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How managerial interactions affect employees' work output in Ghanaian organizations

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine how managerial interactions with employees affect work output, using Ghanaian organizations as a study.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper adopts a survey method, using questionnaires to collect data from 120 workers from four Ghanaian organizations to form the basis of the study.

Findings – It was found that regular interactions between managers and employees have a direct positive effect on employee work output. Results emerging from the analysis show that for organizations to make any significant impact on performance, both managers and their subordinates must have a very good climate of social interactions. The involvement of lower level employees in organizational activities and decision making is of crucial importance to organizational performance.

Research limitations/implications – The study is limited to the four organizations of the sample and the number of respondents.

Practical implications – The paper's findings call for some behavioural directions for managers in organizations to pay serious attention to the total involvement of workers through effective communication in the running of the organizations.

Originality/value – The paper discusses organizational communication by focusing on managerial interaction with employees, and how it can affect organizational work output. The consequences of lack of effective managerial interaction with employees would result in an increased tendency for individuals to leave the organization due to a lower level of satisfaction with their managers.

Keywords Ghana, Employees behaviour, Managers, Communication, Social interaction, Managerial interactions, Effective communication, Employee motivation, Work output

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

At the core of every organization are people held together by a common interpersonal relationship. How strongly this interpersonal relationship is maintained is determined by the frequency and mode of interactions between managers and their subordinates in work organizations. Communication between managers and subordinates is critical for organizations since familiarity breeds trust and creates positive relationships and therefore repeated interactions between managers and employees in organizations. This fosters team cooperation (Flache, 1996) and creates the conditions for commitment (Ng *et al.*, 2006). Essentially, managerial interaction means communication between management and employees in organizations and communication is the essence of what we do each day in our professional lives.

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An important challenge for managers in networking and coordinating their organizations is the task of harmonization through effective interaction of the partners (Jaatinen and Lavikka, 2008). According to the relationship management perspective in corporate communication, an organization's work is affected by its ability to develop mutually satisfying relationships between managers and employees (Ledingham, 2003). Researchers have also connected relationship evaluations with employee commitment, employee retention and customer retention (Wilson, 2000; Yang and Mallabo, 2003).

Managerial communication has been linked to organizational commitment in several ways. For example, Ng *et al.* (2006) found that management communication, work schedule flexibility through management-employee interaction and opportunity for learning all affect organizational commitment. Effective organizational communication leads to organizational commitment to total quality management (Allen, 1992) and organizational communication is the key antecedent of employee commitment (De Ridder, 2004). Although these studies have shown how communication can bring about close interpersonal relationships in organizations and commitment of workers to organizational objectives, the studies have predominantly focused on Western economies. So how do these outcomes apply to developing economies, particularly Africa? Obviously, we do not know and therefore a dearth of empirical knowledge on the subject matter in developing countries and in particular Africa is created. Jehn *et al.* (1999) argue that people and organizations from different cultures have experienced different educational cultures and may consequently espouse different values. Thus, each of the different organizational behaviours implies different challenges and opportunities for work groups and consequently each should influence the work group outcome differently. Therefore, this paper suggests that the studies above can be replicated in the developing context but not taken as a universal outcome. Moreover, most of these studies have basically looked at general communication in organizations and related organizational commitment but failed to specifically look at managerial interactions with subordinates and how this affects work output. The existing body of literature is therefore exposed to two main limitations in terms of scope and context of this work.

In terms of context, this paper seeks to address these limitations by exploring employees' attitude toward management-employee interaction and how this could affect organizational work output. In terms of scope, the paper focuses on four Ghanaian organizations as case studies, but its findings are relevant to other African countries due to similarities in cultural and managerial practices.

Rosenbloom (1998) points out that, in order to achieve a coordinated way toward a desired common purpose in work organizations, managers must communicate with subordinates in a manner which communicates expectations clearly. How managers and their subordinates communicate is important to the overall organizational success. Open communication can lead to greater commitment of the workforce, thereby enhancing motivation and performance of employees. Open communication between managers and subordinates can also enhance worker relations, organizational networks and employee trust that would foster good corporate citizenship.

Within the limited literature on African management practices, few scholars have examined behaviours that are related to individual and organizational activities that affect management and work output in the African context, for example; managerial behaviour in Ghana and Kenya with respect to culture (Kuada, 1994), managerial competencies of professionals in Tanzania (Debrah and Ofori, 2005) Public sector management and

competence creation (Kamoche, 1997), culture, job satisfaction and organizational commitment on managers in Nigeria (Okpara and Wynn, 2007), training and employment strategy in the informal sector of developing countries (Debrah, 2007), African culture and leadership practices (Kuada, 2010). These studies have enlivened the debate on management and leadership issues in developing countries and have contributed to shaping the managerial concerns in the African economy. However, none of the studies have examined management communication in the light of employee attitudes to work. Extant literature on management behaviours with regard to communication has failed to address this very important subject in developing economies. As a result, a considerable gap of scholarly understanding of management and employee communication behaviours in developing economies exists. As Kuada (2010) rightly points out, a comprehensive empirical investigation into the impact of dominant African cultural and managerial attributes on organizational performance is urgently required to direct leader development interventions on the continent; the purpose of this article is to fill in this gap and contribute to the creation of a balance of literature particularly in the area of management and employee communication in developing countries using Ghana as a case study.

This paper is structured in four sections: in first section, the study looks at the context in which the study is premised. In second section, the study provides general literature on communication and employee motivation and builds up the research questions for the study. A brief socio-political background of Ghana is provided in the same section. In third section, the study describes the research design, the sample selection, measures and the research analysis. The results are discussed and concluded with theoretical and practical implications and some suggestions for practicing managers in fourth section.

Conceptual background

Management practice in Africa

Managerial practices in most African states reflect organizational and national culture patterns underscored by cultural values that provide a relatively large power distance between managers and their subordinates based on historical racial and ethnic disparities (Horwitz *et al.*, 2004). In most Ghanaian organizations, the dominant leadership style can be described as authoritarian benevolence characterized by rigid supervision (Kuada, 1994). Wiredu (1980) describes the management style in African countries as over centralized in administrative processes where managers enjoy extreme power and alienate their subordinates in matters of organizational decision making. Woode (1999, p. 11) reports that “administrative management in Ghana is highly centralized, characterized by a lack of delegated authority [. . .] and the manager is culturally not conditioned to look favourably on delegation”. Woode (1999, p. 10) further describes the situation as “authoritarian personalities and tin gods abound in several organizations in Ghana, creating dark shadows and less light”. In public organizations, leaders are excessively powerful in the discharge of their tasks as employees behave toward their leaders with extreme caution (Kuada, 1994). Thus, the economic growth of the public sector in Africa is hampered by leadership and management practices which are held back due to traditional conventions and activities (Kuada, 2009). These behaviours result from contextual factors including national and corporate cultures which may have determined the design and implementation of HR practices in the African continent (Jackson, 2000; Mbigi, 2000).

Drawing from the analysis above, the likelihood of a gap between managers and employees in most Ghanaian public institutions is obvious and this has the inclination of creating disaffection leading to continuous industrial disputes. There is dearth of effective communication between managers and employees when the former creates a distance between them and their subordinates in the same organization (Abugre, 2007). Accordingly, this article sought to assess the current managerial interactions with subordinates in Ghanaian organizations.

The absence of free flow communication between managers and their subordinates can create a social gap between co-workers and this in turn can affect the organizational atmosphere. According to Cole *et al.* (2009), when the social distance between managers and subordinates is too high, majority of employees (subordinates) particularly those in the lower echelon, are not in a realistic position to evaluate their managers' actions. Therefore, employees are forced to make assumptions and attributions about the behaviours of their managers. These assumptions and attributions can have serious adverse effects on the communication pattern of an organization; hence, this paper postulates that a defect in the communication pattern of organizations can lead to employee de-motivation. Evidence from the study of Okpara and Wynn (2007) suggest that information systems employees in Nigeria were not committed to their work due to lack of motivation resulting from unwillingness of management to change from their conventional practices of doing things. In a study of the Tanzanian construction industry, Debrah and Ofori (2005) bemoan the critical shortage of managers with up-to-date skills and competencies required to work and this has resulted in the industry being uncompetitive. Therefore, and consistent with the views of researchers on the practices of management and leadership of private and public sector organizations in African, the overriding concern is finding solutions to management behaviours that act as drags to organizational growth. The contribution of this article in filling the theoretical gap that has been left on the part of management communication in developing countries is therefore timely. Kuada (2010) makes a forceful assertion that if leadership or management is to help in the economic growth of African organizations and alleviate poverty in the general African economy, then we need a more robust knowledge to resolve the extent to which current leadership practices influence decision making and behaviours in private and public organizations in Africa. This work finds a theoretical sustenance in Kuada's assertion and believes that the best way to contribute to leadership and managerial efficiency in private and public organizations in Africa is an empirical contribution to managerial and employee interactions in organizations. Since communication is the core of all organizational processes, an exploration into the attitudes and behaviours of how managers interact with employees in organizations and the outcomes of these behaviours to work output would help to advance management knowledge in the area of organizational communication.

Robbins (2003) posits that one of the most inhibiting forces to successful group performance in organizations is lack of effective communication. The nature of management and supervision experienced by employees impacts greatly on their job satisfaction and employees' job satisfaction is enhanced when their superiors provide a supportive environment that encourages the employees to interact and speak out (London and Larsen, 1999).

According to Yukl (2006), for the last half century, people have struggled to understand the precise meaning of leadership, the context or situation under which leadership

is effectively exercised and the processes of leadership in terms of traits, skills and competencies. In an uncertain and fast changing global economy where leadership is affected by doubtful circumstances, Scharmer (2007) advocates for managerial and leadership theories that give broader understanding of effective leadership in organizations. The behaviours of managers in organizational settings thus play a major role on how employees' interactions affect work output. Mumby (2001) explains how the critical tradition focuses on the behaviour of leadership communication as a product that can either sustains or destroys the structure of managerial philosophy and authority in an organizational setting. As a result, senior management would always adopt a calculated development discourse to increase their domination of the organization during critical times (Laine and Vaara, 2007). According to Hardy and Clegg (1996), leadership has traditionally been thought of as a "mechanism of domination" along with culture and structure which is mediated by interactions within the social structures that contrive the consent of the enthusiastic worker (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Nevertheless, there is an increasing realization of how leaders and critical theory will coexist and how leaders can benefit from the critical tradition's emphasis on power and control created by societal differences, organizational hierarchy and resource imbalance (Fournier and Grey, 2000). Though, the behavioural contingency approach to leadership suggests that leaders should adopt behaviours which are appropriate for situations to produce organizational effectiveness (Yukl, 2006). It demands that managers develop appropriate diagnostic skills to determine the characteristics of subordinates and the organizational tasks and to be flexible enough to increase the likelihood of desired effectiveness outcomes (Fry and Kriger, 2007).

Literature review

A major strategic challenge facing many organizations today is the development of human resources. Organizations can best meet the challenge of human resources if they are able to detect the kind of resources available and how these resources can be used in order to generate value in the marketplace. Organizational resources can be generated into any good use if there is a better interaction between managers and employees and consequently a better understanding of the managerial and employee communications (Hodgetts and Kuratko, 1991). An excellent interaction between employees in work organizations brings them closer to each other and this feeling of closeness among co-workers have been identified as a motivational factor which prevents loss of labour (Maertz and Griffeth, 2004).

Communication is so important in the lives of managers and employees that organizations cannot exist without communication, because the daily activities of a manager and employees are tied to effective communication (Keyton, 2005). Many organizational communication researchers (Putnam and Fairhurst, 2001; Weick *et al.*, 2005) believe that communication is the organization and the organization is communication. It is obvious that communication has a very strong linkage to the very core of organizational survival (Taylor and van Every, 2000).

Through communication, organizational ideas are shared to provide a fundamental understanding of the tasks that are to be performed by managers and employees as well as the goals of the organization. Given the important nature of organizational goals, members have to interact to be able to achieve these goals which are the core values of the organization. Holbeche (2002) argues that regular interaction between managers and

employees draws them closer to each other and emphasizes that, lack of interpersonal communication has always led to suspicion, demoralization and loss of essential staff and business. Organizational communication provides organizations with the opportunity to shape their image or outlook in the best possible way to their stakeholders and this can be achieved through a better understanding of the managerial and employee interactions.

According to Keyton (2005), organizational communication is a complicated and continuous managerial process, through which members of the organization are able to create, maintain and change the organizational direction. Managers have a vital role to play in the process of organizational change through adequate and effective sharing of information to subordinates. In fact managers are always in a better position to provide information on internal and external matters about their organizations to the employees. When workers realize that their superiors are ready to share organizational information with them, the workers will be willing to reciprocate this gesture with better performance in their jobs (Abugre, 2010). Managers must therefore make sure that every information provided is well understood by their subordinates and the vice-versa. Communication between managers and their subordinates is essential to the success of all organizational processes. The effectiveness of appraising employees in organizations would depend on the extent to which the performance measure gives specific guidance to employees about what is expected of them and how they can meet this expectation (Brockner *et al.*, 1992). If a measure does not specify what an employee must do to help the company achieve its strategic goals, it becomes difficult for the company to achieve its strategic purpose. Therefore, any failure to involve employees through communication leaves employees uncertain about their jobs and a perceived threat of job loss can lead to increased worry and feelings of distress (Brockner *et al.*, 1992).

The degree to which communications are formal or informal in organizations can affect the quality of communication between subordinates and top management. In the same way, the extent to which communication is formalised in the organization will affect the quality of vertical and horizontal interactions between managers and employees at different functional levels, including the extent of how the interactions facilitate organizational problem-solving and team work (Clutterbuck, 2001). For example, formal communication through policy documentation and meetings inform employees about the required information needed to undertake a job (Adler, 1999). However, it is the informal, non-hierarchical means of communication (horizontal communication) in the form of conversations with colleagues that fill in gaps between what employees want to know and what management has time and inclination to tell them (Goris *et al.*, 2000). Horizontal communication can be referred to as the quality of communication processes amongst co-workers and the effectiveness of this flow of communication includes the accuracy of the information and the depth and breadth of the organizational “grapevine” (Federico, 1996). The quality of horizontal communication can affect the ability of employees to undertake a work task and second affects employees’ level of satisfaction in the workplace. As a result, employees who experience a lack of information about how to perform a task are likely to suffer higher levels of frustration than those equipped with the necessary information to easily negotiate a work task (Federico, 1996).

Managerial and employee interactions in work organizations are mostly transmitted through messages. These messages can be communicated via written memos, meetings, formal presentations, electronic mails (e-mails) and formal and informal conversations.

These factors in turn affect an employee's perception of the communication processes (communication climate) (Mayfield *et al.*, 1995). Effective organizational communication processes affect employee motivation, provide good role modelling for subordinates to follow and affirm employees' self development in as much as appropriate feedback processes are in place (Mayfield *et al.*, 1995). Many communication researchers (Te'eni, 2001; Williams and Geller, 2008) have suggested that if the content of the information is considered relevant to the employees and the person giving the information is considered "credible", then the employees are more likely to listen to the information. Thus, the rate at which managers interact with their subordinates plays a major role in building credibility among them. The relationship between managers and subordinates affects employees' ability to do their job. Managers who are considered to be most effective in work organizations are those whose approach to work is relaxed, attentive and friendly, combined with a high level of argumentation and a low level of verbal aggression (Infante *et al.*, 1993). In contrast, weak and less effective communications are motivated by control and tend to include higher levels of verbal aggression (Javidi *et al.*, 1994).

All these studies have created theoretical insights into management communication literature, but these theoretical insights are foreign based and may not necessarily apply to the African context. The reason is that value differences between Westerners and other people manifest in different ways (Jehn *et al.*, 1999). In this regard, it is worthy that this paper investigates how managerial interactions affect employee work output in Ghanaian organizations to advance management knowledge in communication since extant literature is overwhelmingly dominated by Western studies.

Communication and the motivation of employees

The behaviours of employees can be a manifestation of their own motivation and preferences or a manifestation of the preferences of other people. There are many forms and degrees of cooperation that exist between workers and management. The degree of cooperation can influence a worker's attitude of being unreceptive to being creative in the organization. These different forms of attitude can determine how far employees can contribute to their organizations. To effectively manage employee motivation, managers must recognize and provide for the needs of employees in a manner that high levels of performance are achieved (Lundy and Cowling, 2004). They stress that decisions and actions of managers based on a valid model of human behaviour are better likely to achieve success than merely on incorrect assumptions.

A theory of motivation relevant to managerial and employee interaction is "goal-setting" (Lock, 1968). Writers on this subject affirm that if appropriate goals are set for employees and in a manner which are acceptable to the concerned employees, higher levels of motivation and performance are likely to be achieved. Lock and Latham (1990) add that for goals to have their full effect, managers must provide employees with performance feedback through regular interactions. Robertson *et al.* (1992) confirm that goals communicate to individual employees to achieve specific levels of performance however, without feedback, which allows employees to track how well they are doing in relations to the goals, achieving the set goals will be difficult. Employees' job satisfaction is high if the environment encourages a positive feedback both vertically between managers and employees and horizontally between workers (Emmert and Taher, 1992). Kim (2002) also identifies a positive relationship between employees' job satisfaction and a participative management style used by superiors in work organizations. Another theory

of motivation that is linked to managerial and employee interactions is the expectancy theory. Expectancy theory of motivation recognizes that individual employees have different needs and goals and that employees' behaviours will be influenced by the degree to which they perceive that they will satisfy their needs and accomplish their goals (Steers and Porter, 1999). Employees or group members of an organization will perform high if only they are clear about their tasks and also have a positive attitude towards them (Lundy and Cowling, 2004).

There is now a substantial literature that suggests that regular communications between managers and employees help to improve the likelihood of an organization being successful. For instance, Hanson's (1986) researched into the profitability of 40 major companies over a five-year period and his findings among others were that when predicting profitability of an organization the presence of good interpersonal relationships between managers and staff was three times more powerful than other variables like, combined market share, capital intensity, firm size and sales growth rate. Clampitt and Downs (1993) also assessed the effects of regular communication between managers and employees on organizations. They concluded that the benefits obtained from quality internal communications included improved productivity, a reduction in absenteeism, increased levels of innovation, a reduction in the number of strikes, higher quality of services and products and a reduction in costs. Kratzer *et al.* (2004) affirm that organizations with supportive teams are those that are characterized by a harmonious working atmosphere, in which team members feel comfortable among one another. Constant interaction between employees tends to foster team cooperation and employee motivation. Kanter (1988) says that higher levels of innovation can be achieved by good communication within and between organizations. He adds that contact between many managerial levels in an organization is important to the achievement of organizational goals as well as the creation of a supportive climate for innovation. In a study to determine how communication strategies could help employees adjust to a culture of safety in work organizations, Williams and Geller (2008) found that managers who were empathic in their interactions with employees enjoyed better cooperation from the workers. They reported that empathic communicators.

Foster an improved sense of appreciation and respect, which in turns leads to increased levels of interpersonal trust, respect, honesty and openness. The end result is enhanced organizational communication, higher morale and better performance (Williams and Geller, 2008, p. 51).

Regular interaction between managers and employees ensures consistency of messages and reduces the amount of time and energy spent on rumours. Regular communication also builds support for credibility and ensures that employees who identify strongly with their organization are more likely to show a supportive attitude toward it and to make decisions that are consistent with organizational objectives. Managerial communication creates a unified corporate identity by improving the insight that individuals have into the overall philosophy of their organization and its strategic direction (Ambler and Barrow, 1996).

In a study of 878 public sector employees in Turkey, Ertürk (2008, p. 464) used a trust-based model which focuses on the interpersonal transactions between managers and subordinates and discovered that "increased participative management and managerial communication practices will lead to increased trust and in turn, to openness to change".

The differing angles in which the studies above have outlined the link between communication, motivation, trust and employee commitment to work provoke more research into management communication. Serious research is even required in this subject area within the African context since existing studies have focused on organizations in developed economies. The dearth of empirical knowledge on management communication and employee commitment to work in developing economies requires an investigation. One of the most inhibiting forces to successful group performance in organizations is the absence of effective managerial and employee communication (Robbins, 2003). Thus, this work examines whether managerial interactions affect employee work behaviour and consequently work output in Ghanaian organizations. To do so, the paper proposes the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the common media of interactions between Management and employees in Ghana, are these media accessible to all employees?
- RQ2. Does effective managerial interaction affect employee work output?
- RQ3. Does effective managerial interaction affect employee motivation in Ghanaian organizations?

Ghana – a socio-political context

Ghana is a developing country located in the Western coast of Africa. After more than 100 years of colonial rule under the British, Ghana became the first Sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from her British colonial masters in 1957. Ghana has a population of about 23 million people and the capital city is Accra with a population estimated at about 3.2 million. Ghana has received positive ratings from respected world institutions, e.g. the World Bank, IMF, UNO, etc. as the most stable democratic country in Sub-Saharan Africa for the past 20 years. From the 1960s to the mid-1980s, the state control dominated the Ghanaian economy and both private and state-owned companies operated in a highly regulated market system until the liberalization of the economy in the 1990s. There are quite a number of multi-national companies and a reasonable number of small to medium private local firms in the country. Among a few of the multinational companies are; Shell-Ghana, Coca Cola, Standard Chartered Bank, SGSSB Bank, Unilever, Newmont, Cargill, SABMiller, etc. Despite the presence of these private companies, Ghana still has a very large public sector with the government being the largest employer of more than 500,000 workers in all ministries, departments and agencies, in the entire country. This has led to the government of Ghana spending more than 70 percent of her total earnings on salaries and remunerations. Ghana's economy primarily rest on the production of agricultural products (cocoa and timber) and minerals (gold, bauxite, manganese). It is important to note that Ghana has joined the oil producing countries after discovering oil in commercial quantities in the year 2009. This would certainly increase Ghana's export earnings and consequently enhance her gross national income.

Culturally, Ghana has many tribes and languages that constitute the population of Ghana. The numerous tribes in the country has given rise to the importance of chieftdom and this perhaps lend credence to Hofstede's (1980) assertion that Ghana lies within the high power distance spectrum. Cultural principles are respected with values oriented strongly towards respect for the elderly with relatively high collectivist standards. The high power distant culture makes communication and expressions in organized settings

more centralized and dictatorial, with subordinates reduced to listening and implementing what they have been asked to do. The prevailing leadership style is more authoritarian than participative management style, with strict supervision and detailed instructions to subordinates and zero tolerance to deviations from the instructions given (Kuada, 1994). In addition to the colonial master-servant relationship approach to organizational bureaucracy, Ghanaian public administration has inherited management practices which have been influenced by her colonial history interlaced with traditionalism. It is common to see in most public organizations, a wide gap of relationship between junior employees and their bosses and where most bosses have become authoritarian and bureaucratic (Woode, 1999). Against this setting, it is very important to study the managerial practices (management communication) within the gamut of national history and organizational realities.

Human communication is more than just a simple act of transmission of messages; communication is about the construction and negotiation of meaning (Deetz, 1995; Jian *et al.*, 2008). As a result, Leadership actors can either be passive receptors of meaning or closely controlled (Foucault, 1995) as much as they can be transformative agents (Fairhurst, 2007). As agents of transformation, leaders have the ability to construct the contexts to which they and their subordinates must respond to.

If organizations are coordinated social units to achieve specific purposes and objectives by means of planned and coordinated activities and management is about the cooperation of both managers and employees to realize organizational objectives, then the context of this research is very appropriate. Second, by examining how managers and subordinates in Ghanaian organizational settings interact, we can gain a better understanding of how managerial interactions affect employee work output particularly in Ghana where economic liberalization programmes have been implemented and therefore one expects a massive opening of more firms.

The work attempts to draw attention to the behaviours and challenges of managers and employees in Sub-Saharan African in the area of organizational communication using Ghana as a study.

Study design

The study was a survey carried out in four Ghanaian organizations located in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. The concentration of key public and private organizations with their headquarters located in Accra necessitated the choice. A non-probability sampling method was used in selecting the four organizations whilst a random sampling method was adopted in selecting the employees.

Structure of the survey

The study was conducted using a survey method in four Ghanaian organizations: two public organizations and two private organizations. The choice of two public and two private organizations was to give a balance and measure the effectiveness of managerial and employee interactions in public and private organizations in Ghana.

Sample frame. The sample for the four organizations was conveniently drawn from the directory of companies in Ghana. For the private organizations, the two largest and oldest multinational companies in the country were selected while a government ministry and a government agency were selected to represent the public organizations. Since the main purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of workers on how

managerial interactions affect employee work output in organizations, consideration was given to the size of the study organizations hence, the choice of large and established organizations.

Managerial and employees' mode of communication could better be identified by sampling from a representative cross-section of the organizations using a survey. An important aspect of survey methodology is the development of a questionnaire which is appropriate for its purpose (Churchill, 1991). Consequently, the research instrument was developed. The research instrument comprised of both closed and open ended questions which enabled the participants to offer their candid opinions on the mode of managerial and subordinate interactions of their respective organizations. The efficient and effective administration and implementation of a survey significantly influence the overall success of data generation and the achievement of satisfactory response (Faria and Dickinson, 1992). Accordingly, a sample of 120 respondents from all four organizations in the study was surveyed. The sample size was obtained by taking 30 respondents each from all four organizations. In each organization, the 30 respondents were further obtained by sampling ten persons each from the three levels of management: senior level management, middle level management and junior level management. This was to make sure that all categories of employees were covered. However, 109 valid responses out of the total 120 respondents were considered for analysis. This represents a response rate of 90.8 percent which is highly significant and successful for a survey analysis. Analysis was both descriptive and inferential using the χ^2 to assess the occurrences of relationship between variables (managerial interactions and employee work output) and to measure the statistical significance of the relationship between the variables.

Measuring instrument and survey measures

Data for this study were collected using a self-developed and self-administered pre-coded questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of four sections relating to participants' biographical information; quality of management communication; knowledge and accessibility of managerial communication; and communication relationship to work attitude. The four sections varied in their manner of measurement. The biographical section (gender, managerial level, position at work, age) were collected using a nominal scale with pre-coded options. Quality of management communication and knowledge and accessibility of management communication comprised of ten items and 16 items, respectively. While the quality of management communication section assessed the communication behaviour of managers and subordinates and were measured using a five-point Likert scale instrument ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) anchors, the knowledge and accessibility of management communication assessed organizational communication media and was measured using a six-point scale instrument ranging from (1) attended or participated once (2) up to three times (3) up to five times (4) up to ten times (5) more than ten times (6) not participated or attended at all. The fourth section which related to communication relationship to work attitude comprised eight items were measured using closed and more of open-ended answers; example items are "Does your superior or boss instruct or speak to you politely to do work?" – if yes or no, "Did it influence your working behaviour?" and "Do you think effective communication and respect for your views will motivate you to work hard even if your salary is not increased?" Give reasons for your answer".

Respondents were asked of their gender, managerial level, age and position at work because in examining job attitudes in relation to managerial communication, these variables are very important to organizational commitment. Quality of management communication, knowledge and accessibility of management communication and communication relationship to work attitude were definitively measures that have theoretical merits to the study because management actions are assessed by how employees see them. The questionnaire was constructed from the literature with additional novelty to enhance the theoretical conception. Items in the questionnaire related directly to the measures being assessed. The questions were printed on both sides of an A4 paper.

As part of a validity test, the instrument was initially given to the various heads of human resources managers of the four organizations to make sure that it followed their standards and codes of ethics before they were distributed to the participants. This was to enhance the internal validity of the questions. The questionnaires were only used after they have been certified as content reliable by the various HR managers of the organizations.

Data analysis

Statistical package for the social sciences was used to analyze the data specifically providing descriptive and graphical analyses, count data, the χ^2 test and cross tabulations of the test variables. The premise for the validity and consistency of this study is the calculation of the *p*-value. The *p*-value is the probability that a sample drawn from a population is tested given that the assumptions proposed by the study are true. A *p*-value of 0.05 percent indicates that there would only be a 5 percent chance of drawing the sample being tested if the research proposition was actually true. In other words, it demonstrates a 95 percent confidence level meaning that the study has 95 percent of assurance that the research questions are significant to provide responses appropriate to the research objectives. A *p*-value of 0.05 is a typical threshold used in industry to evaluate the stated hypothesis or research questions and a value below 0.05 is said to be significant (Tusting *et al.*, 2005).

Results

We begin this section with a discussion of the extent to which managers interactions can affect employees' work output in Ghanaian organizations. The results are analyzed and clustered into three major sections along the lines of the key research questions posed in the study.

RQ1: media accessibility and mode of managerial interactions

To explore and describe respondents' knowledge and participation of some communication media in their respective organizations, it was necessary to pose some questions to respondents to elicit their views on the type of media that was used as mode of communication between managers and employees. Emphasis was on how often respondents interacted with their bosses using the various communication media at work. The questions also allowed the respondents to assess the effectiveness of these communication media in their organizations.

Face-to-face conversation with superior. The major source of media participation for most respondents was face-to-face conversation between an employee and his immediate Boss. As many as 90.8 percent of respondents said they interacted with their bosses

through face-to-face conversation. As regards effectiveness of this medium of communication in the organizations, 59.5 percent of respondents said they had engaged in face-to-face conversation with their Bosses more than (ten) times within a month. Also, 10.1 percent of the respondents said they had engaged in face-to-face conversation with their bosses up to five times within a month, whilst 14.8 percent of respondents agreed that they had engaged in face-to-face conversation with their bosses only three times within a month. About 15.5 percent of junior employee said that they have never spoken with their chief directors and other senior management personnel on face-to-face before.

Telephone calls. Majority of respondents accepted telephone calls in the organizations as the next most widely used media of interaction between managers and employees at work place. As many as 80.7 percent of the total respondents agreed to using telephone calls as medium of interaction for work purposes. Majority of respondents accepted telephone calls or telephone conversation as a very effective means of interactions in work organizations. As many as 80.7 percent of respondents said they used the telephone for work purpose up to ten times in a month, while 6.8 percent used telephone for work purpose up to three times in a month.

General meetings. The survey results showed that 90 percent of the total respondents met their communication needs during meetings. However, few of the respondents (8.1 percent) said meetings were meant for only senior management and the few times the junior employees attended meetings they had no courage to speak-out their minds.

Memos. Findings from the survey showed that the use of memos as a medium of organizational communication is very high. Majority of respondents representing 79.8 percent of the total respondent population agreed to using memos as a tool for communication in their organizations. However, in one of the private organizations, employees used the e-mail which meant the name memo has only been changed to e-mail. Findings also showed that in the public organizations, the writing and receiving of memos concentrated within senior and middle level managements and that most of the employees did not even know how to write memos.

Reports. Results also showed that writing and receiving of reports at work place was high. The survey findings showed that 78.9 percent of respondents received or wrote reports in their work organizations. Again, some employees revealed that report writing was very good but it did not apply to most junior officers and except during general meetings that some of them heard something from reports and minutes, all reports concentrated in the offices of senior officers.

Conferences and durbars. Conferences and durbars organized by organizations are some of the media through which managers interact easily with their subordinates. A total of 77.1 percent respondents agreed that they interacted with their managers and colleagues by far in conferences and or during staff durbars.

Parties and get-togethers. Though not something that occurs frequently, 77.1 percent of the total sample population of the survey agreed that they had good interactions with their bosses and colleague workers during parties and get-togethers. Parties and get-togethers are gatherings where organizational matters are disseminated to employees and useful interaction between workers of the organization take place.

Do all workers have equal access to management? The study also tried to find out if all workers particularly those of the junior rank or level had free and unimpeded access to management anytime they needed to contact management on work related issues. It is interesting to note that, only 8.3 percent of the total respondents said “agree strongly”

to the question that “all workers have easy and equal access to management”; 27.5 percent of respondents said “agree”, 21.1 percent respondents said “not sure”. Whilst 32.9 percent of respondents answered “disagree” meaning that management was not accessible to all workers; and 8.3 percent of respondents chose “disagree strongly” to the question.

Management is aware of all grievances that occur in the organization. Since the study sought to find out how managerial interactions affected employee work output, the question above was framed to elicit the perception of employees on whether top managers knew all what was going on or if they are aware of all grievances in the organization. Results from the survey were as follows: respondents who decided on – “agree strongly” were 5.5 percent, while those who opted for – “agree” were 34.9 percent; 33.0 percent of respondents said they were “not sure” if management was aware of all grievances and complaints in their organizations. Respondents who chose “disagree” were 22.9 percent and those who answered “disagree strongly” were 1.8 percent.

Transparency in organization. Most Ghanaian workers believe that their managers do not disclose simple and basic information about the organization to them. Findings from the survey conducted showed that employees preferred the disclosure of the following to workers:

- Company mission statements – 89.0 percent prefer to have knowledge on this.
- Company vision – 90.8 percent prefer to be aware of the vision statement.
- Annual profits – 98.2 percent wish to be aware of profit made.
- Allowances to both senior and junior workers – 47.7 percent want to be aware whilst 46.8 percent said no.

RQ2: how managerial interaction affect employee work output

Findings from the respondents surveyed show that lack of regular interactions between managers and their subordinates will poorly affect work behaviours of employees. As much as 94 percent of the total respondents agreed that effective communication between superiors and their subordinates will increase job satisfaction leading to improved work performance. This finding is further demonstrated by the fact that there is an obvious association involving effective communication between management and employees and work attitude of employees as shown in the χ^2 (Table I) ($\chi^2 = 3.87$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.5$), where the p -value = 0.49 is less than the level of significance at 0.05.

When you are instructed politely by your boss to do work, does it influence your work behaviour? The question sought to find out if managers were polite to subordinates in communication, it would have any impact on the latter’s work behaviour. Majority of respondents (98.2 percent) responded “yes” signifying that if a boss speaks with respect and in a polite manner to a subordinate, then the latter would reciprocate in like manner with work behaviour.

		Effective communication between management and employees			χ^2	df	Sig.
Responses		Yes	No	Total			
Attitude to work	Yes	94 (93.2)	9 (9.8)	103 (103.0)	3.87	1	0.49
	No	1 (1.8)	1 (0.2)	2 (2.0)			
Total		95 (95.0)	10 (10.0)	105 (105.0)			

Note: Figures in bracket – expected count and missing response = 4

Table I.
 χ^2 test with cross-tabulation of attitude to work and effective communication between management and employees

Importance of internal communication to work attitude. On the importance of internal communication to work attitude of employees, 96.4 percent of the respondents, answered in the affirmative that lack of effective internal communication in work organization would affect employees' attitudes to work. Table II shows an overwhelming number of respondents who agreed that lack of internal communication will affect an employee's attitude to work.

RQ3: how managerial interactions affect employee motivation in Ghanaian organizations Most employees prefer their managers to treat them with respect as co-workers. Respondents in the survey said effective communication and respect for their views would motivate them to work better than necessarily increasing their salary levels. As many as 79.8 percent of the total respondents affirmed that effective communication and respect for their views would motivate them to work hard rather than merely increasing salary levels of employees. From a quantitative standpoint, there was a marked association between effective managerial interactions and employee motivation to increase job performance ($\chi^2 = 8.76$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$), this is illustrated in Table III where the p -value is 0.003 and considerably less than the level of significance at 0.05. Findings also showed that effective communication has direct positive impact on organizational performance ($\chi^2 = 22.59$, $df = 12$, $p < 0.05$). The study also found that lack of interpersonal communication results in poor work ($\chi^2 = 41.95$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$), this is also illustrated in Table IV where the p -value is highly significant at 0.000.

Table II.
How effective communication affects employees' attitude to work

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	105	96.4
No	2	1.8
Missing system	2	1.8
Total	109	100

Table III.
 χ^2 test with cross-tabulation of motivation to increase job performance, and effective managerial and employee interactions

	Responses	Effective managerial and employee interactions			χ^2	df	Sig.
		Yes	No	Total			
Motivation to increase job performance	Yes	86 (84.4)	0 (1.6)	86 (86.0)	8.76	1	0.03
	No	18 (19.6)	2 (0.4)	20 (20.0)			
	Total	104 (104.0)	2 (2.0)	106 (106.0)			

Note: Figures in bracket – expected count and missing response = 3

Table IV.
 χ^2 test with support of the question: "interpersonal communication and respect for your views will motivate you to work hard even if your salary is not increased"

Responses	Observed no.	Expected no.	Residual	χ^2	df	Sig.
Yes	87	53.5	33.5	41.95	1	0.00
No	20	53.5	-33.5			
Total	107					

Note: $n = 109$ and missing response = 2

Reasons for poor working relations/communication in organizations. Respondents were asked to indicate the reasons or causes of poor working relations among employees in their organizations. Findings showed respondents choosing in order of preference the following descriptors: lack of employee motivation 68 percent; no transparency between management and employees 66 percent; lack of regular employee training 40 percent; lack of respect for ordinary and junior level employees by management 38 percent; and lack of knowledge of company objectives and mission statements by employees 36 percent.

Workers in my organization are well motivated and actively do their work. The study also sought to find out if employees in the organizations were well motivated by management to actively do their work. Findings from the survey were as follows: agree strongly 9.2 percent; agree 27.5 percent; not sure 26.6 percent; disagree 25.7 percent; disagree strongly 9.2 percent.

Discussion

In this paper, the author examines managerial interaction with employees and how this can affect work output in organizations. Three research questions were analyzed and the results revealed that effective communication and regular management-employee interactions are significant practices for organizations because they uphold worker perception of information flow leading to better work output. Management communication provides employees with the necessary information that demonstrate what the organization stands for and the value it upholds. The behaviour that a manager exhibits through communication in an organizational setting will certainly impact an employees' behaviour at work. The study has also demonstrated the importance and interdependence between employees' trust, motivation and organizational communication. This finding is a significant contribution to management literature on employee trust, employee motivation and managerial interaction as three interdependent variables in work organizations.

Results emerging from the analysis show that for organizations to make any significant impact on performance, both managers and their subordinates must have a very good climate of social interactions. The involvement of lower level employees in organizational activities and decision making is of crucial importance to organizational performance. This is supported by as many as 79.8 percent of the total respondents who confirmed that effective communication between managers and subordinates through employee involvement and respect for subordinates' views would motivate them to work harder than merely increasing their salary levels and not respecting their views. This finding calls for employees' participation in decision making of the various organizations. This evidence is further demonstrated by respondents' choice of descriptors that cause poor work relationship between managers and employees. In this case, the respondents strongly stated motivation and transparency as the variables they cherished most. However, and consistent with the conceptual framework, the study found that most supervisors or managers in Ghanaian organizations advocate strict management practices. Employees perceive their managers as not being flexible to current changes and still maintain an authoritarian disposition (Kuada, 1994) and this creates a huge power distance (Hofstede, 1980) distancing employees from management that clearly demonstrate the inequality between managers and employees. This finding highlights the dominant values of the importance of hierarchy in most African states; so even at work, employees must demonstrate loyalty and respect to their managers

as a sign of unequal status and power. Findings from the study also showed that many workers are unaware of on-going activities in their organizations. In other words, most Ghanaian workers do not take part in the decisions of their organizations and therefore are unaware of some pertinent organizational issues. This means that employees lack knowledge of company mission statements, company vision and the main objectives of the organization. One main reason for this is that, most communication media for example; report and memo writings, durbars and conferences in the organizations are mostly patronized by top senior management staff. These findings lend credence to Woode (1999, p. 11) who reported that.

Ghanaian managers justify their behaviour by arguing that their subordinates are not competent enough to exercise delegation of duty.

This explains the responses illustrated by our *RQ1* which sought to ascertain the accessibility and effectiveness of communication media in the various organizations. Even though, some of the communication media are available in the organizations, findings show that participation of these communication media is not effective. The findings of this research suggest that if managers in developing countries encourage work attitude that push away their subordinates in core decision making, then employees would always remain incompetent because they are not sufficiently empowered to develop their self confidence in communicating with authorities. This assertion supports the proposition of Kuada (2010, p. 12) that:

African employees exhibit a higher propensity to follow instructions that their superiors give them than to adopt critical attitude to the tasks that they are required to perform and carrying them out to their individual satisfaction.

Consistent with past research, this study also found that managerial interactions have a direct and positive relationship with job satisfaction and positive commitment of employees at the organizational level. This finding supports the general belief that good and effective communication between managers and their subordinates influence the latter's attitude to work (Holbeche, 2002; Kim, 2002; Maertz and Griffeth, 2004). The findings also support that of Brockner *et al.* (1992) who revealed that any failure to involve employees through communication leaves employees uncertain about their jobs and a perceived threat of job loss can lead to increased worry and feelings of distress. This means subordinates prefer their managers to be transparent in organizational matters by constantly interacting with them (the subordinates). Constant interactions between managers and subordinates enable the latter to be abreast with current issues of the organization. Similarly, findings from this study add support to Maertz and Griffeth (2004)'s assertion that an excellent interaction between employees in work organizations brings them closer to each other and this feeling of closeness among co-workers have been identified as a motivational factor which prevents lost of labour. This finding therefore gives an affirmative response to the *RQ2* which sought to find out if effective managerial interactions affect employees' work output. The study also showed that regular interactions between managers and employees have a direct positive effect on employee job performance (Table II) and organizational performance and the main reason given by the respondents is that effective communication makes the employee feel a real part of the organization.

Results from the study also established that the absence of managerial interactions with employees in organizations will de-motivate workers and consequently lead to

a downward effect on work performance. Analysis of the findings also revealed that there was a significant relationship between employee motivation and good interpersonal communication (Table III). In other words, workers are motivated to increase their work output if there is a positive and regular interaction between managers and employees and respect for employees' participation in work organizations. The main reason given by respondents was that employees preferred their views to be respected in their work places even if their salaries are not raised. Respondents also indicated that lack of motivation, lack of transparency between management and employees and lack of training were some key factors that accounted for poor work relationship and poor communication in their organizations. The findings therefore answer the *RQ3* which sought to determine a relationship between effective managerial interactions and employee motivation. Even though respondents agree that effective managerial interaction affects workers' motivation, findings from the study show that most Ghanaian workers are not motivated in their work place and this affects their work behaviour. Evidence from the results show that only 9.2 percent of the total respondents agreed strongly that they were motivated to actively work in their organization. This finding is consistent with Okpara and Wynn (2007) who found that employees in developing countries were not committed to their jobs because of lack of motivation from their executives.

Managerial interaction with employees is an intangible resource and the perceived injustice in management interactions or the lack of it will certainly de-motivate employees and consequently organizational work output.

In view of this, managers of organizations must consider improving the various communication systems particularly those that give access to employees to interact with management. Communication media in the form of face-to-face conversations; telephone conversations; general meetings; parties and get-together; report and memo writings; durbars and conferences should be made regular and enforced so that employees can use these media to interact easily with management on organizational issues. This will help narrow the gap between managers and employees in terms of interpersonal relationship.

Conclusion and managerial implications

The significance of placing value on employees and effective interactions among workers are very essential in sustaining work performance in organizations. Organizations will achieve their objectives if all workers particularly those in the lower levels of the organization are made aware of the operational activities through regular interactions of management and employees. Effective interactions between managers and employees will be possible if employees have unimpeded access to their bosses. This study has shown that the top-down approach to managing organizations hardly benefits the employees. In a developing economy such as Ghana, organizations can become more effective if managers recognize the views of their employees. The consequences of failing to do so would result in an increased tendency for individuals to leave the organization due to lower levels of satisfaction with their managers. This study therefore proposes an effective organizational communication by involving all employees in organizational activities through regular interactions between management and employees.

While certainly of interest to researchers, the implications of managerial interactions in terms of its impact on employees in organizations is especially significant for managers and professionals seeking to make decisions on this work arrangement.

Since results of this study indicate that a higher prevalence of interactions between managers and their subordinates is associated with an increased worker satisfaction, organizational decision makers need to incorporate effective communication between co-workers when implementing corporate work practices and strategies.

The findings above have both theoretical and practical significance to organizational studies. Theoretically, the results highlight some important aspects of management and employee communication behaviours in current work organizations, re-vitalizing research in the area of organizational communication in developing countries. The article also contributes to the growing body of work examining HR issues in Africa. From a practical point of view, to motivate and retain employees to work hard, qualities of managerial communication play a significant role. Managers who are able to modify or improve their interactional role with their subordinates would enhance the perceptions of employees about care and respect for employees' involvement in organizational activities.

In conclusion, despite any limitation the study represents a step in explaining how managerial interactions affect employee work output. Also the paper has provided several useful guidelines for managerial practice and implications in the area of employee communication. The results provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the current practices of management that reflect many of the related problems and challenges in organizations. The results of the study make it clear, however, that managerial activities which seem to alienate subordinates participation of organizational activity could be extremely costly to an organization and could also undermine aspects of the corporate strategy that led to the activity in the first place. The study hopes that realistic communications from the side of managers can help employees to increase their work output.

Limitation of study and future research

Notwithstanding the interesting findings of the study, there are some limitations inherent in the approach to the study. First, the author believes that four different organizations may not be sufficient to generalize the findings. Also 120 participants may be small for a perceptual study and the paper thinks that more participants could have been employed. Besides, while employee communication as a perceptual study is difficult to investigate if not through employee evaluations, the relationship between communication and work output needs to be investigated through many people in many other organizations. For these reasons, future research should seek to replicate the study with more participants and organizations in Africa to ascertain the generality of the work.

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