

## The Role of Organizational Communication in Improving Employee Performance at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan in the Digital Era

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### Abstract

Organizational communication has an important role in facilitating the effective flow of information, building clear understanding, and improving employee performance. This research aims to analyze the role of organizational communication in improving the performance of employees of the Medan Indonesian Palm Oil Institute of Technology in the digital era. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive method. The subjects of this research were the chancellor, deputy chancellor 1 for academic affairs, deputy chancellor 2 for human resources and finance, vice chancellor 3 for student affairs, and head of the human resources department. Data collection techniques in this research are interviews, observation and documentation. The data analysis techniques in this research are data presentation, data reduction, conclusion drawing and evaluation. The results of this research explain that the role of organizational communication carried out by ITSI leaders has been running well. The leaders of the Indonesian palm oil technology institute carry out their role in improving employee performance by motivating employees both directly and indirectly through their respective regulations. The form of motivation is by providing class promotions, providing positions according to competency, providing training and further studies. This research also explains that in overcoming communication barriers, ITSI leaders have implemented various strategies to overcome these obstacles, such as providing adequate infrastructure, building a culture of mutual respect, and utilizing technology in communication.

**Keywords:** Organizational communication, roles, employee performance.

### INTRODUCTION

Human beings constantly interact with one another. They even tend to live in groups or organizations in order to achieve common goals that would be impossible to attain individually. These interactions and collaborations continue to develop systematically, forming what is known as an organization. Interactions or relationships among individuals and groups or teams within every organization generate expectations. These expectations subsequently create specific roles that must be carried out by each individual in order to realize the vision, mission, and objectives of the organization or group (Hazani, 2022).

Communication is a means of fostering goodwill in daily life, whether at home, school, university, the workplace, or in public settings. Through communication, both from individual to individual and from individual to group, people can share information with one another. Particularly in the workplace, communication has always been the primary tool for obtaining information and delivering services in carrying out work (Daryono, 2018).

Communication should involve the exchange of meaningful information and serves as a powerful tool linking organizations and their environments with strategic objectives, marketing planning purposes, and tactical organizational actions aimed at attracting the attention of customers and stakeholders (R. Ginting & Hidayati, 2016).

According to Robbins and Coulter, as cited in (Wibowo, 2019), communication has four functions: control, motivation, emotional expression, and information. Communication functions to control employee behavior in various ways. It acts as a motivational tool by clarifying what employees should do, how well they are performing, and what can be done to improve their performance. In addition, communication allows individuals to express their emotions and fulfill their social needs. Ultimately, communication provides information needed by individuals and groups to accomplish organizational tasks.

Communication is the process of sharing meaning through verbal and nonverbal behavior. Any behavior may be considered communication if it involves two or more people (Mulyana, as cited in Thariq & Anshori, 2017).

Organizational communication is the process of creating and exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relationships in order to cope with uncertain or constantly changing environments. This definition contains seven key concepts: process, message, network, interdependence, relationship, environment, and uncertainty (Muhammad, 2019).

Goldhaber (Muhammad, 2019) states that organizational communication is “the process of creating and exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relationships to cope with environmental uncertainty”; in other words, organizational communication is the process of creating and exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relationships in order to deal with uncertain or constantly changing environments.

An organization is established as a forum in which a number of individuals gather and carry out a series of activities regularly to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals. Particularly in modern society, people feel that in addition to managing themselves, they must also manage their environment, maintain order, organize, and control it through a series of activities known as management and organization. Communication functions as a system that connects individuals and organizational units, or as a flow that is capable of enhancing the performance of those involved within the organization.

Organizational effectiveness lies in the effectiveness of communication, because communication is essential for creating a shared understanding between information senders and receivers at all levels of the organization. Furthermore, communication also plays a role in building an organizational climate that can ultimately influence organizational efficiency and productivity (Hazani, 2022).

Because of the importance of the relationship between managers as organizational leaders and communication, their role needs to be explained so that its influence on the

organizational behavior of employees (internal publics) and those outside the organization but related to it (external publics) can be clearly understood (Effendy, 2017).

Organizations or companies need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their employees as a basis for improving weaknesses and strengthening strengths in order to enhance productivity and employee development. Therefore, periodic performance evaluations oriented toward the past or the future are necessary. Based on the performance theory of Bernardin and Russell, employee performance is conceptually defined as the results achieved by employees in carrying out the responsibilities assigned to them, which demonstrate outcomes and provide useful and effective contributions to the organization. These are reflected in Quantity of Work, Quality of Work, Job Knowledge, Creativeness, Cooperation, Initiative, and Personal Qualities (Putra, 2019).

The Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology (Institut Teknologi Sawit Indonesia/ITSI) Medan is one of the private higher education institutions in North Sumatra and the only institution specifically focused on developing human resources in the palm oil industry. The Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology (ITSI) is a transformation of the institution formerly known as STIPAP (Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Pertanian Agrobisnis Perkebunan) and produces undergraduate graduates in the field of palm oil plantation studies.

The Two-Way Communication Theory emphasizes the importance of dialogue between management and employees. In an organizational context, effective communication not only involves the transmission of information from superiors to subordinates but also includes feedback from employees to management. Two-way communication is a balanced communication process between communicators and recipients. Thus, two-way communication is a process that allows both senders and receivers to occupy equal positions in communication, in processing message content, and in the communication channels that occur (James, as cited in Ilpiyanto et al., 2023).

This is important to ensure that all parties have the same understanding regarding organizational goals and expectations. Feedback is a key element of two-way communication. Employees who feel heard and receive constructive feedback tend to be more engaged and motivated. Research shows that effective feedback can improve job satisfaction and employee performance, which is highly important in both academic and professional contexts.

Performance appraisal is an organizational process for evaluating employee performance. The general purpose of performance appraisal is to provide feedback to employees in an effort to improve their work performance and increase organizational productivity. More specifically, it is conducted in relation to various employee policies, such as promotion, salary increases, education, training, and others (Hariandja, 2002). Therefore, performance appraisal can serve as a basis for assessing the extent to which work activities have been performed effectively. Performance appraisal is not merely an evaluation process aimed at identifying employee strengths and weaknesses, but rather a broader effort to help

employees achieve the level of performance expected by the organization and to support employee and organizational development.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. Qualitative research methods are research approaches that focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of social, cultural, and human behavioral phenomena through the collection and analysis of descriptive, narrative, and interpretive data (Faustyna, 2023).

Qualitative research is intended to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others, holistically, and to describe them in the form of words and language within a specific natural context by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, as cited in Abdul, 2023).

Research subjects are sources of information or individuals who provide data to researchers. In this study, the subjects consisted of the Rector of the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology, the Vice Rector I for Academic Affairs, the Vice Rector II for Human Resources and Finance, the Vice Rector III for Student Affairs, and the Head of the Human Resources Division. This includes various forms of communication occurring within the organization, including communication among employees, communication between management and employees, as well as formal and informal communication that influences interactions within the organization.

Meanwhile, the object of this study was Employee Performance. This refers to the level of effectiveness and efficiency of employees in carrying out their duties and responsibilities at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan. This study evaluates how organizational communication can influence employee performance.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Role of Organizational Communication**

#### **1. Interpersonal Roles**

##### **a. Figurehead Role**

The figurehead role is a role arising from one's position as the head of an organizational unit, whereby a leader or manager performs ceremonial or symbolic duties. Based on the research findings above, it was found that the figurehead role in improving employee performance at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan utilizes ceremonial functions to highlight employee and team achievements, provide recognition to high-performing employees, and emphasize the importance of their contributions to the organization. Furthermore, it promotes open communication and mutual respect to strengthen the values of trust and solidarity, which are essential for improving employee performance.

##### **b. Leader Role**

As a leader, a manager is responsible for ensuring that the work performed by subordinates runs smoothly. Several activities are directly related to leadership at all stages of

management, including policy determination, planning, organizing, mobilizing, supervising, and evaluating. There are also activities that are indirectly related to leadership, such as motivating members to work diligently. To exercise leadership effectively, a leader must be able to communicate effectively. In the context of leadership, a manager communicates effectively when they are able to encourage employees to carry out certain activities with awareness, enthusiasm, and enjoyment. Such a work atmosphere is expected to produce satisfactory results.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that the leaders of the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan perform their role in improving employee performance by motivating employees both directly and indirectly through various regulations and policies. The forms of motivation include providing promotions, assigning positions according to competencies, offering training and opportunities for further study, and striving to be good role models by demonstrating integrity, hard work, and commitment. Leaders also serve as motivators and facilitators to ensure that every employee achieves their best potential and support structured employee development programs through public speaking training and other training programs.

### **c. Liaison Role**

As a liaison, a leader communicates with individuals outside the vertical chain of command, both formally and informally. The following are the results of interviews conducted by the researcher with the leaders of the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan regarding how leaders establish communication relationships with employees through both formal and informal means.

Based on the research findings above, the liaison role carried out by leaders at ITSI Medan demonstrates that effective communication, whether formal or informal, is key to building harmonious relationships with employees. This not only enhances team performance but also creates a positive and inclusive work environment.

## **2. Informational Roles**

### **1. Monitor Role**

In carrying out the monitor role, leaders must view the environment as a source of information.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that in their monitor role, leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology view the work environment as a valuable source of information and strive to build effective communication with staff at all levels. The findings also indicate that the monitor role of leaders depends greatly on their ability to establish effective communication and strong interpersonal relationships. This becomes a key factor in gathering the information necessary for appropriate decision-making within the organization.

### **2. Disseminator Role**

As disseminators of information, managers or leaders receive and collect information from outside the organization and then distribute it to their subordinates.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that the disseminator role is a crucial aspect of leadership in ensuring the effective flow of information from outside the organization to team members, particularly in conveying information so that employees do not misunderstand it. The role of information dissemination requires leaders not only to actively gather external information but also to filter and distribute it appropriately in order to maximize benefits for the organization and team members. Transparent and structured communication is key to successfully carrying out this role.

### **3. Spokesperson Role**

As leaders, in their role as spokespersons, they must communicate information to influential individuals who oversee the organization.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan emphasize the importance of effective communication management by considering the context, urgency, and sensitivity of information to ensure that messages are conveyed clearly and appropriately. The spokesperson role is not merely about delivering information but also about strategically managing messages by selecting appropriate channels, considering the audience, and maintaining the integrity of organizational communication. This approach strengthens transparency, efficiency, and accountability in the delivery of information within the workplace.

### **3. Decisional Roles**

#### **1. Entrepreneur Role**

Leaders or managers strive to advance their organizations and adapt to changes in environmental conditions.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that the entrepreneur role in the leadership of the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan involves efforts to encourage innovation, adaptation to change, and organizational development through proactive and collaborative strategies for employees. Leaders emphasized the importance of creating an environment that supports creativity, adaptability, and team empowerment to respond to continuously changing business dynamics. Leadership focuses not only on enhancing organizational competitiveness but also on building team capacity through empowerment, technological adaptation, and change management. This approach ensures that the organization can respond to external challenges with innovative solutions while maintaining long-term sustainability.

#### **2. Disturbance Handler Role**

In the role of disturbance handler, a manager or leader responds to every pressure

faced by themselves and their team members.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that the disturbance handler role in leadership involves the ability to manage pressure, resolve conflicts, and restore team stability through empathetic, communicative, and solution-oriented approaches. Leaders emphasized the importance of calmness, psychological support, and collaboration when dealing with challenging situations. Through this approach, leaders become not only problem solvers but also facilitators who strengthen the adaptability of teams in facing workplace dynamics.

### **3. Resource Allocator Role**

A manager (leader) has the responsibility to decide what work should be done, who will perform it, and how tasks will be distributed.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology employ effective task and resource allocation strategies by considering the competencies, expertise, and interests of team members. This approach aims to improve productivity, accountability, and job satisfaction while ensuring alignment with the organizational structure. The resource allocator role demonstrated by these leaders reflects a balance between organizational rationality and the human needs of team members. Through this approach, the organization can achieve its goals sustainably while maintaining employee job satisfaction.

### **4. Negotiator Role**

Leaders or managers spend a significant amount of their time negotiating.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan perform the negotiator role effectively through a combination of systematic preparation, in-depth understanding of all related parties, and the ability to create mutually beneficial solutions. The interview findings indicate that successful negotiation depends more on preparation and the right approach than merely on speaking or persuasion skills. The leaders interviewed demonstrated that effective negotiation is a structured process that combines data, empathy, and strategy to achieve optimal outcomes for all parties.

## **Improving Employee Performance**

This study demonstrates results and provides useful and effective contributions to employees of the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology, as reflected in Quantity of Work, Quality of Work, Job Knowledge, Creativeness, Cooperation, Initiative, and Personal Qualities. The following are the research findings related to improving employee performance.

### **1. Quantity of Work**

Based on the research findings above, it was found that in measuring employee work

quantity, ITSI leaders apply modern performance management principles by using various relevant measurement tools such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and annual work targets. There is a common view that measurement should be data-based, structured, and refer to clear standards. Differences only exist in the technical implementation and measurement focus, but all are aimed at creating an objective evaluation system that positively impacts organizational productivity.

## **2. Quality of Work and Job Knowledge**

Work quality will improve when planning and training are provided to employees to support job knowledge.

Based on the research findings above, it was found that leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology strongly support the improvement of employee work quality and job knowledge by consistently providing both internal and external training opportunities. Leaders not only assign employees to attend training but also actively guide, educate, and engage in informal discussions with teams to discuss improvements in work quality. Improvements in work quality depend not only on formal training but also on proactive leadership, a collaborative work environment, and continuous development opportunities.

## **3. Creativeness**

Based on the research findings above, in encouraging employees to innovate in their work, leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan provide incentives or rewards for teams that successfully develop innovative ideas, create spaces for expressing ideas, and support innovation in accordance with technological developments.

## **4. Cooperation**

Based on the research findings above, ITSI leaders build positive relationships with colleagues through effective teamwork developed through active collaboration, open communication, and activities that strengthen relationships among team members.

## **5. Initiative**

Based on the research findings above, it was found that leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology encourage employees to complete their work by providing freedom and trust. However, before granting autonomy, leaders ensure that team members understand their responsibilities through clear guidance. Leaders are prepared to take responsibility if mistakes occur as a result of team initiatives, enabling employees to take measured risks without fear.

## **6. Personal Qualities**

Based on the research findings above, it was found that in addressing personality-related challenges that may affect team performance, leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan employ coaching and counseling approaches, open

communication, and personal dialogue to seek solutions together.

## **Factors Inhibiting the Role of Organizational Communication in Improving Employee Performance at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan in the Digital Era**

### **1. Technical Barriers**

These barriers are caused by inadequate facilities and infrastructure required by the organization, such as physical conditions that do not support effective communication, as well as insufficient mastery of communication techniques and methods.

Based on the research findings above, it was concluded that technical barriers to communication can be overcome by leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology Medan through the provision of adequate infrastructure and the enhancement of user competencies. By adopting a holistic approach that combines adequate infrastructure, user capacity building, and effective support mechanisms, organizations can comprehensively overcome technical communication barriers. This solution not only resolves current issues but also prepares organizations to face communication challenges in the continuously evolving digital era.

### **2. Behavioral Barriers**

Behavioral barriers include preconceived views, emotionally driven prejudices, authoritarian environments, resistance to change, and egocentric attitudes.

Based on the research findings above, it was concluded that behavioral barriers such as prejudice and egocentric attitudes can be overcome through collaborative approaches focused on developing an inclusive organizational culture. By implementing a multidimensional approach that combines education, organizational culture strengthening, and support mechanisms, behavioral barriers can be transformed into strengths that enrich team dynamics. This solution not only addresses current issues but also establishes a strong foundation for more harmonious and productive teamwork in the future. Behavioral transformation requires long-term commitment from all levels of the organization, but the results will be reflected in improved performance and job satisfaction among all team members.

### **3. Language Barriers**

Language barriers refer to all forms used in the process of conveying messages, such as spoken language, written language, gestures, and others.

Based on the research findings above, it was concluded that leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology overcome language communication barriers by using language that is easy to understand so that the messages conveyed can be well received by the team.

### **4. Structural/Organizational Barriers**

Structural barriers are obstacles caused by differences in hierarchical levels or job positions within the organizational structure.

Based on the research findings above, it can be concluded that barriers caused by differences in organizational hierarchy can be overcome through several effective communication strategies. Leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology emphasize the importance of open communication policies and the creation of clear communication channels. The approaches adopted by these leaders demonstrate that effective and participatory communication can overcome structural barriers within organizations, enhance engagement, and create a more harmonious work environment.

## **5. Distance/Geographical Barriers**

Geographical barriers are obstacles viewed from the perspective of distance or geographical location. Communication can occur more easily when both parties interact in locations that are not far apart. However, employees are not always located in the same place, especially in organizations with branches spread across different locations and regions.

Based on the research findings above, it was concluded that the approaches adopted by leaders at the Indonesian Institute of Palm Oil Technology demonstrate that by utilizing modern technology, geographical distance barriers can be minimized, allowing communication among teams to remain smooth and effective.

## **CONCLUSION**

The role of organizational communication in improving employee performance at the Indonesia Institute of Oil Palm Technology (ITSI) Medan in the digital era is highly significant. It encompasses interpersonal, informational, and decision-making aspects. Leaders function as figureheads, leaders, and liaisons, all of which contribute to creating a conducive and productive work environment. The leaders of the Indonesia Institute of Oil Palm Technology carry out their roles in enhancing employee performance by motivating employees both directly and indirectly through established policies and regulations. Forms of motivation include providing promotions in rank, assigning positions according to employees' competencies, offering training programs, and facilitating further education opportunities. In improving employee performance, the leaders of the Indonesia Institute of Oil Palm Technology actively provide training, encourage innovation, and foster positive working relationships to enhance employee productivity and effectiveness.

Several factors hinder the role of organizational communication in improving employee performance at the Indonesia Institute of Oil Palm Technology Medan in the digital era. These include technical barriers, behavioral barriers, language barriers, structural barriers, and geographical distance barriers. The leaders of the Indonesia Institute of Oil Palm Technology have implemented various strategies to overcome these obstacles, such as providing adequate infrastructure, fostering a culture of mutual respect, and utilizing technology to support communication processes.

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