

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED SMES IN KOGI EAST

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the impact of effective communication on organizational performance in selected SMEs in Kogi East. A survey research design was employed, with a study population of 4,891 SME owners in Kogi East. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling technique, a sample size of 354 was determined. Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis through SPSS 21.0. The findings revealed that vertical communication has a positive and significant effect on the organizational performance of the selected SMEs, while diagonal communication showed a positive but insignificant effect. The study concluded that effective communication is essential for sustaining and enhancing workforce productivity. The study recommended that firms establish inter-departmental communication to help identify unforeseen problems or challenges, thereby improving performance.*

**Keywords:** Communication, Diagonal, Horizontal, Organization and Performance.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the defining traits of humans is their capacity to convey ideas and thoughts through various languages. The evolution of language, especially spoken language, has allowed humans to establish a significant divide between themselves and other species. Language, therefore, is understood as a system of sounds, symbols, and words used for communication (Lin, 2018). Around the world, businesses encounter substantial demands and challenges (Balogun, 2016). To succeed, stay competitive, and maintain profitability in today's global economy, businesses must effectively manage production factors. Managing human resources, in particular, presents unique challenges, as it requires skillfully handling employees' thoughts, emotions, and feelings to optimize productivity. Communication channels are crucial in navigating these complex tasks (Chukwuma, 2020).

As the world becomes more interconnected, the importance and role of communication continue to grow. The need for global visibility has driven organizations to embrace new technologies to enhance performance. However, communication faces obstacles such as gender differences, the role of silence, government intervention, and cultural diversity (Nebo et al., 2017). Effective communication is critical to enhancing organizational performance, as poor communication between management and employees

can have detrimental effects, even when resources are ample. Communication is vital to an organization, essential to the growth, survival, and development of human resources, just as blood is essential to the human body.

Mckinney et al. (2019) compare communication within an organization to blood circulating within the body; it is essential to effective teamwork and organizational functioning. Organizations that recognize the value of communication integrate it into their environment to coordinate production factors, particularly the material and human components, as a network driving change and progress. Greenspan (2019) describes the communication process as involving the sender, encoding, the message channel, decoding, and the receiver, who then provides feedback to the sender.

Organizational performance is the extent to which an organization's output aligns with its intended results, heavily influenced by the quality of communication between staff and management (Adekeye & Ajayi, 2020). For example, communication enables management to keep employees informed about policies and plans, while employees can readily communicate their views and concerns to relevant authorities (Udombaba, 2021).

Horizontal communication involves the sharing of information, ideas, and feedback between individuals or departments at the same level within an organization. This approach fosters coordination and effective problem-solving across teams, departments, or divisions, often boosting efficiency and collaboration (Ahmad et al., 2020). In larger organizations with interdependent units, horizontal communication is vital for synchronizing activities and resource-sharing (Robbins & Judge, 2018).

Diagonal communication, in contrast, allows information to flow across different hierarchical levels but outside traditional vertical channels. This might occur, for example, when a junior employee from one department communicates directly with a senior staff member in another department. By breaking through hierarchical boundaries, diagonal communication promotes cross-functional collaboration and enhances organizational agility (Smith, 2019). It creates a more dynamic workplace by encouraging direct communication across ranks (Harris & Nelson, 2022).

The literature review revealed that most studies examining the impact of effective communication on organizational performance focus primarily on corporate entities such as the manufacturing sector and banks. There has been limited research on SMEs in Nigeria, and even fewer studies have explored SMEs in Kogi State, particularly in Kogi East.

This study is guided by the following research questions: i) Does horizontal communication impact the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Kogi East? (ii) How does diagonal communication affect the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Kogi East? The primary objective of the study is to evaluate the effect of effective communication on organizational performance within selected SMEs in Kogi East. The specific objectives are to: i) Assess whether horizontal communication impacts the organizational performance of these SMEs, and ii) Determine whether diagonal communication

influences the organizational performance of these SMEs. The study's hypotheses, stated in null form, are as follows: Ho1: Horizontal communication has no significant effect on the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Kogi East. Ho2: Diagonal communication has no significant effect on the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Kogi East.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Concept of Communication

Communication is a bidirectional process that involves aligning perspectives and ensuring comprehension, whether delivered verbally, in writing, or through body language. It involves developing an idea, transmitting it, receiving, interpreting, and assessing it, followed by providing feedback to confirm accurate understanding (Miller, 2018). Oviawe (2019) described communication as the exchange of messages, ideas, or attitudes, fostering mutual understanding between sender and receiver. Obamiro (2020) portrayed it as the interaction between a source (sender) and a destination (receiver), which, when understood, prompts action. According to Udombaba (2021), communication entails the transfer of meaning and understanding through symbols or language to ensure the receiver fully grasps the information's intent. Both formal and informal communication work together to boost morale and motivation within the workplace (Adekeye & Ajayi, 2020). In this study, communication is defined as the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, or emotions between individuals or groups through verbal, non-verbal, or written forms.

### Vertical Communication

Vertical communication, as described by Owusu and Abor (2023), involves the flow of information between various hierarchical levels in an organization, such as between managers and employees, often within a formal structure. This structure shapes how instructions, feedback, and objectives are shared. Kumar and Gupta (2022) emphasize that vertical communication is essential for organizational efficiency and enhancing overall performance. Nwankwo and Onu (2021) characterized it as essential for organizational control and coordination, enabling management to guide employee actions effectively. Vertical communication also plays a significant role in shaping employee behavior and organizational culture, directly impacting performance. It fosters transparency and trust across hierarchical levels, boosting employee motivation, commitment, and productivity (Ali & Aslam, 2022). Adedoyin and Salami (2023) noted that vertical communication promotes accountability and responsibility, especially in high-pressure settings. This study defined Vertical communication as the flow of information and messages within an organization between different levels of its hierarchy. It typically occurs in two directions:

### Diagonal Communication

Smith (2023) defined diagonal communication as the sharing of information across various hierarchical levels within an organization, particularly between employees in different departments or divisions, which facilitates quick decision-making and enhances organizational adaptability, positively influencing

performance. Johnson and Clark (2022) described it as the flow of information between managers and employees across organizational levels and functions, often bypassing traditional hierarchies to improve coordination and collaboration, leading to enhanced firm performance. Williams (2024) argues that diagonal communication encourages interaction across organizational levels and departments. Jones (2023) emphasized that diagonal communication fosters cross-functional problem-solving, allowing collaboration among various departments and levels. Robinson *et al.* (2023) identified diagonal communication as a critical factor in improving organizational performance, breaking down hierarchical barriers and enabling a free exchange of information across departments. This study conceptualizes diagonal communication as the exchange of information across different levels and departments within an organization, cutting across both hierarchical and functional boundaries.

### **Organizational Performance**

Neely *et al.* (2020) defined organizational performance as the effectiveness and efficiency with which an organization meets its objectives, optimizing resources and capabilities to achieve strategic goals and emphasizing both operational efficiency and long-term outcomes. Daft (2021) described organizational performance as "an organization's ability to attain its goals by using resources efficiently and effectively," typically evaluated through profitability, market share, and the quality of goods or services. Armstrong (2022) explained that organizational performance reflects the extent to which an organization meets its predetermined goals or outcomes, including financial metrics, customer satisfaction, innovation, and social responsibility. Jones and George (2021) define organizational performance as the organization's capacity to reach high levels of effectiveness, efficiency, and profitability in pursuit of its goals. Hitt *et al.* (2020) described it as the cumulative result of all organizational activities, measured through indicators such as productivity, innovation, and financial outcomes, viewing performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing both internal processes and external success in the market. This study defines Organizational performance as a measure of how effectively an organization achieves its goals and objectives. It encompasses various metrics and outcomes that indicate the health, productivity, and competitiveness of an organization.

### **Theoretical Review**

This study is based on Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), developed by Howard Giles in 1973. CAT posits that individuals modify their communication behaviours to either converge (align) or diverge (create distance) from their conversational partners, influenced by social dynamics and desired outcomes. In organizational contexts, converging communication fosters understanding, mitigates conflict, and promotes collaboration, thereby enhancing overall performance. Conversely, divergence can lead to misunderstandings and hinder teamwork, negatively affecting productivity (Giles, 1973).

### **Empirical Review**

Uche and Nnamdi (2024) investigated how diverse communication channels affect organizational performance within Nigerian manufacturing firms, emphasizing digital communication's impact on production efficiency and the role of effective communication in fostering organizational growth. Utilizing

a mixed-method approach with quantitative and qualitative data, the study sampled 120 employees from three Abuja-based manufacturing firms through surveys and interviews, with quantitative analysis via SPSS and qualitative data through thematic analysis. Findings highlighted that digital tools substantially enhance production efficiency by reducing decision-making delays, while effective communication across channels significantly supports organizational growth. The study recommended integrating both digital and traditional communication methods to maximize performance and employee motivation, though it primarily focused on large organizations, leaving the impact on smaller firms less examined.

Okoro and Ibrahim (2024) assessed the effects of vertical and horizontal communication on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, specifically examining vertical communication's role in managerial efficiency, horizontal communication's influence on team collaboration and innovation, and overall communication's impact on financial performance. Through a cross-sectional survey involving 100 SMEs and 250 employees, data were gathered via structured questionnaires and analyzed using correlation and regression. Results indicated that while vertical communication enhances managerial efficiency, its impact on innovation is limited; however, horizontal communication significantly boosts teamwork, innovation, and problem-solving, thus improving performance. The study suggested a balanced focus on both vertical and horizontal communication for enhanced innovation and efficiency, though it did not deeply explore the specific resource constraints facing SMEs.

Adeola and Aluko (2023) explored how internal and vertical communication influence organizational performance in Nigeria's banking sector, focusing on internal communication's effect on employee performance and vertical communication's role in decision-making efficiency. Through a descriptive survey of 150 employees from five banks in Lagos, analyzed with regression analysis, results showed that internal communication positively impacts employee performance, enhancing service delivery, while vertical communication supports decision-making but faces hierarchical obstacles. The study recommended two-way communication channels to facilitate feedback across all levels, though it did not address the rising importance of digital communication tools in banking.

Oyetunde (2023) examined vertical communication's impact on job satisfaction in Nigerian public sector organizations, aiming to understand the effects of upward and downward communication on employee satisfaction. Using an explanatory research design with a sample of 100 civil servants and regression analysis, the study found that vertical communication significantly affects job satisfaction, recommending public sector organizations create open communication systems. However, the study lacked a clear timeframe, which may limit the relevance of its findings.

Emeka (2023) investigated the connection between diagonal communication and innovation in Nigerian startups, analyzing how cross-functional communication influences innovation. The descriptive study of 100 startup employees, using correlation analysis, revealed a strong positive association between diagonal communication and innovation. Recommendations included encouraging more diagonal

communication to drive innovation, though the study did not consider external market factors influencing innovation.

Jibrin (2022) assessed communication's impact on organizational performance at Nigeria Brewery Plc, spanning 2010–2022. A survey with 361 employees was conducted, using multiple regression analysis, finding that vertical communication significantly enhances organizational performance, while diagonal communication has a positive but minor effect. Recommendations included fostering inter-departmental communication and improving employee training, with the recent data enhancing relevance.

Hassan and Bolarinwa (2022) evaluated vertical communication's role in enhancing customer service in telecom firms, identifying communication barriers affecting service delivery. With a descriptive survey of 150 customer service employees and correlation analysis, findings showed a significant positive impact of vertical communication on service delivery performance, recommending open feedback channels to improve service quality, though external influences on communication flow were not considered.

Aliyu (2021) analyzed diagonal communication's effect on performance in the Nigerian retail sector, with objectives covering communication flow's impact on sales, customer satisfaction, and performance. A survey of 120 employees with multiple regression analysis revealed that diagonal communication had a minor impact on retail sector performance, recommending refinements in diagonal communication strategies to boost effectiveness, though employee engagement as a moderator was unaddressed.

Adewale and Ibrahim (2021) investigated vertical communication's impact on employee productivity in Nigerian manufacturing, focusing on top-down communication flow and decision-making. Using a descriptive survey of 120 employees from three firms and regression analysis, results showed a positive effect of vertical communication on productivity, recommending improved upward channels for inclusiveness, though findings were limited to manufacturing.

Johnson and Kalu (2021) assessed diagonal communication's effect on team collaboration in Nigerian IT firms. A descriptive survey of 75 employees across three firms, analyzed through multiple regression, showed diagonal communication positively affects collaboration and performance, recommending more inter-departmental communication, though its generalizability is limited to IT firms.

Musheke and Phiri (2021) examined effective communication's impact on organizational performance within a systems theory framework from 2015–2021. Using a quantitative approach and Pearson's correlation, findings indicated a significant impact of chosen communication channels on effectiveness, recommending timely information delivery, though the study lacked specifics on factors influencing communication.

Enwin and Rumuolumeni (2020) analyzed communication's role in organizational performance at Ndorama Eleme Petrochemical Ltd from 2010–2020. The descriptive study with 110 staff indicated that

various communication types enhance performance while poor communication hinders it, recommending feedback-promoting practices, though the study's specificity limits its broader application.

Ogohi (2020) explored communication strategies' impact on Nigerian public sector performance from 2007–2020. The study adopted multiple linear regression analysis. The results reveal significant benefits for organizational performance, especially at the Nigerian Communications Commission. The study recommended communication training for junior employees but lacked focus on unique challenges in public versus private sectors.

Alabi (2020) investigated vertical communication's role in change management in a financial services firm, using case study design and mixed methods. Results showed an insignificant effect on adaptability, recommending improvements in vertical structures for smoother transitions, though the case study design limits generalization.

Okeke and Anya (2020) examined vertical communication's influence on decision-making in Nigerian banks, focusing on communication barriers. A cross-sectional design with 80 managers and employees found vertical communication positively affects decision-making, suggesting training to overcome hierarchical obstacles, though a larger sample would enhance generalizability.

### **Gaps in Literature**

This study offers comprehensive insights into the topic at hand; however, many previous studies have not specifically focused on the relationship between effective communication and organizational performance, particularly within the manufacturing sector. Consequently, this research is positioned within selected SMEs and will investigate the effective communication practices and organizational performance of these SMEs in Kogi East. The researcher believes that there has been a persistent oversight in research regarding this area, especially concerning SMEs, which could harm the sector and the broader economy. Thus, the study operates on the assumption that there is a lack of research in this field. It will analyze horizontal and diagonal communication as indicators of effective communication and their impact on organizational performance in the context of the chosen SMEs in Kogi East.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a survey research design which rely on primary data. The total population for the study comprises 4891 selected Small and Medium Enterprises operating in Kogi East, which includes SME owners in Dekina, Bassa, Ankpa, Ibaji, Ofu, Olamaboro, Idah, Omala and Igalamela/Odulu LGA in Kogi State (Kogi State Ministry of Commerce and industry, 2023). The sample size of the study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling technique to arrive at a sample of three hundred and fifty-four (354) SMEs selected by purposive sampling. The source of data collection was primary data collected from the respondents through questionnaires. The analysis was conducted by Model summary, Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Regression analysis.

**Model Specification**

The dependent variable is organizational performance (OGP), while the independent variables are Vertical Communication (VC), and Diagonal Communication (DC). The specified model is presented in a linear functional equation as follows:

$$OGP = f(VC \& DC).$$

Expressing the above relationship in econometric terms, it becomes:

$$OGP_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VC_{it} + \beta_2 DC + \mu_{it} \text{----- (Model)}.$$

Where:

OGP = an indicator representing Organizational Performance (Dependent Variable);

$\beta_0$  = a constant;

$\beta_{1-2}$  = coefficients of independent variables;

VC = a predictor representing an independent variable (Vertical Communication);

DC = a predictor representing an independent variable (Diagonal Communication);

$\mu$  = Stochastic error term;

$i$  = Firms;

$t$  = Periods: and

$f$  = Functional relationship.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**Model Summary**

Table 1 below shows the results of the model summary which reveals the goodness of fit of the model depicted by the R-squared and the adjusted R-squared.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.732 <sup>a</sup>	.536	.532	.47497

a. Predictors: (Constant), DC, VC

The adjusted R-square value of 0.532 in Table 1 above indicates that vertical communication and diagonal communication have a combined effect of 53% on the dependent variable during the period covered by the study.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Table 2 below depicts the outcomes of the ANOVA test which reveal the F-statistic and prob-value of the model.

Table 2: ANOVA Test

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	83.119	2	27.706	122.815	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	71.965	319	.226		
	Total	155.084	322			

a. Predictors: (Constant), DC, HC, VC

b. Dependent Variable: OGF.

The F-Statistics value of 122.81 and the P-value of 0.000 in Table 2 signified that the model is fit and significant at a 1% level. This means that the result is good and admissible for decision-making.

### Regression Analysis

Table 3 below indicates the result of the regression analysis of the model conducted with ordinary least square regression.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.716	.175		9.832	.000
VC	.460	.088	.519	5.222	.000
DC	.113	.087	.134	1.302	.194

a. Dependent Variable: OGP

Source: SPSS software.

### 5 Test of Hypotheses

Table 3 indicates that vertical communication exhibits a t-statistic of 5.222 and a p-value of 0.000, which is significant at the 1% level. This suggests that vertical communication positively and significantly impacts the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Kogi East. Consequently, the null hypothesis asserting that vertical communication has no significant effect on organizational performance in this context has been rejected.

In contrast, Table 3 shows that diagonal communication has a t-statistic of 1.302 and a p-value of 0.194, indicating that it is insignificant at all levels of significance. This means that diagonal communication has a positive yet insignificant effect on the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Kogi East. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that diagonal communication does not significantly affect organizational performance in this context is accepted.

### Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that vertical communication significantly enhances the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Kogi East, implying that improvements in vertical communication are likely to boost organizational performance. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of Okeke and Anya (2020) and Bery *et al.* (2015).

Additionally, the study finds that diagonal communication has a positive but insignificant effect on the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Kogi East. This suggests that an increase in diagonal communication leads to only a minimal rise in organizational performance, indicating that diagonal communication is not a major contributor to the performance of these SMEs. This aligns with the results of Aliyu (2020) and Jibrin (2020).

### Summary of Findings

1. Vertical communication has a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of SMEs in Kogi East with a coefficient of 0.519, a t-statistic of 5.222 and a p-value of 0.000;
2. Diagonal communication has an insignificant positive effect on organizational performance of SMEs in Kogi East with a coefficient of 0.134, a t-statistic of 1.302 and a p-value of 0.194.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study highlights the crucial role of communication in managing workplace relationships between managers and their subordinates. Effective communication fosters a sense of satisfaction among employees regarding their interactions. The findings indicate that both vertical and diagonal communication enhance the performance of SMEs in Kogi East.

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Organizations should establish efficient inter-departmental communication channels to help each department identify unforeseen issues or challenges.
- ii. Employees should receive adequate training to effectively utilize available communication tools to enhance performance.

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