Communication Satisfaction explaining 12.471% of the total variance have been identified as the fourth most important factor of internal communication in higher education institutions. The dimension comprised of statements “Communication satisfaction internally strengthens my positive working attitude (.847)” and “Our institution manages poor staff communication to cease staff burn out syndrome (.811)”. This factor focused on the fact that the communication satisfaction of faculty working in higher education institutions is very important to be able to perform better.

### **Factor 5: Feedback**

Feedback was identified as the fifth important factor of internal communication in higher education institutions explaining 9.945% of the total variance. The factor contained statements namely “My institution regularly defines expectancy levels to be met in our job (.896)”, “There is a system of complete information sharing between the management and the entire staff (.876)” and “Our suggestions are not always welcomed by our institution (.568)”. The factor stresses on the fact that the feedback of the faculty is very important part of effective communication in higher education institutions.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The results of factor analysis portrayed the factors affecting internal communication in HEIs with university status. The understanding of the concept of the internal communication dimensions and impact on faculty members has been limited in Indian context. The five-factor model of internal communication reported in this chapter shows the factors affecting internal communication prevalent in HEIs. The data from 600 faculty members, a 16 item model was developed. The factor model captures five factors affecting internal communication: Communication Climate and Institutional Bond, Supervisory Communication, Co-worker (Horizontal) Communication, Communication Satisfaction, and Feedback. The results of EFA show factors of included items only, additional factors may exist that are not defined in this study.

Empirical investigation aimed at exploring factors affecting internal communication in the higher education sector is progressively important for academicians and for authorities. The

authorities can understand the internal feelings of faculty members through their perceptions and can help them while developing and implementing internal communication dimensions.

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