

The Influence of Communication Skills on Employee Performance in Public Organisations: The Case of Morogoro Municipal Council

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of communication skills on employee performance in public sector organisations, where effective communication is essential for navigating bureaucratic systems and engaging diverse stakeholders in service delivery. A descriptive case study design with a quantitative approach was employed at Morogoro Municipal Council in Tanzania, where data were collected using structured questionnaires from 112 employees selected through simple random sampling, and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results indicate that employees possess a high level of communication competence ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.76$) alongside a high level of employee performance ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.72$). The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive association between communication skills and employee performance ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$), while regression results indicate that communication skills significantly predict employee performance ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 37 per cent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.37$). The study concludes that communication skills play a significant role in shaping employee performance in public organisations and recommends that public organisations invest in communication skills development through training, feedback mechanisms, and supportive environments to enhance performance and improve public service delivery.

Key terms: Communication skills, employee performance, public organisation, public sector, service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

In modern organisations, communication is recognised as one of the most critical managerial and interpersonal competencies. According to Aguinis (2019) and Robbins and Judge (2017), organisations rely on effective communication to coordinate activities, share information, resolve conflicts, and foster mutual understanding, all of which are essential for achieving individual and organisational goals. Both private and public organisations benefit from communication as a key driver of collaboration, decision-making, and overall employee performance.

Employee performance, in turn, is widely acknowledged as a fundamental determinant of organisational effectiveness. Public organisations, such as municipal councils, are expected to provide services efficiently while remaining accountable and responsive to citizens. De Janasz et al. (2018) emphasise that employees who communicate clearly, actively listen, provide timely feedback, and engage effectively in interpersonal interactions are more capable of performing well and contribute meaningfully to organisational objectives.

Research has shown that ineffective communication can have serious consequences for organisations. Tourish and Hargie (2004) note that poor communication often leads to misunderstandings, reduced employee morale, weak coordination, and low productivity. Misinterpretation of instructions and ineffective teamwork can result in substandard service delivery, particularly in public organisations where employees operate within complex bureaucratic systems and interact with diverse stakeholders (Boyne, 2002).

In Tanzania, local government authorities play a vital role in delivering essential public services. Despite this important role, many public organisations continue to experience operational inefficiencies. Existing literature links these challenges to various factors, including leadership, motivation, resource constraints, and institutional policies (World Bank, 2018). While several international studies have established a positive relationship between communication skills and employee performance (Clampitt & Downs, 1993; Hargie, 2011), there is limited empirical evidence

focusing specifically on public organisations in Tanzania.

Despite the extensive discussion of communication skills in organisational studies, insufficient attention has been given to how these skills influence individual employee performance in Tanzanian public institutions. This study, therefore, examines the influence of communication skills on employee performance in public organisations in Tanzania, using the Morogoro Municipal Council as a case study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Communication Skills

Communication skills entail a person's ability to effectively send, receive, and interpret information in interpersonal and organisational contexts (Robbins & Judge, 2019). These skills include speaking, listening, writing and reading skills (Keyton, 2017). Effective communication is key to conveying messages clearly and ensuring they are understood accurately by the intended recipients (DeVito, 2016).

Communication in organisations is a tool for coordinating multiple activities and aligning employees with organisational goals. According to organisational behaviour and management scholars, effective communication is a determinant of teamwork, conflicts and mutual understanding (Keyton, 2017). Employees with strong communication skills tend to be better at sharing ideas, providing feedback, and collaborating with colleagues. All these are attributes of employee and organisational performance.

Employee Performance

According to Campbell and Wiernik (2015), employee performance is the degree to which workers successfully execute their duties and fulfil responsibilities to achieve organisational objectives. Employee performance can be measured through indicators such as productivity, quality of work, efficiency, adherence to procedures and standards, and the ability to meet organisational goals (Aguinis, 2019).

High-performing employees tend to demonstrate competence, commitment and ability to work collaboratively with others. Organisational and

management researchers have identified several factors that influence employee performance. They include motivation, training, work environment, leadership and communication effectiveness.

Social Exchange Theory

This study is underpinned by social exchange theory, which was originally developed by Blau (1964). Based on the theory's postulations, social interactions within organisations are considered reciprocal exchanges between individuals and instructions. Similarly, when employees perceive a positive organisational environment, they tend to display positive attitudes and behaviours in return (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

When there is effective communication between management and employees, it fosters trust, transparency and mutual understanding (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When employees receive clear information, constructive feedback and open communication from their supervisors and managers, they are more likely to respond with improved commitment and performance.

In the context of public organisations, effective communication enhances relationships among employees and strengthens collaboration (Keyton, 2017). Social exchange theory, therefore, provides a useful lens for understanding how communication skills foster employees' behaviours and performance outcomes (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Communication Skills and Employee Performance

Various studies in management and organisational research have highlighted a link between communication skills and employee performance (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Employees with strong communication skills are better at coordination, facilitate knowledge sharing, and enhance collaboration. They are better at expressing their ideas, understanding instructions, and resolving workplace conflicts (Keyton, 2017). All these play a significant role in improving teamwork and enhancing work productivity. On the other hand, poor communication tends to result in misunderstandings, task duplication, and delays in decision-making. The literature indicates that organisations that promote effective communication tend to experience higher

levels of employee engagement, improved performance, and better service delivery. This shows that communication skills are considered among the important soft skills that contribute towards organisational success.

In the Kenyan context, empirical research has shown that effective communication has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. For example, a study on effective communication and employee performance in the tobacco industry in Kenya found that employee communication positively and significantly influenced employee performance, indicating that organisations that improve communication are likely to enhance performance outcomes (Mutua et al., 2023). Another Kenyan study at the KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme found that multiple aspects of organisational communication such as communication channels and feedback significantly predicted employee performance (Oronje & Wainaina, 2019).

A similar study conducted in Nigeria examined the relationship between communication skills and employee performance among hotel employees in Rivers State. The research used a cross-sectional survey design and collected data from 250 respondents out of a sample of 306 employees. The analysis indicated a positive relationship between communication skills and various dimensions of employee performance including task accomplishment, innovativeness, and timeliness (Otamiri & Nneka, 2023). These findings suggest that employees with strong communication skills are more likely to complete tasks effectively, demonstrate innovative behaviour, and deliver work on time.

Another study by Onifade et al. (2019) at Unilever Nigeria PLC examined effective communication as a tool for improving employee performance. This research utilised a descriptive survey design with 142 respondents and found a significant positive relationship between effective communication and employee performance, implying that clear and well-structured communication enables employees to comprehend responsibilities and perform more efficiently.

When assessing these empirical studies, one can detect consistent patterns regarding how communication shapes employee performance. Firstly, communication helps enhance employees' understanding of organisational goals, roles, and expectations. This improves employees' ability to perform their tasks effectively. Secondly, effective communication strengthens collaboration and coordination among employees, thereby promoting innovation and efficiency in work processes. Thirdly, communication systems that help provide timely access to information flow reduce misunderstanding and delays, and ultimately improve job performance outcomes.

Although these studies provide relevant insights into how communication skills affect employee performance, they were conducted in different contexts, mainly within industry or county organisational settings and outside Tanzania. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence linking communication skills and employee performance within Tanzanian public organisations. This contextual gap underscores the need for further empirical research to examine how communication skills affect employee performance in Tanzanian public-sector settings.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive case study design that employed a quantitative methodology to investigate the link between communication skills and employee performance. The study was conducted at the Morogoro Municipal Council, a public organisation in Tanzania's local government system. A sample size of 157 employees, calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula, was initially planned; however, only 112 questionnaires were used in the study due to non-response and incomplete responses. However, the study achieved a 71.3 per cent response rate, which is sufficient for inclusion in the data analysis, as per Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). A simple random sampling technique was employed. Data analysis involved the application of descriptive and inferential

statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics outputs included the mean score and standard deviation. On the other hand, outputs from inferential statistics are related to correlation and regression.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Results

Communication Skills

The findings in Table 1 show descriptive statistics of employees' communication skills at Morogoro Municipal Council. Based on the results, employees generally demonstrate a high level of communication competence, as reflected in the mean score of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.76. This implies that most respondents agreed that council employees possess adequate communication skills.

With specific statements, the statement that "I communicate my ideas and work-related information clearly to my colleagues and supervisors" has a high mean score of 4.12 and a standard deviation of 0.71. This indicates that employees perceive themselves as capable of clearly expressing information related to their work. Similarly, the respondents agreed that they actively listened to their colleagues when they received information ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.76$). This suggests that effective listening skills are present within the council.

Furthermore, the findings show that employees have a strong ability to adapt to different communication styles during interactions with fellow employees ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.73$). On the other hand, the statement that "I provide constructive feedback to colleagues in a respectful and understandable manner" demonstrated considerably lower mean score ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.82$). This indicates that although feedback practices are in place, there is still room for improvement. The results provide a general picture of the development of employees' communication skills at the council. This may support effective coordination and task execution.

Table 1: Descriptive Results for Communication

SN	Statement	Mean	SD
1	I communicate my ideas and work-related information clearly to my colleagues and supervisors.	4.12	0.71
2	I actively listen to others when they express their opinions or provide instructions at work.	4.05	0.76
3	I provide constructive feedback to colleagues in a respectful and understandable manner.	3.94	0.82
4	I am able to adjust my communication style when interacting with different people at the workplace.	4.08	0.73
5	I feel confident when communicating work-related information during meetings or discussions.	3.98	0.79

Employee Performance

The results in Table 2 indicate descriptive statistics for employee performance at the Morogoro Municipal Council. The results indicate that employee performance is perceived as relatively high, with an overall score of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 0.71. These results indicate that respondents generally agree that they perform their daily assigned duties well.

The statement with the highest score ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.68$) was “*I maintain high quality in the work that I perform*”. The statement indicates that employees believe they deliver work at a satisfactory level. Another statement, “*I consistently complete my assigned tasks within the required time,*” had a high mean score ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.72$). This reflects that

employees’ ability to meet deadlines and accomplish their assigned responsibilities is high.

The findings also show that employees collaborate strongly with their colleagues in pursuit of organisational goals ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.74$). Also, the respondents indicated that they met their supervisors’ performance expectations ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.70$). Regarding the ability to provide or improve service delivery within the organisation, the respondents’ responses show a relatively high mean score of 4.02 and a standard deviation of 0.77. Generally, employees at Morogoro Municipal Council demonstrate a satisfactory level of performance, which may contribute positively to organisational effectiveness and public service delivery.

Table 2: Descriptive Results for Communication

SN	Statement	Mean	SD
1	I consistently complete my assigned tasks within the required time.	4.10	0.72
2	I maintain high quality in the work that I perform.	4.18	0.68
3	I work effectively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals.	4.05	0.74
4	I am able to meet the performance expectations of my supervisors.	4.09	0.70
5	I contribute positively to improving service delivery in my organization.	4.02	0.77
	Average Mean	4.09	0.72

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the correlation analysis of employee communication skills and employee performance. The study’s results indicate a significant, positive

relationship between communication skills and employee performance ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that as employees’ communication skills improve, their performance also increases. The results

imply that employees who can express their ideas clearly, listen actively to their colleagues, and exchange information effectively tend to perform better at work.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Between Communication Skills and Employee Performance

Variables	Communication Skills	Employee Performance
Communication Skills	1	
Employee Performance	0.61**	1

** Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$

Regression Analysis

Table 4 shows the regression statistics examining the influence of communication skills on employee performance. The model summary shows that 37 per cent of the variance in employee performance is explained by communication skills ($R^2 = 0.37$). This shows that variance in communication skills accounts for a relatively larger share of the changes in employee performance.

The ANOVA results confirm that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 60.52$, $p < 0.001$). This

indicates that communication skills significantly predict employees' performance at Morogoro Municipal Council.

The regression analysis indicates that communication skills exert a significant positive impact on employee performance ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$). This shows that improvements in communication skills lead to improved employee performance. The findings of this study therefore support the study hypothesis that communication skills positively influence employee performance in public organisations.

Table 4: Regression Analysis for Communication Skill and Employee Performance

Model Summary				
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.61	0.37	0.36	0.42
ANOVA				
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Regression	10.72	1	10.72	60.52
Residual	18.26	103	0.18	
Total	28.98	104		
Coefficients				
Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t
Constant	1.84	0.31	—	5.94
Communication Skills	0.54	0.07	0.61	7.78

Discussion of Findings

The study's results indicate that communication skills are positively and significantly associated with employee performance at Morogoro Municipal Council. Based on correlation analysis, there is a significant positive association between communication skills and employee performance ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that employees with stronger communication skills tend to perform their tasks more effectively within the organisation.

Moreover, the regression results confirm that communication skills significantly influence employee performance, accounting for 37 per cent of the variation in performance. This shows that effective communication plays a substantial role in shaping how employees perform their day-to-day duties in public organisations. Employees who can clearly communicate ideas, listen actively to others, and provide constructive feedback are more likely to understand work instructions, collaborate with colleagues, and achieve organisational goals.

These findings support propositions of social exchange theory, suggesting that positive interactions within organisations can lead employees to behave in certain ways in exchange. When employees are exposed to open and effective communication in the workplace, they are more likely to respond with greater commitment and performance.

These findings are in line with previous research showing the importance of communication in improving employee productivity and organisational effectiveness. Effective communication is a key determinant of task coordination, fewer misunderstandings and teamwork among employees in organisations. In the public sector, institutions such as local government authorities have multiple stakeholders who interact with employees daily; therefore, communication competence is critical to ensuring effective and efficient service delivery. Generally, the findings highlight the importance of developing strong communication skills among

employees in public organisations to improve performance and service delivery.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: This study examined the influence of communication skills on employee performance in public organisations. The study used the Morogoro Municipal Council as a case study. The findings indicate that communication skills among employees at the Council are high, as most reported being able to communicate well. The research revealed a significant positive link between communication skills and employee performance, suggesting that employees with stronger communication skills tend to perform their tasks more effectively. Regression analysis confirmed that communication skills are a significant predictor of employee performance. Consequently, organisations that focus on developing their employees' communication abilities may achieve better work outcomes. The findings highlight communication skills as a fundamental component of organisational success in the public sector.

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