AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF INTERPERSONAL GROUP AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN A BUREAUCRATIC HEALTH ORGANIZATION

SYNOPSIS

SUNDARI KRISHNAMURTHY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

MADRAS - 600 005

In Sanskrit "communication" is conveyed by the word "Samāgama" which means "coming together" or "community". A similar etymological connection can be noticed in the Latin word "communicare" which means "to make common" from which are derived both "communication" and "community". It is obvious then, the community develops, along with its communicative power through several media, particularly language forms.

In pre-historic times, communication must have begun with speech and pictures. An improvement in the form of pictures and specifically meaningful signals will involve a community sense and sharing of knowledge, though of a very rudimentary variety. The time of transition, with the passage of centuries, to the art of writing and the use of alphabets, is critical and all important for civilization and knowledge sharing. When writing was developed knowledge, could be recorded and preserved for posterity so that cultures and civilizations could have a continuous memory collectively of past achievements and make advancements from the point left of, possible. Language is not only an individual phenomenon but is a social phenomenon thus creating societies different from animal groups with an interaction in conscious goals, interests and purposes.

Indian thinkers have for long been aware of the importance of communication. This is seen in an ancient hymn in the Ṛg-Veda (X, 71, 1-11). This hymn to knowledge, recounts the origin of

sacred speech. It tells of the origin, development and flowering
of the most astonishing monument ever designed by the mind,
chiseled out of the verbal substance - the Sanskrit language. It
is seen that the people of the vedic times (2500 B.C.) were
conscious of the importance of language and therefore of communi-
cation.

By about 1500 B.C. (the vedic period) great revolutionary
transformations had taken place for mankind in India - the wheel
and agriculture, economic division of labour and political insti-
tutions for government, language and culture had developed.
Language thus became an important tool of education and instruc-
tional communication developed. In the communal life of the
vedic period, people communicated with each other, socialised the
young ones, transmitted culture causing the development of
interpersonal communication. Speech was used as a weapon in social
conflict, as a mechanism of social control, as a vehicle for
transmission of status claims, as a means of socialization, as a
symbolic rallying point for group solidarity thus generating
cultural communication. Political, economic, health and admini-
strative organizations utilised communication in their daily
transactions causing the development of political, health and
organizational communications. Thus all these multi-faceted
development of communications can be arranged at several sociolo-
gically hierarchical levels - for example, interpersonal communi-
cation, organizational communication, mass communication and
intercultural communication; communication came to be utilised in
topical settings as for example in politics, education and medicine.

India's culture is rich and variegated and so have been the communicative arts, mechanics and usages. There is a wealth of information on these seven areas of communication both in the writings of Indian and Western scholars.

On examining literature in these seven areas in communication in the Indian context it was found that not much attention has been paid to organizational communication either in the past or in contemporary India. Hence, the present study.

The objective of the present thesis is to analyse communications in an organizational setting. Like the wheel, tools, weapons and agriculture, organizations also were created by man historically to aid him in evolutionary development. Organizations exist because it is easier for a large group of people acting interdependently to transform resources than it is for individuals. There is a strong relationship between the organization's ability to transform the resources it acquires and the outcome it desires. The mechanism through which control and co-ordination of the organization is accomplished is communication. There can be no separation between organising functions and communicating functions in organizations. In modern society organizations are an inescapable part of our lives. Therefore the present thesis aims at studying organizational communications.

Organizations - and thus their study - can be extremely complex. While organizational effectiveness is obviously a result of a constellation of various forces, it has been found that communication plays a significant part in contributing to or

detracting from total organizational effectiveness. Not only is it vital for organizations to communicate effectively with their external environment but internal communication effectiveness is also of critical importance. Organizations need accurate and timely information about what is going on in their relevant environments, but they also need the internal capability to process this information. A focus as in the present study on the psycho-social dimensions of how people communicate both internally and externally in the organization thus is an interesting area of study in organizational communication.

The present study tries to find out the methods by which people in an organization utilise communication. This is crucial and all-important for it has been recognized that people and organizations survive due to communication. When people find it difficult to cope with life at the personal level, one of the main reasons is lack of adequate information. Also their performance at a job depends largely on the amount of information they possess. Since organization are made of people, the communication problems of the individual are transported to the larger unit of the organization through its employees. People are the most critical resources in an organization. Hence, their motivation, level of satisfaction, group interaction and leadership determines the types and range of communication systems in an organization. Hence, the present study focuses on those psycho-social variables of people which influence communications in organizations.

The present thesis aims at studying a bureaucratic organiza-
tion, because we live in an age which is characterized by the
growth of bureaucractive organizations, both in size and number.
Increased specialization of function, both within and among
organizations, appears to be a concomitant of these trends. There
are two major consequences of these developments. One is the rise
of large concentrations of power, in opposition to which the man
in the street may well feel quite helpless. The other is the
transformation of interpersonal relations. Ever since Independence
there has been a prolific growth of the bureaucracy in India and
therefore a study of bureaucratic organizations is of contemporary
value.

The present thesis aims at studying a Health Organization,
which is also bureaucratic, because among all the service organiza-
tions like Banks, Insurance, etc., it is health which is very
crucial to a nation and that too to a developing nation like India.
A nation is judged by the quality of its people and the quality of
the people is determined by health. Large outlays of capital and
expenditure of resources - manpower, materials, machines etc.,
have been spent both by the Central and State Governments. ·It
therefore becomes interesting to analyse and understand as in the
present thesis the interplay of various factors within the organi-
zation like leadership, organizational climate, peer leadership
and satisfaction and the interplay of these variables on organiza-
tional size, structure and communication effectiveness and there-
fore on organizational effectiveness.

In brief, the present thesis aims at studying communications in a bureaucratic health organization and attempts to study such of those psycho-social variables like leadership, climate, satisfaction and group process as they affect the communicative process in an organizations.

"Communication", "Organization" and "Organizational Communication" are defined for this study. Since communication is all-pervasive, there are about 126 definitions of communication. Dance & Larson have defined "Communication is the process (or the product of the process) of acting on information". "Organization" as defined by the Classical theorists, "is the structure of the relationships, powers, objectives, roles, activities, communications and other factors that exist when persons work together". A modern theorist would define an organization as a "structured process in which individuals interact for objectives". It is difficult to define "Organizational Communication" (OC). The Abstracts jointly published by the American Business Communication Association and the International Communication Association categorise OC as consisting of the following subtopics:

1) interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup communication in organizations;

ii) communication factors and organization goals (like morale, effectiveness, innovation, leadership, motivation, etc.);

iii) skill improvement and training in OC;

iv) communication media in organizations-software and hardware;

v) communication system analysis in organizations &

vi) research methodology in OC.

The theoretical background for the present thesis was based on a review of literature on organizational theory and behaviour, studies on bureaucratic and health organizations and the research on organizational communication literature. Bureaucratic theory has brought out the influence of structure and hierarchy of the organizations, on the flow, centrel and direction of communication. A high density of written communication is seen in bureaucratic organizations. These ideas are specially noteworthy for the present thesis, as the organization studied was bureaucratic.

Administrative theory and scientific management through the communication process aimed at coordinating and controlling the numerous individuals in the organization as also the variegated types of tasks being performed in the organization. Again, the literature on administrative theory and scientific management is very useful to the present thesis, as the health organization studied is spread over Tamil Nadu State. Information, coordination and control over the personnel, units and programs of the health organization are achieved in and through administrative communication.

Group work, participative decision-making and upward communication were the main elements of the Human Relation theory. Since in the present thesis data were gathered from a health organization, the contribution of Human Relations theory to communications in organizations is particularly relevant to the present thesis. The personnel in a health organization are constantly dealing with life-and-death situations; also the development of the nation is highly

dependent on such health programs as family planning, leprosy control, eradication of malaria and filaria, detection and control of T.B. and the implementation of public health measures. The success of the Health programs would depend in a large measure on the human resources (more than the material resources) of the organization. Therefore, the personnel of health organizations will have to be handled according to the principles of the human relationists.

The fusion, linking-pin and social-systems theories show that communication is not merely the tie that binds the organization, but is also a process that permeates every aspect of organizational life- be it planning, organizing, staffing, directing, commanding, controlling, innovating, decision-making, leading, motivating and coordinating. Thus, communicating is organizing. Communications as used in various aspects of organizational life are studied in the present thesis and the literature of linking-pin and other theories are therefore useful.

Systems theory has viewed the organization as being multi-level, multi-variable and multi-dimensional and the myriad facets of organizational life are moulded by communication. Communication is thus a multi-trait phenomenon in organizations, and this is how it is studied in the present thesis.

Futuristic "ad-hoc" organizations use communications as a high-level tool to aid the organization in its functioning. This theory is again of special interest to the present thesis, as

special ad-hoc committees and high-level work groups functions in
the health organization studied, during special situations, like
an epidemic or during special occasions, like Mahamakam, when
communication coordinates the multiple fronts of work in the
organization.

Research on health organizations and health communication
show the importance of the individual health-care employee.
Interpersonal communication between the health-care personnel
(whether doctor, nurse or health visiter) and the patient is
crucial. Team-work and group participation and communication is
the very core of the organization's functioning. Since health
organizations differ vastly from other service organizations, a
systems view-point is adopted currently, whereby an organization
is studied at multi-level, as multi-functional and as exhibiting
multi-traits.

Important areas and variables for study have emerged from a
review of literature in the different sub-fields of organizational
communication; inter-personal communication, intragroup and inter-
group communication, communication factors and organizational
goals, skill improvement and training in OC, communication media in
organizations and communication Systems Analysis in organizations.

Though organizations have been studied by students of socio-
logy, psychology, public administration and management, it is the
scholar of organizational communication who is able to study all
the facets of the organization. In fact it has been maintained by
scholars that, what is called an "organization", emerges from the

communication behaviours of interacting human beings. Hawes is of the conclusion, "Rather than assuming already organized organizations, the alternative perspective considers it necessary to determine <u>how</u> such patterned behaviour evolves, <u>how</u> the collectivities maintain themselves and <u>how</u> they disengage... In short, a social collectivity <u>is</u> patterned communicative behaviour, communicative behaviour does not occur <u>within</u> a network of relationship but <u>is</u> that network".

Having roots in social psychology, organization theory and behaviour, human relations and others, organizational communication, was reviewed as a collection of disciplines in search of a domain in the 1960's. However, today it may be said that organizational communication is a field of communication, with a sufficient theoretical background and practical research methodology, to be recognised as an area of study and research.

Human communication performance is a multi-dimensional variable, as is human work performance. Therefore, there is a multiplicity of variables available for study in an organizational setting. However, researchers in organizational communication have usually analysed variables related to structure, outputs, demographics and media-usage.

Following the pioneering work of Likert and Hain & others the present investigation has focused attention on psycho-social variables of supervisory leadership, organizational climate, peer leadership, group process, psychological contract and job

satisfaction which are studied as they interact independently, inter-actively and collectively.

Demographic variables such as age, sex, education, job tenure, training and supervisory status are examined for their interactions with the above psychosocial variables. Structural variables analysed were formality, size and type of structure. Variables connected with media-usage, directionality, content and percent of initiation were also examined for their contribution to overall organizational communication.

Supervisory leadership and organizational climate were treated as Internal causal variables. The primary intervening variables were peer leadership, group process, and psychological contract. Dependent variable considered was job satisfaction. All these variables were measured using a questionaire designed for the present investigation.

The variables used in the investigation were defined as follows:

Internal causal variables are independent variables which determine the course of developments within an organization and the results achieved by the organization. These causal variables can be altered or changed by the organization's management. Causal variables include the structure of the organization, technology, management style, and organizational climate. The causal variables utilised in the present study were: organizational climate and supervisory leadership. Each of these causal

variables is defined below along with the criteria which comprise
them.

1. Climate

The conditions above and outside of the work group which affect
the group's performance.

A. Upward Receptivity. A measure of the supervisor's recep-
tiveness to subordinate ideas and suggestions.

B. Coordination. A measure of the various work group's
ability to plan and to coordinate their efforts, as well as
their ability to solve problems and to settle differences.

C. Decision Making. A measure of the behaviours which deter-
mine the problem-solving and decision-making abilities of
the system.

II. Supervisory Leadership

A. Support. Behaviour by the supervisor which increases the
subordinate's feeling of worth and importance.

B. Goal Emphasis. Behaviour by the superviser which stimu-
lates enthusiasm among subordinates for getting the work
done.

C. Team Building. Behaviour by the superviser which builds
the subordinate's group into a work team.

D. Work Facilitation. Behaviour by the superviser which helps
the subordinates get the work done by removing road blocks
and obstacles.

Intervening variables reflect the internal state and health
of the organization e.g., the loyalties, attitudes, motivations,

and perception of all members and their collective capacity for effective interaction, communication, and decision making. The primary intervening variables measured in the study were peer leadership, group process, and psychological contract.

I. Peer Leadership

    A. Support. An index of how the behaviour of members of a work group contributes to the individual's sense of importance and personal worth.

    B. Goal Emphasis. A measure of the extent to which a group's behaviour encourages and maintains high standards of performance.

    C. Team building. An index of peer interaction to accomplish team goals.

    D. Work Facilitation. Peer behaviour which helps the subordinates actually get the work done by removing obstacles and road blocks.

II. Group Process

    A. Intra-Group Coordination. A measure of the work group's ability to effectively plan and coordinate its activities together.

    B. Group Problem Solving. A measure of the group's ability to make good decisions and solve problems effectively.

    C. Motivation. An index of the factors which encourage people to work hard (e.g., other people, policies, and conditions).

    D. Communication. An index of the information sharing and receptiveness of ideas and suggestions.

III. Psychological Contract

An index of the individual's expectations regarding his
rights within, regards from, and obligations to the organiza-
tion -- as measured by the degree to which the individual's
basic and higher needs have been satisfied by the
organization.

End-result variables are dependent variables which reflect
the achievements of the organization such as its productivity,
costs, scrap loss, and earnings. Job satisfaction is also an
end-result variable and was the only one measured by the survey
instrument. It is important to note, however, that changes in
job satisfaction are highly related to changes in organizational
performance. Job satisfaction is defined below along with the
factors which comprise this index.

Satisfaction

A. Company. A measure of satisfaction with the Organization
   compared to other familiar organizations.
B. Job. A measure of job satisfaction taking into account
   all of the other variables.
C. Pay. A measure of satisfaction with pay relative to the
   skills and effort put into the work.
D. Work Group. A measure of satisfaction with the other
   individuals working within the work group.

The preceding model implies that by manipulating or changing
causal variables such as supervisory style or organizational

climate, a demonstratable change will also take place in the intervening variables of communication, motivation, and coordination; in other words, the internal operating procedures of the organization. These intervening effects, in turn, will have a significant influence on the end-result variables--job satisfaction. In brief, if causal variables are altered, a corresponding change will be produced in the intervening variables which ultimately will be reflected in changes in the end-result variables.

Sample sizes and sampling plans have varied considerably over the past thirty years. Excluding case histories, in the 1950's most organizational communication research designs used sample sizes under 100; in the 1960's, this increased to approximately 200 persons per study. More recent samples, from the 1970's have averaged slightly over 300 per study. Sampling plans, currently, have called for measurements taken from individuals, entire sub-groups or departments, or from the total organization.

In the present investigation, the questionnaire was administered to middle-level employees, i.e. those directly involved in the delivery of health-care in the rural areas like, the doctor, health inspector, vaccinator, health visitor, leprosy inspector, etc., Data were collected from personnel drawn from about 40 Primary Health Centres and 16 District Head Quarters Hospitals distributed in the 16 Districts of Tamil Nadu i.e. data from personnel from health programs like Malaria, Family-Welfare, Public Health and Leprosy, from entire sub-units were collected.

The development of the use of quantitative measurement analysis in organizational communication research has paralleled the growing use of mathematical models in all the social sciences. The general direction of this progression has been from the early use of aggregate scores of ratings, through the use of comparative statistical procedures and tests of significance, to the use of correlative and regressive techniques. Appropriate analysis like ANOVA, multiple correlation etc have been used in this study.

The findings of the present investigations are briefly as follows:

The most basic unit or sub-system of the organization is the individual. The ways in which individuals transmit, interpret and receive messages and the ways in which these messages affect the individual's motivation are central factors of organizational communication. A dyad is formed when two persons interact in an organization. Dyadic communication is an important element of the organization and considerably influence organizational climate. Still another sub-system occurs when three or more organizational members interacts: the group. Superior - subordinate interaction, interaction among peers largely influence group process and group behaviour - which play a crucial role in the effectiveness of an organization. The final communication sub-system is less readily identifiable. It involves individual dyadic and group sub-systems - this is the organization's hierarchy. Individuals and groups high in the hierarchy influence those lower in the hierarchy. Communication exerting leadership is the largest sub-system of organizational communication. Lastly, the system

itself; the organization is made up of channels and networks which connect the individual, dyadic, group and hierarchical sub-systems. Physical location, interpersonal relationships, job requirements and organizational policies influence the ways in which organizational systems interact.

Our society is saturated with organizations. We live our lives contributing to the input of some organizations, serving the operations of others, and consuming the output of still others. As we have seen, these organizations exist largely because of communication. Hence the study of organizational communication is relevant to virtually every member of our society.

*****