

**THE IMPACT OF TWO-WAY SYMMETRICAL COMMUNICATION USE
ON JOB SATISFACTION AMONG EMPLOYEES OF MOROCCAN
PRIVATE COMPANIES**

**L'IMPACT DE L'UTILISATION DE LA COMMUNICATION
SYMÉTRIQUE SUR LA SATISFACTION AU TRAVAIL DES EMPLOYÉS
DES ENTREPRISES PRIVÉES MAROCAINES**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide an insight into the practice of internal public relations in Morocco by investigating the impact of two-way symmetrical communication use on employee satisfaction. A sample of 114 employees participated in the study by completing a questionnaire that asked about their perceptions of the communication model in their respective companies as well as their feelings about their job. The instrument was tested for reliability and proved to comply with the required standards. Using Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression, the study indicated that the use of two-way symmetrical communication was a significant predictor of job satisfaction among employees working in Moroccan private companies. The study provides evidence for

corporate managers in Morocco that employees develop a positive attitude and emotions toward their job as a result of the incorporation of communication techniques based on principles of reciprocity and exchange of ideas.

KEY WORDS: Internal public relations; two-way symmetrical communication; job satisfaction; Moroccan private companies

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude vise à fournir un aperçu de la pratique des relations publiques internes au Maroc en étudiant l'impact de l'utilisation de la communication symétrique sur la satisfaction des employés. Un échantillon de 114 employés a participé à l'étude en remplissant un questionnaire portant sur leurs perceptions du modèle de communication dans leurs entreprises respectives ainsi que sur leurs sentiments concernant leur travail. La fiabilité de l'instrument a été testée et il s'est avéré qu'il était conforme aux normes requises. En utilisant la corrélation de Pearson et la régression linéaire simple, l'étude a indiqué que l'utilisation de la communication symétrique était un prédicteur significatif de la satisfaction au travail parmi les employés travaillant dans des entreprises privées marocaines. L'étude fournit des preuves aux gestionnaires d'entreprises au Maroc que les employés développent une attitude et des émotions positives envers leur travail suite à l'incorporation de techniques de communication basées sur les principes de réciprocité et d'échange d'idées.

MOTS-CLÉS: relations publiques internes - communication symétrique - satisfaction au travail - Sociétés privées marocaines

1. INTRODUCTION

Internal public relations is one of the managerial functions that substantially drive the conduct of business communication. It is related to the overarching public relations discipline which allows organizations to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with their publics through the use of strategic communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Internal public relations, on the other hand, refers the practice of public relations that is directed particularly to managing the relationship

between the top management level and employees (Sowa, 2005). Internal communication, particularly two-way symmetrical communication, constitutes a considerable part of internal public relations. Previous research demonstrated the importance of effective internal public relations by investigating the association between internal communication and employee satisfaction. The latter has also been subject to several studies (e.g. Panayotopoulou, Papazekis, & Palaiologos, 2011; Tiwari & Bangwal, 2017; Cobanoglu, Rezaei, Wu, Aldakhil, & Amin, 2017) since it is a major factor for enhancing the company's productivity, efficiency, performance, and the overall quality of work (Schubert, et al., 2004). Isha, et al. (2017) found communication to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction. Similarly, a study carried out by Hon and Kim (2009) examined the relationship between one-way and two-way communication models as coined by Grunig and Hunt (1984) and job satisfaction among Korean public relations practitioners. Their study discovered that two-way symmetrical communication was the most significant predictor of job satisfaction. Furthermore, another study undertaken by Nickerson and Mehra (2019) indicated that organizational communication and job satisfaction are positively related.

Even though internal public relations body of research has been increasingly growing over the past few decades, studies investigating internal public relations in Morocco remain scarce. Therefore, the current study serves as the one of the underpinning stages of academic research that examines the context of Morocco. Moreover, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical communication and job satisfaction among employees of Moroccan private companies. The study aims to provide an insight for managers of Moroccan private companies into the significance of establishing a communication environment that encourages differences of opinions and fosters dialogue in the workplace. The study also attempts to indicate how incorporating two-way symmetrical communication leads to accomplishing a high level of employee satisfaction.

In addition, the current study departs from asking the following null and alternative hypotheses:

H₀ There is no association between the use of two-way symmetrical communication and job satisfaction among employee of Moroccan private companies.

H₁ There is an association between the use of two-way symmetrical communication and job satisfaction among employee of Moroccan private companies.

A sample of 114 employees was reached. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that was based on a ten-point Likert scale. The items in the questionnaire were developed by Grunig et al. (2002). After data was gathered, a preliminary Pearson correlation test and then a simple linear regression analysis were conducted in order to examine the association between the independent and dependent variables.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Internal public relations operates fundamentally through internal communication. The latter is at the heart of the business conduct and is a prerequisite for the company to function properly. Internal communication is defined as a company's overall communication effort aimed at achieving its desired goals. It typically flows vertically, horizontally, internally, externally, formally, or informally in order to connect employees to each other and to various levels of management (Jackson, 1987). This section aims to illustrate the concept of two-way symmetrical communication as conceived by Grunig and Hunt (1984). Next, the significance of employee satisfaction for companies is detailed. Finally, previous studies that investigated the relationship between communication and employee satisfaction are reviewed.

2.1. Two-way symmetrical communication

Two-way symmetric communication is one of the four models of public relations that were developed by Grunig and Hunt (1984). This model is better understood when contrasted with the other three models. The first one is press agency whose primary goal is the transmission of information. The communication in this model is fundamentally one-way and does not require any dialogue with the intended audience. The second model is public information. This model is similar to press agency in that they both rely on one-way communication; however, public information aims to disseminate accurate and adequate information to the relevant publics. Whether a company opts for press agency or public information, information dissemination is a crucial component of its internal communication. Employees in particular want to be informed directly by the company about changes that may affect their jobs. When companies are the primary

source of information about themselves, employees become more incentivized to actively participate in the company's welfare; otherwise, the grapevine steps in to fill the communication gap (Theaker, 2001). Moreover, adequate information dissemination promotes trust between the corporation and its employees (Pincus, et al., 1991).

The next model is two-way asymmetric public relations. This model relies on feedback and two-way communication principles. However, it is asymmetric in that the main objective is to change the audience's attitude or behavior, rather than altering the organization's own practices. It utilizes methods of research to identify the messages that are prone to produce the support of the public without having to change the behavior of the organization (Grunig, et al., 1995). Two-way symmetric communication, on the other hand, is considered the excellent model where communication must result in changes in the perspectives of both the public and the company on issues (Tench & Yeomans, 2006). It is essential that the change which is produced by this model of communication is equally beneficial for the company and the public at the same time (Grunig, et al., 1995). Thus, the objective is to generate mutual understanding between both parties. By focusing on improving cooperation, understanding, and responsiveness; two-way symmetrical communication efforts strive to eradicate all the inherent power between the top management and the employees.

2.2. Employee satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction is one of the vital contributing factors to the effectiveness of business organizations. Even though there is no consensus about what job satisfaction is, Armstrong (2006) generally relates job satisfaction to people's attitudes and sentiments towards their work. Employees indicate their job satisfaction by showing positive and favorable views about their assigned job, whereas job discontent is shown by negative and unfavorable attitudes. Past research found correlations between job satisfaction and other variables. Werang, et al. (2019) studied the relationship between job satisfaction and performance amongst elementary school teachers of Boven Digoel district, Papua. They discovered job satisfaction to be significantly correlated with job performance. Also, Khare and Pandey (2012) performed a regression analysis and found that job satisfaction had a significant impact on employee loyalty. Another study conducted by Abraham (2012) demonstrated that employee engagement was associated with job satisfaction.

She suggested high levels of employee satisfaction need to be established and maintained by the top management of business organizations in order to promote and guarantee employee engagement.

Furthermore, employee satisfaction crystalizes the image of the organizations when a happy employee projects his or her satisfaction in the way they deal with customers. In this regard, it was demonstrated by Kermani (2013) that employee satisfaction and the quality of service that employees provide to customers were positively related. Therefore, the study concluded that there was a positive correlation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Mendoza and Maldonado (2014) confirmed Kermani's conclusion by conducting a meta-analysis of how job satisfaction and customer satisfaction are correlated. The study indicated a positive and significant mean correlation, showing that satisfied employees will make customers satisfied as well. Hence, there is enough evidence in the literature to show that employee satisfaction leads to high levels of job performance, fosters employee loyalty, promotes employee engagement, and maintains customer satisfaction. Additionally, it is vital to study factors that produce employee satisfaction.

2.3. Previous research on two-way symmetrical communication and job satisfaction

Previous research showed statistically significant relationships between communication and employee satisfaction. Desa, et al. (2019) surveyed 120 workers in the Trade Union Affairs in the Northern State of Malaysia and discovered that Communication was a significant predictor of job satisfaction. They concluded that employees ascribed their job satisfaction to the communication model used by managers in their department. Another study carried out by Men (2014) examined the correlation between symmetrical internal communication and employee satisfaction in a sample of 400 employees affiliated with different companies in the United States across multiple business fields. The study found that employee satisfaction with the organization was significantly and positively predicted by face-to-face communication channels and symmetrical communication. Furthermore, employees showed preference of receiving information in regards to new decisions and updates via email, and then followed by in-person meetings.

Similarly, Hui and Abdullah (2014) investigated the association between communication satisfaction and employee satisfaction among the primary school teachers in the Malaysian

primary school. They selected a sample of more than 226 teachers who completed a questionnaire. Surprisingly, their study indicated a small yet positively significant association between communication satisfaction and job satisfaction. Hui and Abdullah (2014) recommended that it was necessary for the school management to maintain a communication environment that is conducive for teachers to execute their jobs despite the moderate strength of the correlation. Finally, another study was undertaken by Kumar and Giri (2010) to examine the impact of organizational communication on job satisfaction in several Indian organizations. The sample included 380 employees fulfilling managerial roles in their respective organizations. The results showed that organizational communication was a significant predictor of the job satisfaction of employees. It was concluded that effective communication was paramount if organizations aspired to grow and thrive. Furthermore, employee satisfaction, as well as employee job performance, will be enhanced as the organization improves its communication with employees. Thus, communication and employee satisfaction constitute two major constructs that call for further investigation, which is the main objective of this study.

3. METHODS

This section is aimed at detailing the research methodology that is adopted in this study. First, the research approach is discussed. Second, the hypotheses are re-stated. Third, the sampling procedure and demographic description are presented. Fourth, the data collection procedure and analysis are detailed. Finally, the reliability of the scales is reported based on Cronbach's alpha.

3.1. Research approach and hypotheses.

This study uses a quantitative research approach that guides this paper throughout the data collection and analysis procedures. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research design allows to generate numerical data and enables the enquirer to test the associations between independent and dependent variables. Hence, this study is sought to test the following hypotheses.

Null hypothesis

H₀ There is no association between the use of two-way symmetrical communication and job satisfaction amongst employee of Moroccan private companies.

Alternative hypothesis

H₁ There is an association between the use of two-way symmetrical communication and job satisfaction amongst employee of Moroccan private companies.

3.2. Sampling procedures

The target population in this research were employees who work in Moroccan private corporations across multiple sectors. Employees were selected using non-probability sampling. According to Kothari (2004), non-probability sampling means that the sampling procedure is not random in that some individuals have a higher chance of being selected for the study than others. While there are several types of non-probability sampling, this study particularly uses snowball sampling where participants contacted other individuals who may be interested in volunteering to complete the questionnaire.

Therefore, a number of 114 employees took part in this study ($n=114$). Fifty-five of them are female employees (48%), while fifty-nine are male employees (52%). Regarding the age of the respondents, the average age was thirty-two years old with a standard deviation of eight years ($M=32$, $SD=8$).

3.3. Data collection and analysis procedures

This study used a questionnaire that was designed using Google Form online survey. The questionnaire was translated into French since it is a more common language in Morocco than English. Items in the questionnaire were developed by Gruning et al. (2002). Permission from Professor James E. Gruning was granted. The questionnaire used a 10-point Likert scale which allowed employees to indicate their agreement with the degree to which each item describes the communication model and the their feelings about their work in their respective private companies. Moreover, the questionnaire consisted of two scales, namely two-way symmetrical communication and employee satisfaction, accounting for a total of fourteen items.

The data were first analyzed statistically using Pearson Correlation. The latter allowed to infer the statistical relationship between Gruning and Hunt's two-way symmetrical communication model and job satisfaction among employees of Moroccan private companies. Next, Simple Linear

regression was used to see whether employee satisfaction (dependent variable) could be predicted by the use of two-way symmetrical communication (independent variable). Moreover, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was deployed to run both the Pearson correlation and linear regression analyses.

3.4. Reliability and validity

Prior to proceeding with the data analysis, the scales were tested for reliability and validity in order to ensure that the items in the instrument produced consistent results. Field (2013) defines reliability as “whether an instrument can be interpreted consistently across different situations.” (p. 12). In this research, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability analysis indicated excellent results.

The “two-way symmetrical communication” scale, which constitutes the independent variable, consists of 8 items (e.g. “This organization encourages differences of opinion,” “Most communication between administrators and other employees in this organization can be said to be two-way,” “Most decisions in this organization are made after thorough discussion between people who will be affected in a major way.” $\alpha = .92$). The “employee satisfaction” scale, which is the dependent variable, comprises of 6 items (e.g. “My work gives me a sense of accomplishment,” “I am satisfied with the day-to-day working conditions,” “I look forward to coming to work almost every day.” $\alpha = .95$). Hence, it can be reported that the instrument used in this research is a reliable measure.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Correlation analysis

As shown in table 1, Pearson Correlation was conducted in order to examine the relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and job satisfaction among employees of Moroccan private companies. The study found a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between two-way symmetrical communication and employee satisfaction ($r = .881, p = .000$).

Table 1 Pearson Correlation results

		Two-way symmetrical communication	Employee satisfaction
Two-way symmetrical communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.881**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	115	114
Employee satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.881**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	114	114

4.2. Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 2: Simple linear regression results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	576.569	1	576.569	390.018	.000 ^b
	Residual	165.571	112	1.478		
	Total	742.140	113			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Two-way symmetrical communication

The result of the linear regression analysis indicated that the use of two-way symmetrical communication explained 78% of the variance in employee satisfaction, $R^2 = .78$, $F(1, 112) =$

390.018, $p < .001$ with the adjusted $R^2 = .77$. The use of two-way symmetrical communication significantly predicted employee satisfaction amongst employees of Moroccan private corporations, $B = 1.11$, $t = 19.75$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.993, 1.214]. Moreover, an analysis of standard residuals showed that the data contained no outliers (*std. Residual Min* = -2.23, *std Residual Max* = 2.42). Independence of residual errors was confirmed with a Durbin-Watson test ($d = 2.216$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states there is no association between two-way symmetrical communication and job satisfaction among employees of Moroccan private companies was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

5. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role that the use of two-way symmetrical communication plays in maintaining job satisfaction amongst employees of Moroccan private companies. A null as well as an alternative hypotheses were asked to examine the relationship between the aforementioned variables. A preliminary correlation analysis found a strong, positive and statistically significant relationship between the use of two-way communication and employee satisfaction. Next, a linear regression analysis was conducted and indicated that the use of two-way symmetrical communication significantly predicted employee satisfaction in the Moroccan private corporations. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was supported.

The study shows the importance of using two-way communication in the workplace. Corporations that maintain a work environment that promotes dialogue between management and employees are more likely to secure the job satisfaction of their employees. One-way communication models (press agency and public information), as conceptualized by Grunig and Hunt (1984), are still relevant since employees want to be informed at all times, especially about matters that directly affect their jobs; however, one-way communication alone is not sufficient. Employee satisfaction is established and maintained when employees are given the opportunity to actively participate in the realization of the company's mission. The implementation of two-way symmetrical communication allows employees to make suggestions and express their viewpoints about decisions that can affect the quality of life in the organization where they spend a considerable

proportion of their lives. More importantly, high levels of employee satisfaction are obtained when employees feel that their opinions are actually heard and have an impact on the decision-making process.

The findings of the current study are aligned with the results of previous research that investigated the association between communication and employee job satisfaction in various contexts. For example, it was demonstrated by Desa et al. (2019) that effective communication was a significant predictor of employee job satisfaction among workers in the Northern state of Malaysia. Similarly, Men (2014) discovered that face-to-face channels and symmetrical communication significantly and positively predicted employee satisfaction with the overall quality of life in the organizations. Furthermore, the study carried out by Kumar and Giri (2010) indicated that employee satisfaction was significantly predicted by organizational communication. While several other studies provided an insight into the relationship between the quality of communication and employee satisfaction, the current study contributes to the literature of internal public relations by providing more evidence for the association between effective communication and employee satisfaction. Moreover, the study expands the literature by further investigating the context of Morocco. Therefore, Managers of private Moroccan corporations are urged to base their communication strategies with employees on the grounds of dialogue and mutual understanding.

6. CONCLUSION

By examining the impact of the use of two-way communication on employee satisfaction in Moroccan private companies, this study concludes that corporations which implement two-way communication with their employees achieve a high level of employee satisfaction. The correlation between the two variables was reported to be strong, positive and significant. Hence, this study suggests that employees whose input are deemed invaluable by managers demonstrate a positive attitude towards their job. A strong workforce is one the most important assets for corporations that strive to thrive and outperform their competitors. Furthermore, Managers of Moroccan companies need to constantly provide the chance for their employees to offer their feedback and stance on matters that are related to either their jobs or even to the organization in general.

7. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While this study demonstrates interesting findings that help understand internal public relations in Morocco, a number of limitations should be highlighted. This study used non-probability sampling due to a lack of the time and financial resources that are required by the probability sampling, hence, circumscribing the generalizability of the findings to the whole population. Future research can replicate the same procedure using probability sampling. In addition, the data were collected based on the perception of the employees. Future research are encouraged to take into account the perspective of people in the top management as well. Moreover, the rank of the employees (respondents) in the organizational hierarchy was beyond the scope of this study. Future research can investigate the impact of the employee rank on the type of communication employees receive from the management and the extent to which those variables predict employee satisfaction.

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