

# **THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (UTT)**

**Prahalad Sooknanan**

**(prahalad.sooknanan@yahoo.com)**

## **Abstract**

Annual tracer studies allude to the breakdown of communication between management and employees and the potential detriment to employee morale, productivity and quality education. This study examines the role of communication in enhancing institutional effectiveness at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) given its tertiary mandate as the national and entrepreneurial university entrusted to build human capital towards national development. The general aim of this case-study is to identify the current communication challenges by posing the research question: **What communication strategies can be used to address UTT's communication problems?** The study utilizes a quantitative methodology and volunteer sampling technique to administer an online questionnaire survey of 21 questions targeted to user demographics and individual perceptions related to importance of communication, role of communication, electronic communication/social media, formal/informal communication, electronic vs. face-to-face, communication competence and communication gaps. The findings conclude that respondents strongly agree with the importance of communication (82.4%), the role of formal communication compared to informal communication (71.3%), the belief that face-to-face communication is more effective than electronic communication (52.7%), personal competence as communicators (85.9%), but mixed response regarding communication and institutional effectiveness. Overall, the findings answered the RQ and generated five statistically-supported recommendations for better transparency and accountability (77.8%), improved feedback from administration (74.2%), quicker official updates (66.2%), clear reporting structures (55.6%), and increased inter-campus communication (50%) to enhance communication for institutional effectiveness.

**Keywords:** Institutional effectiveness, leadership, organizational communication, transparency and accountability

## Introduction

The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) was established in 2004 with a tertiary mandate to "*discover and develop entrepreneurs, commercialize research and development, and spawn companies for wealth generation*" through the delivery of quality education in Science, Technology, Education, the Arts, Sport and Security, among others, at its fourteen (14) campuses. The institution received Institutional Accreditation from the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) in December 2010 followed by re-accreditation in 2017. Specifically, it is dedicated to providing tertiary education and training and strives to empower nationals to work together to build Trinidad and Tobago's human capacity.

Notwithstanding, annual tracer studies conducted by the Quality Assurance Department of the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) (UTT, 2016; 2017; 2018) have consistently highlighted the breakdown of communication flows vertically and laterally between corporate and academic employees. In addition, there are ongoing concerns regarding transparency and accountability, feedback from administration, tardiness or absence of official updates, and convoluted reporting structures, among others, resulting in disenchantment among staff across all levels of the institution. The situation is exacerbated by entrenched nepotism and cronyism that is perpetuated by changing administrations in an ethnically-charged country with one national university as a customary beneficiary of political patronage. This shortcoming contrasts with the view by DeFleur et al. (2005) that communication has significant consequences for organizations and institutions that function as economic drivers in today's industrial society. Owing to its entrepreneurial mandate, UTT cannot afford to ignore this reality. Nonetheless, the studies reinforce UTT's communication conundrum which hinders effective management and the ability to achieve its tertiary goal as a results-oriented institution. Specifically, the lack and tardy communication of critical information continues to impede the ability of both corporate and academic employees to receive and act on key information in a timely manner thus compromising productivity and quality education. As a result, this deficiency warrants a critical review and rationalization of the institution's current communication approach to identify existing communication gaps to re-enchant and empower employees for overall organizational success. To this end, the researcher postulates the research question (RQ):

## **RQ: What communication strategies can UTT use to re-enchant employees for organizational success**

In an attempt to realize the foregoing RQ, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate how UTT employees feel about the importance of communication;
2. To determine what UTT employees think of the role of formal and informal communication;
3. To examine UTT employees' preferences for electronic communication and social media;
4. To determine employees' overall communication competence; and
5. To ascertain the role of communication in institutional effectiveness at UTT

## **Literature Review**

### *Formal and Informal Communication*

The variations in organizational structures determine the forms of communication that organizations practice. Consequently, organizations practice varying degrees of formal communication forms such as vertical and horizontal or lateral communication. Goldhaber (1990) notes that vertical communication refers to communication that follows the chain of command of a bureaucratic organization. He further notes that vertical communication not only moves downwards through the hierarchy but also upwards. Typically, upward communication is the flow of information from front line employees to managers, supervisors, and directors. In addition, it keeps managers aware of how employees feel about their jobs, policies and procedures, and the business in general. Specifically, it facilitates feedback, mutual trust, and introduction of new policies. On the other hand, Katz and Kahn (1966) note that downward communication helps to relay information on organizational goals and mission, task instructions and training, rules, policies and procedures and feedback to subordinates. However, Fisher (1993) cautions that information loss tends to occur given the time taken and the distance it has to travel down to hierarchical levels.

Another example of formal communication is known as horizontal or lateral communication which Fisher (1993) defines as communication with colleagues and peers whose roles position them at the same hierarchical level of the organization. For example, it occurs between managers

who make inter-departmental decisions and facilitates information-sharing between divisions at many levels especially managers regarding committees and task forces.

In contrast, informal communication is considered the core informal network. It usually occurs through the “grapevine” whereby people transmit information to each other outside of formal communication channels. Davis (1953) identifies three key types of grapevine configurations. The ‘single-strand’ grapevine represents one person who initiates a message which passes through a chain of persons. In the second configuration or ‘gossip chain’, one person is responsible for telling everyone whereas in the third or ‘cluster chain’, one person informs others selectively. Overall, hearing something through the “grapevine” is to learn of it informally and unofficially by means of gossip or rumor. The usual implication is that the information is passed from person to person by “word of mouth”, perhaps in a confidential manner among friends or colleagues. It can also imply an overheard conversation or anonymous sources of information. The practice of “grapevine” communication is quite common in today’s workplace.

### *Organizational Communication Theories*

According to DeFleur et al. (2005), the study of communication today focuses heavily on problems of management and the design of production-oriented groups. This lends credence to the fact that organizations are at the heart of the economic institution in today’s industrial society. It follows, therefore, that communication among these entities has profound consequences for the society as a whole. To this end, organizational communication theories were developed to enhance efficiency, productivity, and output. More specifically, DeFleur et al. (2005) argue that organizational communication today “is preoccupied with designs for the flow of messages and influences by which management can achieve more output from themselves and their employees” (p. 187). To this end, it is essential to recount Goldhaber’s (1990) four theories of how communication is managed in work-related organizations.

#### *The Scientific Management or Classical Approach*

According to DeVito (1994), the Scientific Management or Classical Approach maintains that organizations should make use of scientific methods to increase productivity. The development of this theory is credited to Frederick W. Taylor who refined the human use approach for controlling workers which came to be called ‘scientific management’ (DeFleur et

el., 2005). However, Taylor's humane approach was not always followed and his open communication system between workers and managers was abandoned.

DeFleur et al. (2005) note that a subsequent organizational design was developed by Henri Fayol in 1919 and resulted in the current 'organizational chart' used today. They further add that this chart communicates graphically the chain of authority and command and thereby the flow of formal messages. Today, the chart remains helpful in understanding the vertical communication flow up and down the organization. DeVito (1994) opines that this communication is viewed as the giving of orders and explaining of procedures and operations.

#### *The Behavioral Approach or Human Relations Approach*

DeFleur et al. (2005) concur with DeVito (1994) that the Behavioral or Human Relations approach may also be considered a humanistic or organic approach. The genesis of this approach lies in the *Hawthorne Studies* which focused on maximizing production through scientific management experiments and contributed to the study of organizational communication because they revolutionized the thinking about how people communicate at work (DeFleur et al., 2005). Specifically, human relations theories made it clear that societies exist among workers and their patterns of informal communication were critical factors in binding the worker to the organization and facilitated a ready atmosphere for spontaneous peer group communication while working with one another. In other words, the Behavioral Approach acknowledges the importance of the social, informal groups within the organization and gives special consideration to the interpersonal communications within the subgroups of these organizations.

The Behavioral Approach strongly favors the democratic leader who encourages members to participate in the running of the organization by offering suggestions, giving feedback, and sharing their problems and complaints in the manner of *participatory management* (Likert, 1971). De Vito (1994) claims that all members of the organization participate in the decisions that ultimately affect them rendering communication as a key tool in this endeavor. However, it is important to note that notwithstanding the fact that communication is free and the leadership is democratic, this approach experienced difficulties. The fundamental problem was that the approach was based on the invalid assumption that satisfaction and productivity were positively related (De Vito, 1994). Consequently, management is tasked with designing a system that minimizes communication barriers that lead to high performance by workers while maximizing factors that motivate them to work at a high level of quality (DeFleur et al., 2005).

### *The Systems Approach*

The Systems Approach is informed by more contemporary perspectives such as *systems theory* which were developed to acknowledge the interrelationship of different components, both within and outside of the organization, that have an impact on the organization (DeFleur et al., 2005). Consequently, this approach succeeds in combining the best elements of the *scientific* and *behavioral* approaches and views the organization as a system in which all parts interact and in which each part influences every other part consistent with customary communication behavior. In other words, the organization is viewed as an open system which is open to new information, responsive to the environment, dynamic and ever-changing (De Vito, 1994).

As a result, communication keeps the system vital and live. More importantly, communication is essential if a system is to survive, its parts coordinated, and its activities synchronized. In other words, as the central focus of the organization, it serves as the ‘glue’ that holds all the subsystems together, enabling them to function in sync with each other and with the environment in which the organization operates. Put succinctly, communication relates the various parts to each other and spawns new ideas.

However, DeFleur et al. (2005) caution that in recent years, managers and theorists have focused more closely on the degree of change in the modern workplace given the increasing dependence on computer networks and electronic methods for disseminating information. As a result, organizations today face more challenges in managing and processing the growing volume of information they produce and receive. This therefore mandates organizations to adapt to evolving technologies and increasing global competition by enhancing these related competencies.

### *The Cultural Approach*

As a complement to the foregoing approaches to studying organizations, Putnam and Pacanowsky (1983) and Pilota et al. (1988) advanced a contemporary approach which maintains that organizations should be viewed as a society or a culture. Owing to the fact that social groups or cultures have rules of behavior, roles, rituals, and values, among others, organizations should be studied to examine their culture regarding norms and values. De Vito (1994) argues that the aim of such an analysis enables us to understand the ways an organization functions and how it influences and is influenced by the employees of that organizational culture. In other words, the

cultural approach views both the organization and the employees as sharing the same set of goals and values.

More importantly, in the cultural approach, communication is not confined to merely transmitting messages among employees. By contrast, communication actually defines and constructs the organization, its divisions, and its functions. In other words, the organization is not something apart from the employees and its communication practices but rather it is created and takes its form from its employees and their communication interactions (De Vito, 1994).

### *Organizational Structures*

According to Rouse and Rouse (2010), organizational structure is the formal organizing framework created to achieve the organization's goal. They further note that formal organizational structures are outlined in an organizational chart or organigram which depicts the formal, established pattern of relationships that often exist between departments, roles, and individuals. This organizational framework is commonly known as a bureaucracy. However, Weber (1949) cautions that in spite of the efficiency associated with a bureaucracy it can be a threat to basic liberties and humanity. For example, the formal communication styles of the organization or institution is driven by the prevailing structure or bureaucracy. This in turn has implications for vertical and horizontal or lateral communication patterns in the organization. There are three main types of organizational structures viz. functional, divisional, and matrix.

#### *Functional Structure*

Mohr (1982) describes a functional organizational structure as one that consists of activities such as coordination, supervision, and task allocation and how the organization performs or operates. The term organizational structure refers to how the people in an organization are grouped and to whom they report. In other words, people are organized according to their function. This organizing of specialization leads to operational efficiency where employees become specialists within their own realm of expertise.

However, the most typical problem with a functional organizational structure is that vertical communication within the company can be rather rigid, making the organization slow and inflexible. In this case, lateral communication between functions becomes particularly important so that information is disseminated not only vertically but also horizontally within the organization. Overall, communication in organizations with functional organizational structures can be rigid because of the standardized ways of operation and the high degree of formalization.

### *Divisional Structure*

On the other hand, Mohr (2008) argues that the divisional structure or product structure consists of self-contained divisions which are collections of functions that produce a product. He further states that the divisional structure also utilizes a plan to compete and operate as a separate business or profit center. Currently, the divisional structure is the second most common structure for organizations today. More importantly, its decentralized operations enable more flexibility which is reflected in the increased horizontal or lateral communication.

A key advantage of divisional structure is that it uses delegated authority so the performance can be directly measured with each group. This results in managers performing better, high employee morale, and increased communication flows. Another advantage of using divisional structure is that it is more efficient in coordinating work between different divisions, and there is more flexibility in response to changes.

### *Matrix Structure*

Overall, Mohr (2008) notes that the matrix structure groups employees by both function and product simultaneously. This hybrid structure can combine the best of both Functional and Divisional structures. A matrix organization frequently uses teams of employees to accomplish work in order to take advantage of the strengths as well as make up for the weaknesses of functional and decentralized forms. A fitting example is a company that produces two products, "product a" and "product b" and organizes functions within the company accordingly. Consequently, companies with a matrix structure engage in variations of both vertical and horizontal communication.

### *Communication and Leadership*

Communication is key to leadership effectiveness and leaders and managers play a significant role in the communication process. However, leadership largely relies on bureaucracy and organizational structure to communicate its messages. In addition, it is important to note that these contexts are subjected to change, new markets, and complex or dynamic environments which further impact the relationship between leadership and communication.

In examining the role of leadership in organizational communication, it is important to focus on the leadership styles and their implications for communication. According to Rouse and Rouse (2010), the four main leadership styles are: *authoritarian*, *democratic*, *laissez-faire*, and *transformational*.



### *Authoritarian*

An authoritarian leadership style is exemplified by the tendency to determine the roles of team members, tasks, procedures, and policies without any meaningful participation by the subordinates. Such a leader has full control of the team, leaving low autonomy within the group. Hackman and Johnson (2009) describe the typical communication patterns of authoritarian leadership as downward, one-way communication (i.e. leaders to followers, or supervisors to subordinates) that controls discussion with followers, dominates interaction and independently sets policy and procedures. Further, they assert that authoritarian communicators individually direct the completion of tasks, does not offer constant feedback and rewards acquiescent obedient behavior, and punishes erroneous actions. This communication style is also known for poor listening skills and often uses conflict for individual gain.

### *Democratic*

The democratic leadership style is a very open and collegial style of running a team. Ideas move freely amongst the group and are discussed openly. Everyone is given a seat at the table and discussion is relatively free-flowing. This style is needed in dynamic and rapidly changing environments where very little can be taken as a constant. In these fast-moving organizations, every option for improvement has to be considered to keep the group from falling out of date.

According to Rouse and Rouse (2010), democratic leaders tend to communicate alternatives, but allow or guide the group or team to make policy decisions, task and procedural rules, and to determine rules for themselves. They further state that these types of leaders try to facilitate or encourage discussion within groups including appraisal of team efforts. Finally, groups led by a democratic leader exhibit greater levels of motivation, initiative, and creativity. Overall, these leaders tend to achieve greater levels of commitment from team members and are known for better internal communication.

### *Laissez-Faire*

In the laissez-faire leadership style, all the rights and power to make decisions are entrusted to employees. Laissez-faire leaders allow their followers to have complete freedom to make decisions concerning the completion of their work. According to Rouse and Rouse (2010), these leaders tend to simply supply information or input only when it is needed by the team. They do not directly take part in team discussions and allow the group to determine roles and set

policy, tasks, and procedures. Further, they state that this type of leadership style tends to work for groups of highly motivated professionals who perform many of the needed leadership roles for themselves and can, therefore, be left pretty much alone to get the job done.

### *Transformational*

According to Burnes (2014), transformational leadership style is characterized by challenge to the status quo and the creation of new visions. It is facilitated by high levels of communication from management to meet goals. In other words, leaders utilize communication to motivate employees and enhance productivity and efficiency. Consequently, leaders focus on the big picture within the organization and delegate smaller tasks to teams to accomplish goals.

### **Conceptual Framework Summary**

The following Conceptual Framework Summary in Fig. 1 outlines four (4) models based on the Scientific Management/Classical, Behavioral/Human Relations and Systems Approaches which all culminate in the Cultural Approach at the peak of the pyramid. Each approach contains key features of the foregoing organizational communication approaches and the preferred leadership styles, organizational structures, and communication forms. The framework is subsequently measured against the data findings to reveal the communication gaps at UTT with a view to identifying appropriate communication strategies to achieve the stated aim of fostering re-enchantment and enhancing organizational success.

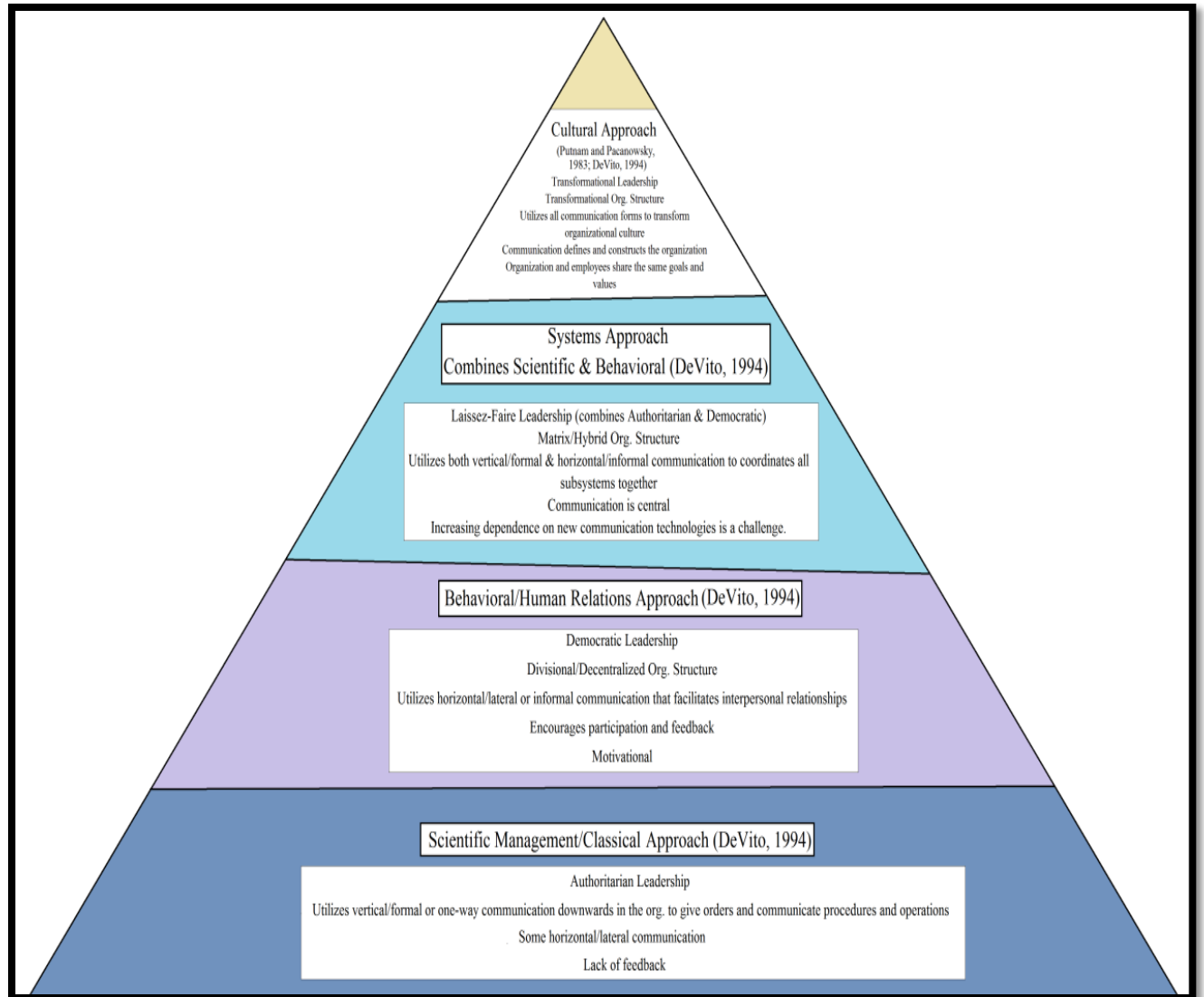


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework Summary

Source: Author

## Methodology

The study employs the quantitative research methodology. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) assert that this methodology typically utilizes large representative samples that allow results to be inferred or generalized to the population under study. A distinct advantage of quantitative research is the use of numbers that allow greater precision in reporting results. Survey research is a common technique of this methodology which allows the researcher to obtain information from the “horse’s mouth” by asking respondents what they feel and think. In

addition, it is generally convenient, transcends spatial (geographical) and temporal (time) boundaries, expedient and can be used to investigate problems in a realistic setting and relatively cost-effective given the amount of information gathered (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006).

The survey instrument was designed using Google Forms software and the link was posted to UTT's intranet platform. It consists of twenty-one (21) items in five (5) sections. Items 1-4 are **demographic** questions while 5-14 solicited responses to **individual perceptions** of communication. There were four (4) questions **about UTT** in items 15-18 and two (2) devoted to **UTT leadership** in items 19 and 20. A **final** question was posed in item 21. While items 1-4 solicited single-answer responses, items 5-20 were rated using the Likert Scale as follows: 1 – “strongly disagree”, 2 – “disagree”, 3 – “neutral/NA/not sure”, 4 – “agree” and 5 – “strongly agree” (see Appendix). The initial posting was followed by a reminder two weeks later. This resulted in an improved response rate which totaled 198 responses out of an approximate population of 1400 academic and corporate employees at UTT.

## **Findings and Analysis**

### *Respondents' Demographics*

The following is a composite profile of responses to **Items 1-4** of the questionnaire instrument regarding age-group, gender, employee type and job category (see Table 1).

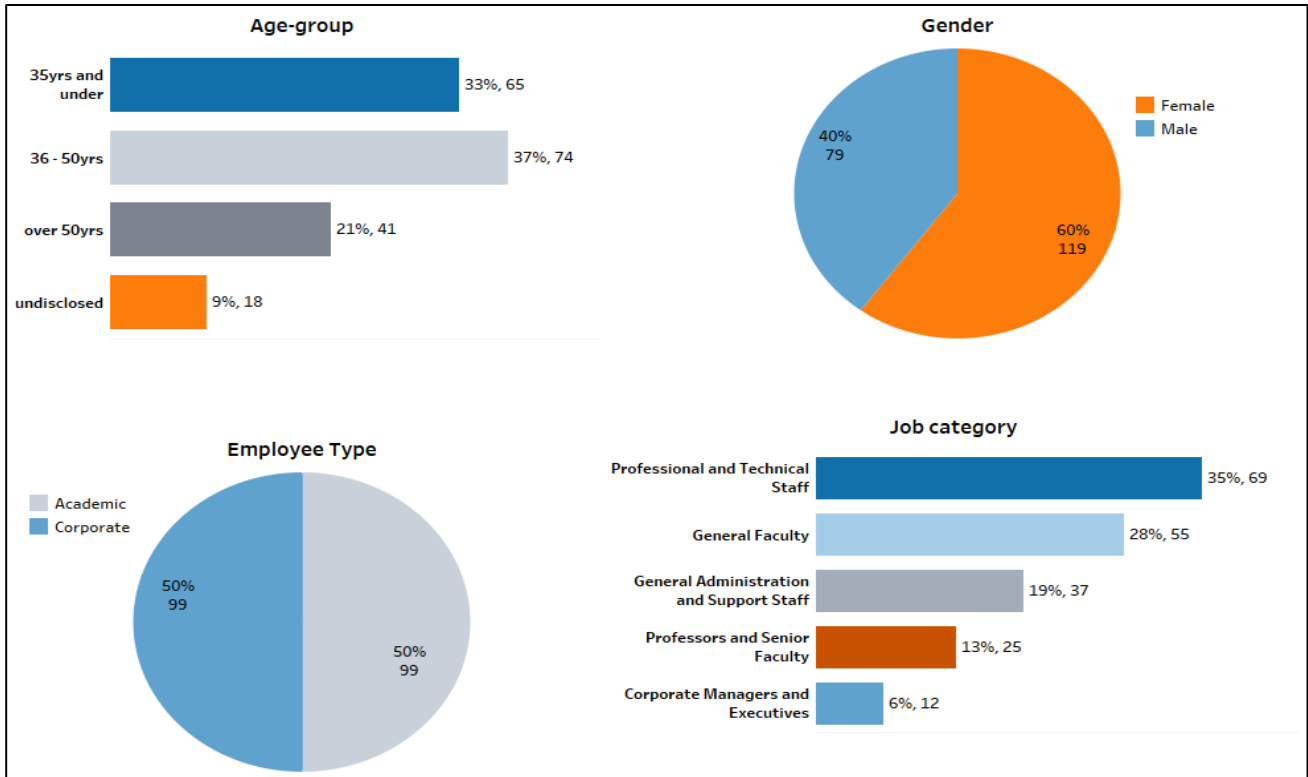


Table 1 Respondents' Demographics

The results show that the majority of employees (70%) fall under the age of 50 years while 21% are above. This reveals a generally younger workforce who can potentially achieve their career aspirations at this relatively new institution. On the other hand, female employees (60%) outnumber their male counterparts (40%) which dispels any perception of gender discrimination at UTT. However, the fact that employee type is balanced (50%) between “academic” and “corporate” is a troubling revelation which departs from the academic focus of a typical university. This anomaly is further mirrored in the result for “job category” which shows that corporate jobs (59%) far exceed academic positions (41%) by 18% thus reversing the expected hiring culture of academic institutions.

#### *Importance of Communication*

Respondents were asked to rate their levels of agreement to the statements in the following questionnaire items by indicating: *1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – neutral / NA / not sure; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree.*

**Item 5:** I am fully aware of the importance of communication.

**Item 6:** Communication plays an important role in organizational success.

Overall, the results show the majority or 82.4 % of respondents strongly agree with the importance of communication (see Table 2) and an overwhelming 88.9% endorsing its role in organizational success (see Table 3).

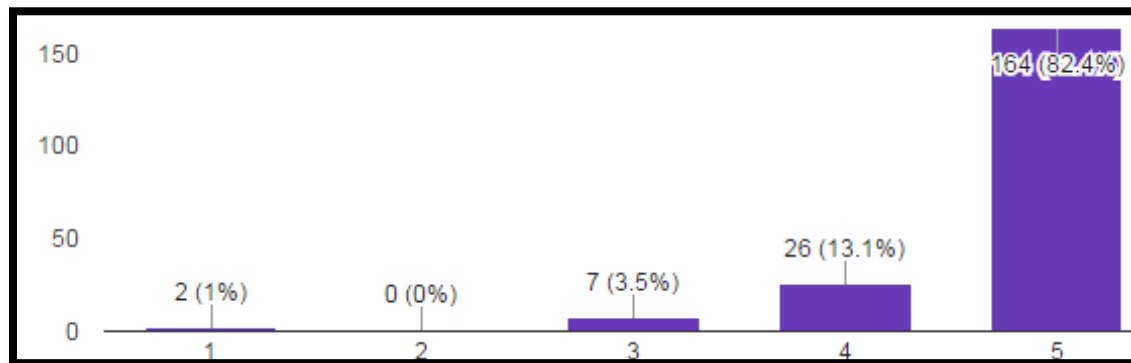


Table 2 Importance of Communication

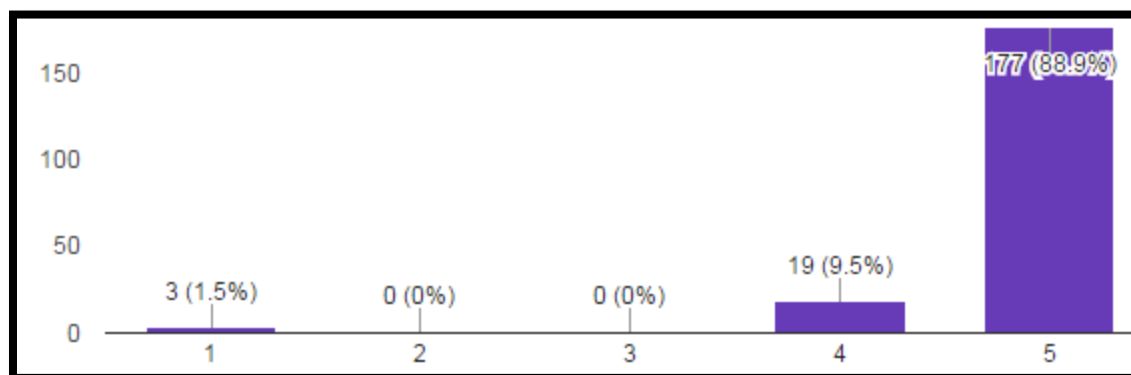


Table 3 Important Role in Organizational Success

Further, descriptive analysis was conducted to determine the central tendency or general average of responses such as mean scores. The analysis revealed means of 4.76 and 4.84 which indicate that respondents strongly agree with these statements. Standard deviation was conducted to determine the amount of variation from the set of data values. The low standard deviations (0.61, 0.56) recorded for each item indicate that responses in the data are clustered close to the mean or expected values. See Table 4.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Communication's role in organizational success	198	4.84	0.562

Importance of communication	198	4.76	0.614
Valid N (listwise)	198		

Table 4 Mean Scores for Importance and Role of Communication

Cross-tabulations determine any significant relationships between variables. In this study cross-tabulations were conducted to compare the mean scores of the two Items with **gender** using t-test of independence. The results revealed no statistically significant differences from the responses of males and females regarding Item 5 ( $p = 0.253$ ) as well as Item 6 ( $p = 0.924$ ). This shows that **gender** did not significantly influence responses to these items. Similarly, t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences between the responses of **academic and corporate employees** and Item 5 ( $p = .249$ ) and Item 6 ( $p = .256$ ) respectively. This outcome also indicates that **employee type** did not significantly impact responses to these items. Nonetheless, the cross tab between **age-group** and the items revealed means of 4.76 and 4.84. (see Table 5).

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Importance of communication	35yrs and under	65	4.80	.474	.059	4.68	4.92	3	5
	36 - 50yrs	74	4.73	.531	.062	4.61	4.85	3	5
	over 50yrs	41	4.90	.374	.058	4.78	5.02	3	5
	undisclosed	18	4.39	1.335	.315	3.73	5.05	1	5
	Total	198	4.76	.614	.044	4.67	4.84	1	5
Communication's role in institutional effectiveness	35yrs and under	65	4.92	.269	.033	4.86	4.99	4	5
	36 - 50yrs	74	4.81	.566	.066	4.68	4.94	1	5
	over 50yrs	41	4.93	.264	.041	4.84	5.01	4	5
	undisclosed	18	4.50	1.295	.305	3.86	5.14	1	5
	Total	198	4.84	.562	.040	4.76	4.92	1	5

Table 5 Mean Scores Cross-Tabbed with Age-Groups

Additionally, one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was conducted to determine the statistical significance of the **age-group** variable on the means of the two Items. The test found that there was a significant statistical difference between the responses of employees at different **age-groups** and Item 5 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194) = 3.176$ ,  $p = .025$ ). There was also a significant statistical difference between the responses of different **age-groups** and Item 6 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194) = 3.164$ ,  $p = .026$ ). See Table 6.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Importance of communication	Between Groups	3.482	3	1.161	3.176	.025
	Within Groups	70.882	194	.365		
	Total	74.364	197			
Communication's role in institutional effectiveness	Between Groups	2.899	3	.966	3.164	.026
	Within Groups	59.247	194	.305		
	Total	62.146	197			

Table 6 One-Way ANOVA by Age-Groups

These levels of significance ( $p=.025$  and  $p=.026$ ) indicate that responses to the statements in Items 5 and 6 were influenced by the **age-group** of respondents. However, there were no statistically significant differences between the responses of employees from different **job categories** and Item 5 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193)=.924$ ,  $p=.451$ ) as well as none regarding Item 6 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193)=.199$ ,  $p=.938$ ).

Overall, the findings reveal how UTT employees feel about the importance of communication which is stated as **Objective 1** of the study. Specifically, employees across the board strongly agree that communication plays an important role in organizational success. This finding was clearly established irrespective of respondents' gender, rank (academic and corporate employees) and job categories. The results support Sillars' (2005) assertion of the critical importance of communication because it allows organizations to be productive and operate effectively. He further maintains that employees experience an increase in morale, productivity, and commitment when they are able to communicate up and down the communication chain. This buy-in enhances workplace enchantment and empowers employees to be active agents who can positively impact their environment and find meaning in their work.

#### *Role of Formal and Informal Communication*

**Item 7:** Formal communication is more reliable than informal or "grapevine" communication.

**Item 8:** I am better informed about new developments at UTT through the "grapevine" than



official channels.

The results show that a total 72.3% (Table 7) of respondents both “agree” and “strongly agree” that formal communication in contrast to informal or “grapevine” communication which reveal that 48.8% “agree” and “strongly agree” that they are better informed through the “grapevine” with 31.7% being undecided (Table 8).

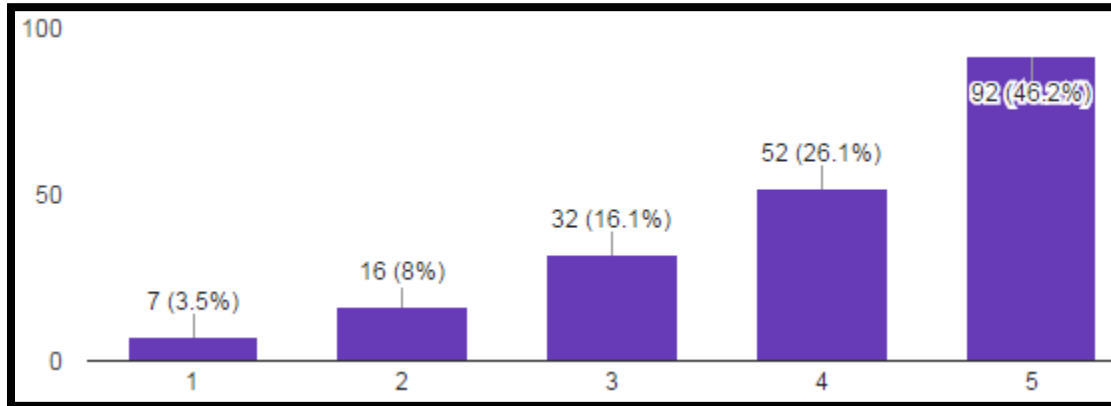


Table 7 Formal Communication More Reliable

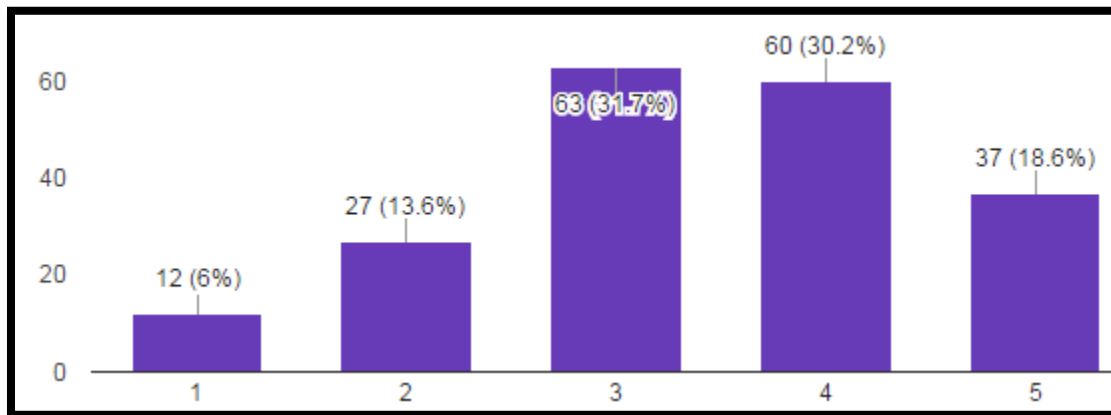


Table 8 Better Informed Through “Grapevine”

A mean of 4.03 indicates that respondents strongly agree with the statement in Item 7 while a mean of 3.41 indicates strong agreement with the statement in Item 8 (see Table 9). Further, the low standard deviations (1.126, 1.117 respectively) recorded for each statement indicate that responses in the data are clustered close to the mean.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reliability of informal and formal communication	198	4.03	1.126
The effectiveness of informal vs. official communication channels	198	3.41	1.117
Valid N (listwise)	198		

Table 9 Mean Scores for Formal and Informal Communication

T-tests conducted to compare means with **gender** revealed no significant statistical differences in responses for males and females to Item 7 ( $p = 0.938$ ) as well as Item 8 ( $p = 0.729$ ). Similar tests for **employee type** found there were no significant statistical differences between the responses of academic and corporate employees and Item 7 ( $p = .615$ ) as well Item 8 ( $p = .949$ ).

Further, one-way ANOVA to compare employee means with **age-group** found that there were no significant statistical differences between the responses of employees at different age groups and Item 7 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194) = 1.607$ ,  $p = .189$ ) as well as none between the responses of employees at different age groups and Item 8 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194) = .289$ ,  $p = .833$ ). In like manner, there were no significant statistical differences in the responses of employees at different **job categories** to Item 7 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193) = .376$ ,  $p = .826$ ) as well as none to Item 8 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193) = .485$ ,  $p = .747$ ).

Overall, the results for Items 7 and 8 succeed in achieving **Objective 2** of the study in determining what UTT employees think of the role of formal and informal communication. Specifically, they reveal that although respondents find formal communication more reliable than informal or “grapevine” communication, they generally feel better informed about new developments through the “grapevine” than official channels. Curiously, this incidental finding infers employees’ lack or low level of confidence and disenchantment or alienation in UTT’s current communication practices especially with regards to its formal or official communication. Generally, given these strong convictions, the data suggest that variables such as gender, employee type, age-group and job categories had no influence on employees’ perceptions. Consequently, the findings support the role of formal and informal communication for

institutional effectiveness advocated by Katz and Kahn (1966) and Sillars (2010). They emphasize that vertical (upward and downward) and horizontal or lateral communication facilitate critical communication flows and serve as the lifeblood of the organization consistent with the transactional model of communication that facilitates critical feedback (Barlund, 2008). In addition, the findings underscore Davis' (1953) assertion that the "grapevine" remains a core informal network to transmit information to each other outside formal communication channels.

#### *Electronic Communication / Social Media*

**Item 9:** I believe face-to-face communication is more effective than electronic communication.

**Item 10:** I believe social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) can improve communication effectiveness.

**Item 11:** Approximately how many hours per week do you spend surfing UTT's Intranet?

**Item 12:** Approximately how many hours per week do you spend on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)?

Although 35.2% of respondents were ambivalent about the statement in Item 9, the majority or 52.7% believe that face-to-face communication is more effective than electronic communication (see Table 10). Similarly, 32.7% were undecided as to whether social media can improve communication effectiveness, but 48.3% agreed with this statement (see Table 11).

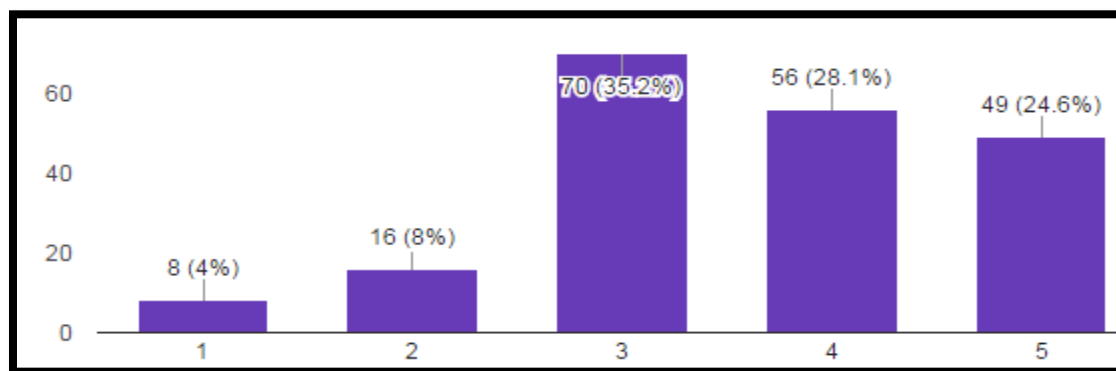


Table 10 Face-to-Face Communication to Electronic Communication

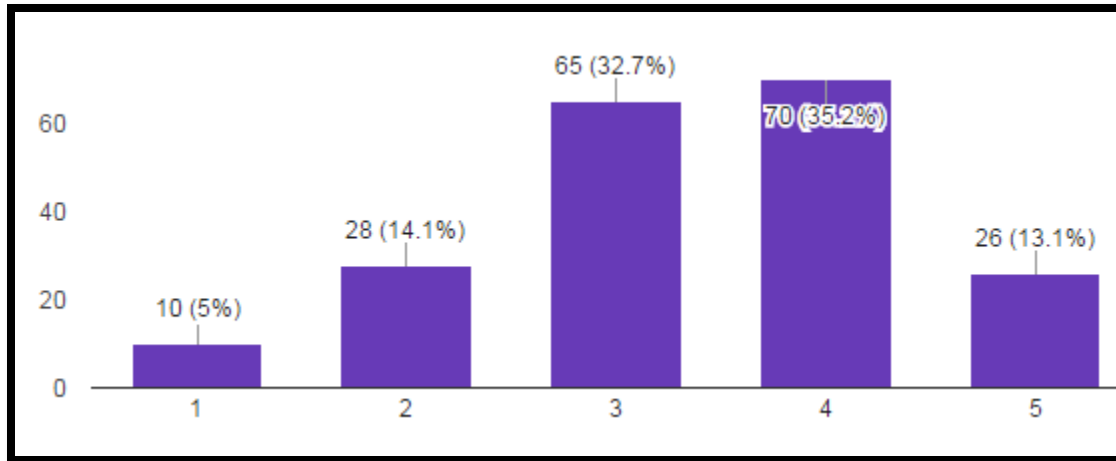


Table 11 Social Media can Improve Communication Effectiveness

Overall, while a mean of 3.61 indicates that respondents strongly agree with the statement made in Item 9, a mean of 3.38 indicates that respondents moderately agree with the statement in Item 10. Nonetheless, the low standard deviations (1.06, 1.03 respectively) recorded for both Items indicate that responses in the data are clustered close to the mean (Table 12). With respect to Items 11 and 12, the study found that respondents spent an average of 5.78 hours per week on social media, but only 3.17 hours per week surfing UTT's intranet, respectively.

However, the relatively large standard deviations of 8.59 and 4.70 respectively indicate that responses in the data set are spread further away from the mean implying greater variability in the data points which is an indication of different usage patterns (see Table 12).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Weekly hours on social media	198	5.78	8.598
The effectiveness of face to face vs. electronic communication	198	3.61	1.065
Social media can improve communication effectiveness	198	3.38	1.030
Weekly hours on UTT Intranet	198	3.17	4.701
Valid N (listwise)	198		

Table 12 Mean Scores for Electronic Communication and Social Media Use

Further, two-tailed t-test of independence were conducted to determine any likely deviations in the responses of both males and females to the **gender** variable as regards Items 9-11. The results found that there were no significant statistical differences between the responses of **males and females** and Item 9 ( $p = 0.773$ ), Item 10 ( $p = 0.964$ ) and Item 12 ( $p = 0.415$ ). However, the study found that there were significant differences between the responses of **males and females** and Item 11 ( $p=.004$ ) regarding time spent surfing UTT's intranet (see Table 13).

		Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Interval of the	
									Lower	Upper
The effectiveness of face to face vs electronic communication	Equal variances assumed	3.272	.072	.288	196	.773	.045	.155	-.261	.350
	Equal variances not assumed			.297	182.253	.767	.045	.151	-.252	.342
Social media can improve communication effectiveness	Equal variances assumed	.008	.931	-.045	196	.964	-.007	.150	-.302	.289
	Equal variances not assumed			-.045	165.479	.964	-.007	.150	-.303	.290
Weekly hours on social media	Equal variances assumed	.083	.774	-.817	196	.415	-1.020	1.249	-3.483	1.443
	Equal variances not assumed			-.817	167.080	.415	-1.020	1.249	-3.487	1.446
Weekly hours on UTT Intranet	Equal variances assumed	12.633	.000	-2.637	196	.009	-1.773	.672	-3.098	-.447
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.941	190.300	.004	-1.773	.603	-2.962	-.584

Table 13 Two-tailed T-test of Mean Scores and Gender

On the other hand, comparison of means to **employee type** using t-test of independence found that there were no significant statistical differences between the responses from academic and corporate employees to Items 9 ( $p = .595$ ), 10 ( $p = .582$ ), 11 ( $p = .170$ ) and 12 ( $p = .869$ ). Similarly, comparison of means to employee **age-group** using one-way ANOVA found that there were no significant differences between the responses of employees of different age-groups and Item 9 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194)= 1.229$ ,  $p=.300$ ), Item 10 as

determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194)= 1.048, p=.372$ ), Item 11 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194)= 1.082, p=.358$ ) as well as none for Item 12 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194)= 2.096, p=.102$ ).

Equally, in terms of **job categories**, comparison of means using one-way ANOVA found that there were no significant differences in the responses of employees at different job categories to Item 9 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193)= .823, p = .512$ ), Item 10 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193)= 1.012, p = .403$ ), Item 11 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193)= .767, p = .548$ ) and Item 12 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193)= .878, p = .478$ ).

Overall, the above results achieve **Objective 3** which sought to examine employees' preferences for electronic communication and social media. The findings show that the majority of the respondents (52.7%) believe that face-to-face communication is more effective than electronic communication while 48.3% agreed that social media can improve communication effectiveness. In both instances, however, respondents were ambivalent with percentages of 35.2 and 32.7 respectively. Notwithstanding, it is evident that employees place greater value on face-to-face communication consistent with Whittaker's (2002) view that it is the gold standard of communication as regards 'media richness' theory where it is seen as most efficient and informational and engages more human senses than mediated communication. Further, the findings support Emmitt and Gorse's (2006) view that face-to-face interaction remains the preferred method to resolve problems and contentious issues.

On the other hand, respondents still support the potential of social media to improve communication effectiveness. However, although they generally spend an average of 5.78 hours per week on social media, only an average of 3.17 hours is spent surfing UTT's intranet. Further, the relatively large standard deviations (8.59, 4.70 respectively) in their responses indicate variability in time spent and usage patterns which was not influenced by variables such as employee type, age-group and job categories. But, gender was significantly correlated ( $p=.004$ ) with time spent surfing UTT's intranet which suggests that usage varies between male and female employees. These findings generally reflect the current shift to mediated communication as formal and informal means given the growing influence of changing communication technologies (Keller, 2013).

### *Personal Communication Competence*

**Item 13:** I am an efficient communicator.

**Item 14:** I consider myself very competent with communication technologies.

The results show that respondents overwhelming (85.9%) believe they are efficient communicators (Table 14) and consider themselves competent (81.9%) with communication technologies (Table 15).

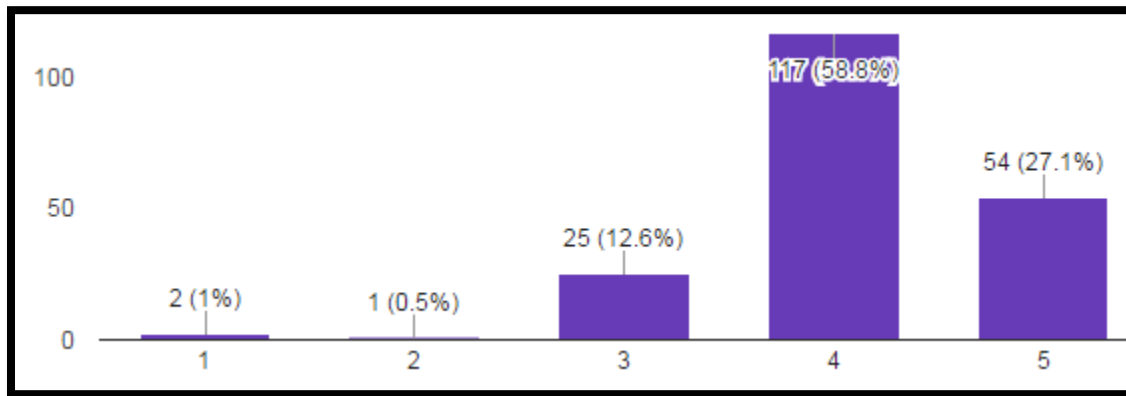


Table 14 Efficient Communicator

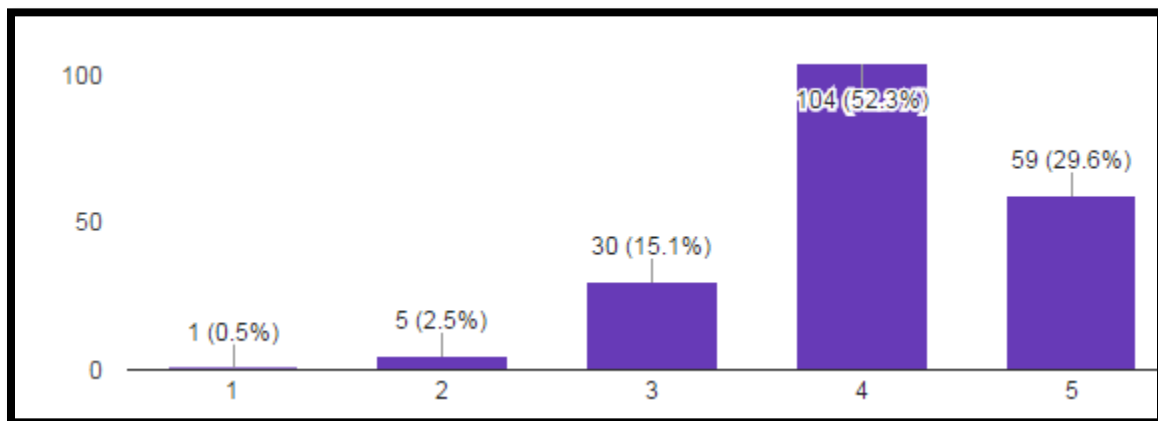


Table 15 Competent with Communication Technologies

Further, means of 4.11 and 4.08 indicate that they strongly agree with these statements and the low standard deviations (.704, .767) indicate that responses in the data are clustered close to the means (Table 16).

Comparison of means by **gender** using t-test of independence found that there were no significant statistical differences between the responses of males and females and Item 13 ( $p = .163$ ) and Item 14 ( $p = .258$ ). Similar tests found no significant statistical differences between the responses of **academic and corporate employees** and Item 13 ( $p = .841$ ) as well as Item 14 ( $p = .165$ ). Additionally, comparison of means by employee **age-group** using one-way ANOVA found that there were no significant statistical differences between the responses of employees at different **age-groups** and Item 13 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194) = .608, p = .611$ ).

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Personal communication efficiency	35yrs and under	65	4.08	.714	.089	3.90	4.25	2	5
	36 - 50yrs	74	4.14	.557	.065	4.01	4.26	3	5
	over 50yrs	41	4.20	.782	.122	3.95	4.44	1	5
	undisclosed	18	3.94	.998	.235	3.45	4.44	1	5
	Total	198	4.11	.704	.050	4.01	4.21	1	5
Personal competence with communication technologies	35yrs and under	65	4.25	.685	.085	4.08	4.42	3	5
	36 - 50yrs	74	4.05	.719	.084	3.89	4.22	2	5
	over 50yrs	41	4.07	.818	.128	3.81	4.33	2	5
	undisclosed	18	3.56	.922	.217	3.10	4.01	1	5
	Total	198	4.08	.767	.055	3.97	4.18	1	5

Table 16 Mean Scores for Efficient Communicator and Technological Competence

However, the study found that there were significant statistical differences between the responses of employees at different age-groups and Item 14 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(3,194) = 4.028, p = .008$ ) which support the variance in technological competence among different age-groups. See Table 17.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Personal communication efficiency	Between Groups	.908	3	.303	.608	.611
	Within Groups	96.648	194	.498		
	Total	97.556	197			
	Between Groups	6.793	3	2.264	4.028	.008



Personal competence with communication technologies	Within Groups	109.070	194	.562		
	Total	115.864	197			

Table 17 One-way ANNOVA by Age-Groups

Finally, comparison of means by employee **job category** using one-way ANOVA found that there were no significant statistical differences between the responses of employees at different job categories and Item 13 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193) = .330$ ,  $p = .858$ ) and Item 14 as determined by one-way ANOVA ( $F(4,193) = 1.559$ ,  $p = .187$ ). In other words, **job category** was not a significant determining factor in respondents' responses.

The foregoing results succeed in achieving **Objective 4** of the study which set out to determine employees' overall communication competence. The results of the analysis reveal that the majority of respondents feel efficient as communicators and competent with communication technologies. However, it was evident that competence levels varied between age-groups. While this evidence constitutes an incidental finding, it is not unique given the fact that younger users are generally more savvy with technology compared to their older counterparts who are typically branded as laggards as regard adopting new technologies. Nonetheless, the overall results reflect the growing change in the modern workplace as a result of the increasing dependence on computer networks and electronic methods for disseminating information emphasized by DeFleur et al. (2005).

#### *Communication and Organizational Success*

**Item 15:** I fully understand how my role and functions are related to UTT's goals.

**Item 16:** UTT is efficient in updating staff about changes in policies and standards.

**Item 17:** Communication on hiring and promotions at UTT is prompt and reliable.

**Item 18:** UTT staff are generally efficient in communication.

**Item 19:** UTT's leadership promptly responds to my concerns.

**Item 20:** My opinions are solicited and valued by UTT leadership in making key decisions.

While respondents (72.8%) overwhelmingly understand how their roles and functions are related to UTT's goals in Item 15 (Table 18), they disagree (50.2%) and display ambivalence (33.7%) about UTT's efficiency in updating them about policies and standards in Item 16 (Table 19).

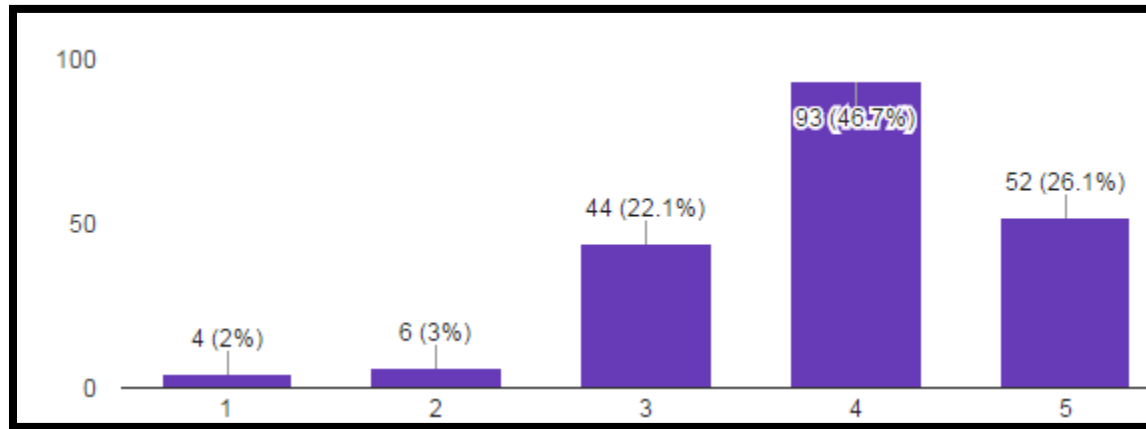


Table 18 Role and Functions Related to UTT's Goals

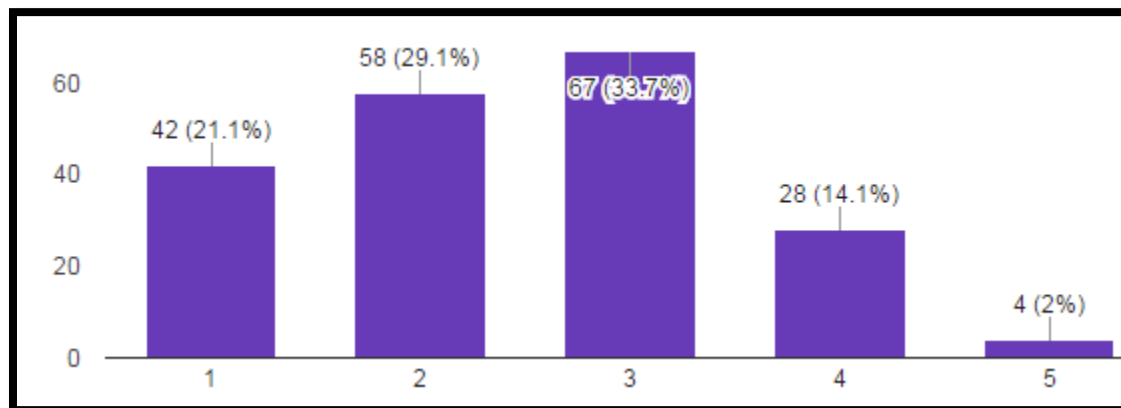


Table 19 Efficient in Updating Staff

More alarming is the statistic regarding prompt and reliable communication on hiring and promotion practices at UTT in Item 17 where an overwhelming 65.8% disagree (38.2% strongly disagree; 27.6% disagree) (Table 20) notwithstanding the general feeling in Item 18 that they are undecided or disagree about their own communication competence (Table 21).

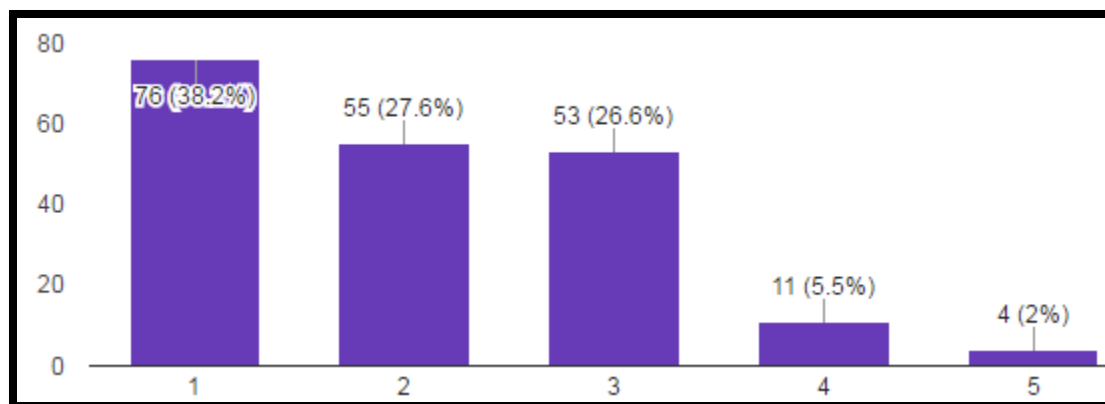


Table 20 Communication on Hiring and Promotion

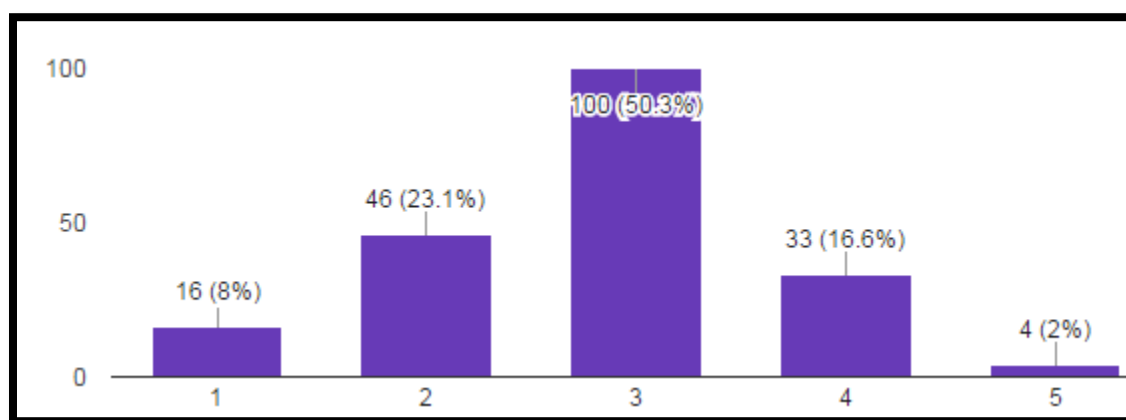


Table 21 Generally Efficient in Communication

Equally revealing is the finding on the response to UTT's leadership regarding employees' personal concerns in Item 18 where respondents either disagree (48.3%) or are undecided (37.2%). See Table 22. This statistic is further mirrored in respondents' ratings of how UTT's leadership value their opinions in Item 19 (Table 23).

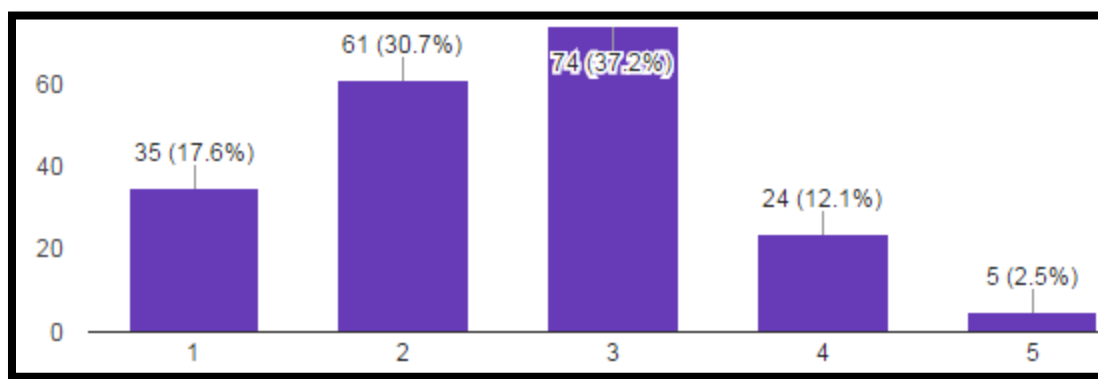


Table 22 Leadership Responds Promptly

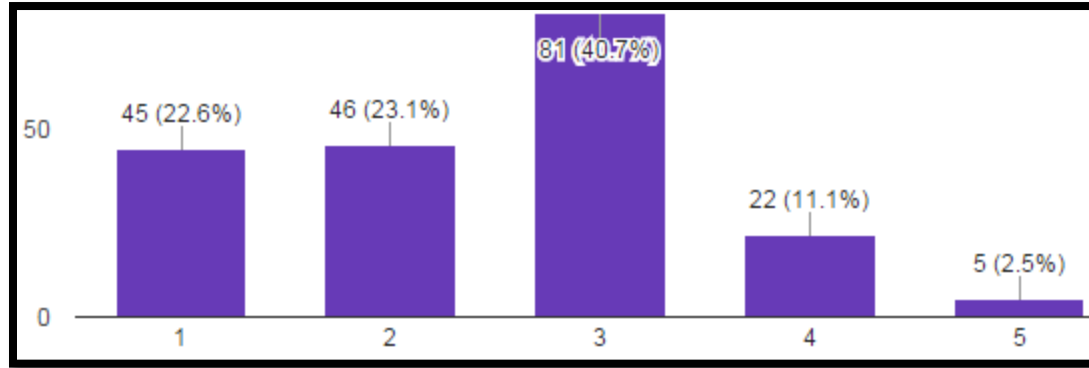


Table 23 Opinions Solicited by Leaders

An overall means analysis of Items 15-20 reveals varying ratings illustrated in Table 24.

A mean of 3.92 indicates that respondents strongly agree with the statement in Item 15 while a mean of 2.81 indicates that respondents are neutral or ambivalent about the statement in Item 16. On the other hand, a mean of 2.52 indicates that respondents strongly disagree with the statement in Item 17 but a mean of 2.46 indicates that they moderately agree with the statement in Item 18. The mean of 2.46 indicates that respondents are neutral or ambivalent about the statement in Item 19 like they are with the statement in Item 20 with a mean of 2.04. However, on a positive note, the low standard deviations recorded for the Items indicate that responses in the data are generally clustered close to the mean.

#	Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
15	Understanding of how employee's personal roles relates to UTT's goals	198	3.92	.886
16	UTT staff are efficient communicators	198	2.81	.879
17	UTT's leadership promptly responds to my concerns	198	2.52	.996
18	Efficiency of updates about changes in policies at UTT	198	2.46	1.040
19	UTT's leadership solicits and value my opinions	198	2.46	1.026
20	Communication about hiring and promotions are prompt and reliable at UTT	198	2.04	1.007
	Valid N (listwise)	198		

Table 24 Mean Scores for Items 15-20

Equally, correlational analyses of Items 15-20 with institutional effectiveness reveal varying results as illustrated in Table 25. In Item 15, there is a weak but positive correlation which is statistically significant between institutional effectiveness and whether employees understood how their personal roles relate to UTT's goals ( $r=.384$ ,  $p=.000$ ). On the other hand, there is a moderate, positive correlation which is statistically significant between institutional effectiveness and Item 16 on whether updates about policy changes at UTT are efficient ( $r=.485$ ,  $p=.000$ ). There is a moderate, positive correlation which is statistically significant between institutional effectiveness and Item 17 on whether employees believe that communication on hiring and promotions at UTT is prompt and reliable ( $r=.521$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and the correlation between institutional effectiveness and Item 18 on whether staff are efficient communications is weak but positive and statistically significant ( $r=.317$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Items 19 and 20 show moderate, positive correlations which are statistically significant between institutional effectiveness and whether employees feel that UTT's leadership promptly responds to their concerns ( $r=.535$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and whether employees believe that UTT's leadership solicits and values their opinions ( $r=.524$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

		The current priorities of UTT are consistent with its stated mission	Understanding of how employee's personal roles relates to UTT's goals	Communication about hiring and promotions are prompt and reliable at UTT	Efficiency of updates about changes in policies at UTT	UTT staff are efficient communicators	UTT's leadership promptly responds to my concerns	UTT's leadership solicits and value my opinions
The current priorities of UTT are consistent with its stated mission  <b>(Institutional Effectiveness)</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.384**	.521**	.485**	.317**	.535**	.524**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	198	198	198	198	198	198	198
Understanding of how employee's personal roles relates to UTT's goals	Pearson Correlation	.384**	1	.300**	.294**	.228**	.278**	.276**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.001	.000	.000
	N	198	198	198	198	198	198	198
Communication about hiring and promotions are prompt and reliable at UTT	Pearson Correlation	.521**	.300**	1	.631**	.439**	.581**	.493**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	198	198	198	198	198	198	198
Efficiency of updates about changes in policies at UTT	Pearson Correlation	.485**	.294**	.631**	1	.334**	.476**	.401**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	198	198	198	198	198	198	198
UTT staff are efficient communicators	Pearson Correlation	.317**	.228**	.439**	.334**	1	.384**	.407**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	198	198	198	198	198	198	198
UTT's leadership promptly responds to my concerns	Pearson Correlation	.535**	.278**	.581**	.476**	.384**	1	.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	198	198	198	198	198	198	198
UTT's leadership solicits and value my opinions	Pearson Correlation	.524**	.276**	.493**	.401**	.407**	.637**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	198	198	198	198	198	198	198

Table 25 Correlational Analysis of Items 15-20

As a whole, the results succeed in achieving **Objective 5** which sought to ascertain the role of communication in institutional effectiveness at UTT. To this end, the results reveal varying but positive correlations among Items 15-20 and institutional effectiveness that are statistically significant. Firstly, the majority of respondents understand their roles and functions in relation to UTT's goals but generally disagree with UTT's efficiency in updating them about policies and standards as well as its communication on hiring and promotion practices. More significantly, respondents are ambivalent about UTT's leadership regarding their personal concerns and opinions. Altogether, their reservations of UTT's leadership practices in general can further negatively impact the institution's effectiveness by engendering disenchantment.

These gaps can be potentially mitigated by UTT revisiting its organizational framework consistent with the "matrix or transformational structure" which combines the benefits of both the "functional" and "divisional structures" and facilitate more efficient communication and enhance institutional effectiveness (Mohr, 2008). In addition, a "transformational leadership

style” is essential to challenge the status quo and create new visions (Burnes, 2014). This strategy further resonates with the “cultural approach” of organizational communication which views organizations as cultures that share the same set of values and goals with employees (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983; DeVito, 1994).

### **Communication Strategies to Re-Enchant Employees and Enhance Organizational Success**

Respondents were asked to select five (5) out of ten (10) suggested strategies to improve communication and organizational effectiveness at UTT. As illustrated in Table 26, over 50% believe that the following five (5) strategies can achieve this outcome and are ranked as follows:

- Better transparency and accountability (77.8%)
- Improved feedback from administration (74.2%)
- Quicker official updates (66.2%)
- Clear reporting structures (55.6%)
- Increased inter-campus communication (50%)

<b>Communication Strategies to Re-Enchant Employees and Enhance Organizational Success</b>	<b>Responses</b>		<b>Percent of Cases</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>	
Faster internet	81	8.1%	40.9%
Improved IT support	51	5.1%	25.8%
Clearer reporting structures	110	11.0%	55.6%
Quicker official updates	131	13.1%	66.2%
Increased inter-campus communication channels	99	9.9%	50.0%
More networking with other institutions	78	7.8%	39.4%
Workshops on communication skills	73	7.3%	36.9%
Better transparency and accountability	154	15.4%	77.8%
Access to senior administrative/corporate staff	74	7.4%	37.4%
Improved feedback from administration	147	14.7%	74.2%
Total	998	100.0%	504.0%

Table 26 Strategies to Improve Communication and Institutional Effectiveness

The significant responses to the forgoing five (5) strategies underscore the underlying communication conundrum and general disenchantment at UTT which this study sought to investigate. Specifically, the findings echo the revelations of the annual tracer studies by UTT’s Quality Assurance Department (2015, 2016) which have consistently reported the breakdown of communication flows across all levels of academic and corporate staff of the institution to the potential detriment of productivity, morale, image and the tertiary mandate of the institution

owing to the evident disenchantment. Towards this end, the results support the need for a new or modified approach that include better transparency and accountability (77.8%), improved feedback from administration (74.2%), quicker official updates (66.2%), clear reporting structures (55.6%), and increased inter-campus communication (50%) to improve UTT's current communication towards organizational success.

Further, these strategies can best be facilitated by drawing on the theoretical rigor from the four models in the Conceptual Framework Summary (Fig 2) previously proposed by this author and adapting them to the institution's current needs and circumstances. To this end, notwithstanding the strengths and drawbacks of the models, it is the author's studied opinion, supported by the empirical evidence, that the Cultural Approach in the fourth model advocated by Putnam and Pacanowsky (1983) and DeVito (1994) serves as a strategic, logical and prudent option to address UTT's current communication challenges and restore employee re-enchantment for organizational success. This model is characterized by the merits of transformational leadership style and bolstered by the efficiency of a transformational organizational structure that utilizes all communication forms to transform UTT's organizational culture and redefine the institution to ensure that the institution and employees (academic and corporate) share the same aspirations and values towards a common goal.



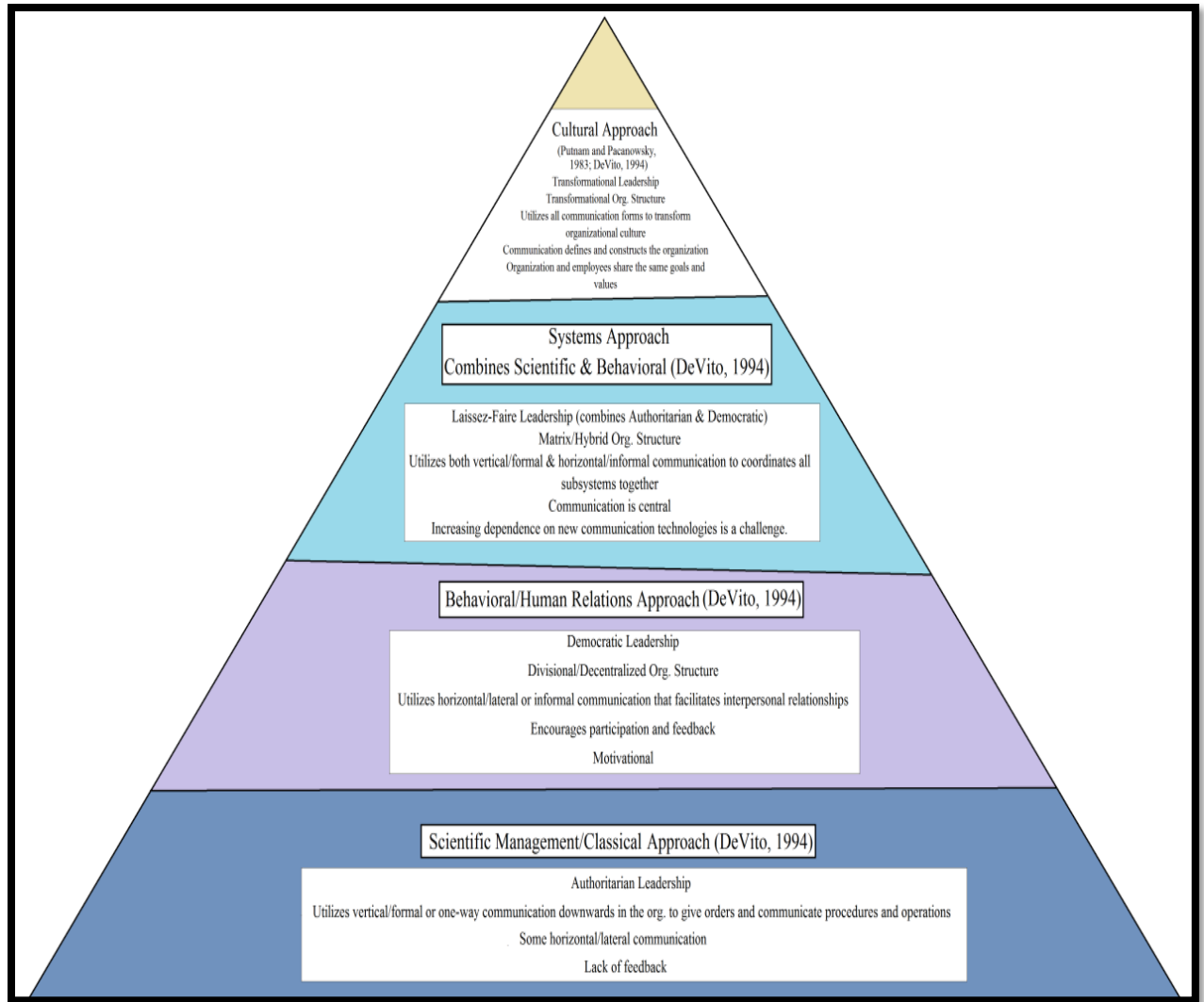


Fig. 2 Conceptual Framework Summary

Source: Author

## Summary and Recommendations

In summary, data analysis revealed that the majority of employees (70%) fall under the age of 50 years indicating potential career paths at the institution while the greater percentage of female employees (60%) dispels any perception of gender discrimination. However, the fact that employee type is balanced (50%) between “academic” and “corporate” is a troubling revelation which departs from the academic focus of a typical university. This is further mirrored in the result for “job category” which shows that corporate jobs (59%) far exceed academic positions (41%) thus reversing the expected norm for academic institutions as regards resource allocations and expenditure not to mention contributing to disenchantment among academic staff.

**Objective 1** of the study focused on how employees feel about the importance of communication to which 82.4% strongly agree. In addition, 88.9% strongly agree with its important role in institutional effectiveness. These findings were not influenced by respondents' gender, rank (academic and corporate employees) and job categories. It is therefore evident that Objective 1 was achieved as the findings support Sillars' (2005) assertion of the critical importance of communication because it allows organizations to be productive and operate effectively. Further, he maintains that employees experience an increase in morale, productivity, and commitment when they are able to communicate up and down the communication chain. It is therefore in UTT's interest to urgently heed these results to reap the stated benefits of communication that render the institution an enchanting workplace.

The results pertaining to **Objective 2** which sought to determine what UTT employees think of the role of formal and informal communication were ambivalent yet consistent with existing employee perceptions. Specifically, they reveal that although respondents overwhelmingly (72.3%) find formal communication more reliable than informal or "grapevine" communication, 48.8% still feel better informed about new developments through the "grapevine" with 31.7% remaining undecided. This incidental finding questions employees' confidence in UTT's current communication practices especially with regards to its formal or official communication. Interestingly, however, the data suggest that variables such as gender, employee type, age-group and job categories had no influence on employees' perceptions. Generally, the findings support the role of formal and informal communication for organizational success and thus achieve Objective 2. The findings are underscored by Katz and Kahn (1966) and Sillars (2010) who emphasize that vertical (upward and downward) and horizontal or lateral communication facilitate critical communication flows and serve as the lifeblood of the organization consistent with the transactional model of communication that facilitates critical feedback (Barlund, 2008). Further, they underscore Davis' (1953) assertion that the "grapevine" remains a core informal network to transmit information to each other outside formal communication channels.

The aim of **Objective 3** was to examine employees' preferences for electronic communication and social media which was achieved. To this end, the results show that the majority of the respondents (52.7%) believe that face-to-face communication is more effective than electronic communication but still agreed (48.3%) that social media can improve communication effectiveness. However, respondents were ambivalent with percentages of 35.2

and 32.7 respectively. One can therefore deduce that employees still place greater value on face-to-face communication consistent with Whittaker's (2002) view that it is the gold standard of communication as regards 'media richness' theory where it is seen as most efficient, informational and engages more human senses than mediated communication. Further, the findings support Emmitt and Gorse's (2006) view that face-to-face interaction remains the preferred method to resolve problems and contentious issues. On the other hand, it is equally evident that respondents support the potential of social media to improve communication effectiveness. However, although employees generally spend an average of 5.78 hours per week on social media, only an average of 3.17 hours is spent surfing UTT's intranet. In addition, the relatively large standard deviations (8.59, 4.70 respectively) in their responses indicate the variability in time spent and usage patterns which noticeably were not influenced by variables such as employee type, age-group and job categories. Notably, gender was significantly correlated ( $p=.004$ ) with time spent surfing UTT's intranet which suggests that usage typically varies between male and female employees. These findings generally reflect the current shift to mediated communication as formal and informal means given the growing influence of changing communication technologies (Keller, 2013).

The study also aimed to determine employees' personal communication competence as stated in **Objective 4**. The achievement of this objective is reflected in the results which reveal that the majority (85.9%) of respondents feel efficient as communicators and competent (81.9%) with communication technologies. However, it was evident that competence levels varied between age-groups. This was borne out in the result of the one-way ANOVA test by age-group which revealed a significant statistical difference (ANOVA ( $F(3,194)= 4.028$ ,  $p=.008$ )). While this evidence constitutes an incidental finding, it is not unique given the fact that younger users are generally more savvy with technology compared to their older counterparts who are typically branded as laggards as regards adopting new technologies. Nonetheless, the overall results reflect the growing change in the modern workplace as a result of the increasing dependence on computer networks and electronic methods for disseminating information emphasized by DeFleur et al. (2005).

As a whole, the results succeed in achieving **Objective 5** which sought to ascertain the role of communication in organizational success at UTT. To this end, they reveal varying but positive correlations that are statistically significant. Firstly, the majority (72.8%) of respondents

understand their roles and functions in relation to UTT's goals but generally disagree (50.2%) with UTT's efficiency in updating them about policies and standards as well as its communication on hiring and promotion practices (65.8%). More significantly, the majority (48%) of respondents disagree with the response of UTT's leadership to their personal concerns and opinions. Altogether, the responses speak to the urgency in addressing current UTT's leadership practices which engender disenchantment and negatively impact organizational success.

The institution can potentially bridge these gaps by embracing an organizational framework consistent with the "matrix or transformational structure" which combines the benefits of both the "functional" and "divisional structures" and facilitate more efficient communication and enhance institutional effectiveness (Mohr, 2008). Further, a "transformational leadership style" is essential to challenge the status quo and create new visions (Burnes, 2014). This suggested trajectory resonates with the "cultural approach" of organizational communication which views organizations as cultures that share the same set of values and goals with employees (Putnam and Pacanowsky, 1983; DeVito, 1994).

#### *Recommendations*

Overall, the achievement of the study's five (5) stated objectives succeed in answering the RQ: **What communication strategies can UTT use to address employee disenchantment for organizational success?** To this end, the recommendations are informed by the empirical data outlined in Table 27 as follows:

Strategies to Improve Communication and Institutional Effectiveness	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Faster internet	81	8.1%	40.9%
Improved IT support	51	5.1%	25.8%
Clearer reporting structures	110	11.0%	55.6%
Quicker official updates	131	13.1%	66.2%
Increased inter-campus communication channels	99	9.9%	50.0%
More networking with other institutions	78	7.8%	39.4%
Workshops on communication skills	73	7.3%	36.9%
Better transparency and accountability	154	15.4%	77.8%
Access to senior administrative/corporate staff	74	7.4%	37.4%
Improved feedback from administration	147	14.7%	74.2%
Total	998	100.0%	504.0%

Table 27 Recommended Strategies to Improve Communication and Institutional Effectiveness

Consequently, the following statistically-supported recommendations are tendered to improve communication, assuage employee disenchantment, and enhance UTT's organizational success:

- Ensure better transparency and accountability (77.8%)
- Improve feedback from UTT's administration (74.2%)
- Provide quicker official updates (66.2%)
- Provide clear reporting structures (55.6%)
- Increase inter-campus communication (50%)

More importantly, the operationalization of these recommendations can best be achieved by implementing them in conjunction with the Cultural Approach as outlined in Fig. 5.1. This approach is compatible with a transformational leadership style that would ensure better transparency and accountability and a transformational organizational structure that can foster a communication culture to enable quicker official updates, clear official updates and increased inter-campus communication that altogether render UTT an enchanting workplace with greater potential for organizational success.

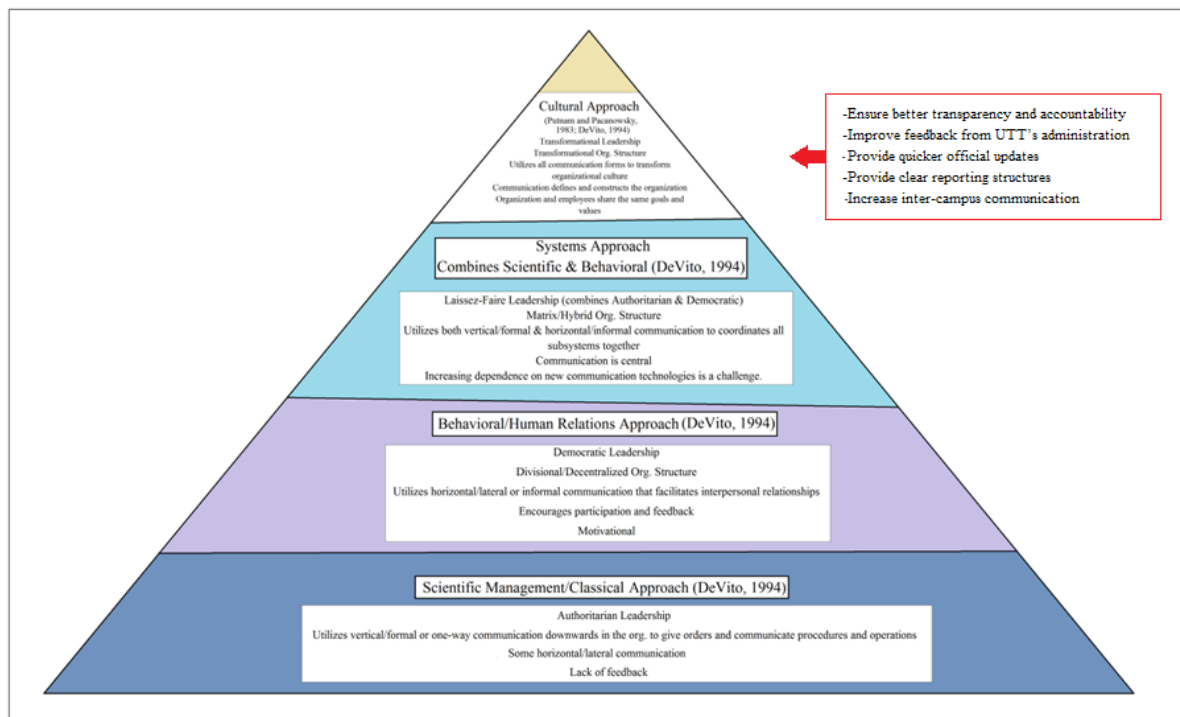


Fig. 3 Recommendations using the Cultural Approach

Source: Author

Based on the above, it is recommended that similar academic institutions and organizations, as a whole, can implement the suggested recommendations to address their communication challenges and achieve institutional/organizational effectiveness to reap the benefits of enhanced productivity, morale, image and employee buy-in especially in stringent economic times. In this regard, it is imperative that they adopt an organizational framework that is consistent with the “transformational structure” which combines the benefits of both the “functional” and “divisional structures” that facilitate more efficient communication and enhance institutional effectiveness (Mohr, 2008). Further, a “transformational leadership style” is equally essential to challenge the status quo and create new visions as advocated by Burnes (2014). Overall, this recommended strategy resonates with the “cultural approach” of organizational communication which views organizations as cultures that share the same set of values and goals with employees (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983; DeVito, 1994).

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