*Corresponding author: Abdel Moneim Ghanim Ezzeldin, Department of Business Administration, Community College, Najran University, P.O. Box 1988, Najran 61441, Saudi Arabia
E-mail: dr_ghanim@hotmail.com

Reviewing editor:
Tahir Nisar, University of Southampton, UK

Additional information is available at the end of the article

cogent business & management

MANAGEMENT | REVIEW ARTICLE

Faculty perceptions of the importance of communication in Saudi Arabia Higher Education Najran Community College: Case study

Abdel Moneim Ghanim Ezzeldin[1]*

Abstract: There are a public consensus among Saudi Arabia higher education institutions that communications are imperative. It is unanimously agreed that communications play an important role in the light of Sharia law implemented in the country which imposes a strict separation between men and women in terms of buildings and teaching process. Thus, communication is increasingly gaining attention in our society. In this connection, there is very little work on the communication system in higher educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this research was to explore faculty perceptions about the importance of communication system for higher educational institutions. The study was also designed to test differences among faculty members about the communication system importance which are attributed to gender.

1. Introduction

Many authors claim that communication is the most fundamental management activity in every organization, whether it is for-profit, non-profit, or educational (Downs & Adrian, 2004; Hargie & Tourish, 2000). Communication is a very important factor in any organization to attain success; the good communication practice is essential to carry out the tasks consistently. However, communication has a particular importance and necessity for academic institutions to support or improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abdel Moniem Ghanim Ezzeldin is an assistant professor at Community College, Department of Business Administration, University of Najran, Saudi Arabia. He currently holds the position of head of the Department of Measurement Unit at Community College. He has also been head of the Department Business Administration (2008–2011), University of Omdurman Islamic University, Sudan.

His main research interests include: Mathematical and statistical approaches in management, Management of higher education institutions, Electronic administration.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The communication system has become the forefront of the issues that occupies attention in the educational field. It is important for the success and effectiveness of academic institutions to become more aware of the communication system to keep improving its effectiveness and efficiency.

The challenge of increasing the benefits gained from the communication system in the educational institution should be based on the understanding of the most important fields which they are used in the communication system.

It is indisputable that the role of the communication system in the separate colleges by gender—as in Saudi Arabia higher education institutions—is inevitable to meet the synergies and integration in various fields whether in the administrative, scientific, or educational process.

It is indisputable that the role of the communication system in the colleges segregated by gender—as Saudi Arabia higher education institutions—is inevitable to meet the synergies and integration in various fields whether in the administrative, scientific, or educational processes.

Faculty members play a key role in the success of the educational institution, through administrative, educational, and supervisory roles. Therefore, knowing their perceptions about the communication system is vital for development programs, to improve the work and support of educational activities, which is reflected eventually in the success of the institution.

2. Statement of the problem

Despite the importance of communication system to the success of higher educational institutions, the communication system conceptualization has gained limited attention by the scholars and practitioners in KSA. In this context, the purpose of this quantitative research was to explore communication system in KSA higher educational institutions and examine the faculty perceptions of the importance of communication. The study was also designed to test the significance differences among faculty members about the importance of communication which is attributed to gender.

3. Research questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

What are faculty members' perceptions about the communication system importance in the administrative, educational, scientific, student affairs, and social fields?

Are their significant differences among the faculty members (men and women) about the perceptions of communication importance in the administrative, education, scientific, student affairs, and social fields?

4. Importance of communication in educational institutions

Communication plays an important role not only in business organization but is also in personal life . The communication system is one of the most important determinants what control the performance and functions smoothly thus; effecting directly the efficiency of the organization and its production ability.

Like any other organization, communication in academic institutions is equally important. The communication system has become in the forefront of the issues that occupies the attention in the educational field. It is important for the success and effectiveness of academic institutions to become more aware of the communication system to keep improving its effectiveness and efficiency (Gratz & Salem, 1982). Communication is a process of sharing and exchanging of ideas, knowledge, attitudes, emotions, news, and skills. According to this conception, learning can be considered a result of the communication system.

The communication system enhances the organizational, educational processes and has a significant impact on a variety of processes in educational institutions and on its life (Morreale & Pearson, 2008). In administration field, communication is particularly important for managers because communication is a key tool for improvement coordination and teamwork, coordination of relations between people, organizational processes, structures, and controlling of the educational institution (Hoy & Miskel, 1982). The importance of communication system in the field of education can be discerned in the requires of the preparation and presentation of lessons using different means of communication verbal, auditory, and visual therefore, the communication plays a vital role in the education process (Habaci et al., 2013). In the scientific field, the communication is the key to share scientific methods, literature, science material with others, to cross-check information, and to confirm results (Brewer, 2011). In student affairs field, communication is the key to the success of collaborative activities in the educational environment and a means for academic guidance, scientific support, and follow-up cultural and scientific activities (Morreale, Valenzano, & Bauer, 2016).

cogent ·· business & management

The importance of communication system in the social field helps recognize important issues and find common ground to work and build a sense of identity and unity (Fraser & Villet, 1994). Such issues are clear in the general exchange of information, and dissemination of many events and social events, participation in ceremonies and events and exchange of greetings on special occasions.

Habaci et al. (2013) confirmed that one of the main conditions for attaining success in education is to maintain an effective environment for communication. Maintaining an effective communication process in education depends on the managers responsible for the educational settings, faculty, who play the most fundamental role in creating an environmental communication to support the educational process.

5. Gender identity in KSA education institutions

Saudi Arabia is the land where the Islam message started, known as the Land of the Two Holy Mosques (Holy Mosques of Makkah and Medina), so, society in Saudi Arabia is strongly influenced by Islam. Therefore, the relationship between Islam and Saudi Arabia is strong and unique. Islam in Saudi society is considered a comprehensive system to judge all life activities AlMunajjed (1997) stated: "Islam is not only a religious ideology but a comprehensive system which embraces detailed prescriptions for the entire way of life".

According to Islamic law (Sharia) implemented in the country, the segregation of male and female is a basic rule, this rule applies to all aspects of social and economic activities, and the education sector (public and higher) is not an exception. Strict separation between men and women is the main base for organizing higher education activities. Based on this base, there is a unit for men, and another one for women within the same educational institution, which caused an increase in the number of higher education institutions.

In such an environment, the communication system becomes a vital requirement for the integration of the men's section and women's section in the same academic institution.

6. Data collection and analyses

Najran Community College represents a population of this study. Establishing the college was in 1422 AH according to the Cabinet Decree No. (3) on 5/2/1422 AH. According to the national report issued by the (Ministry of Higher Education, 1424 AH) that the community college is defined as the institution includes a number of programs and disciplines of study for three years of study at the intermediate level between high school and undergraduate. The programs of this institution are comprehensive and flexible to fit the society needs. The programs of study in the college allow obtaining certificates called (the diploma), which is equal to a medium university degree.

A random sample of size $n = 69$ was used for this study, included full-time faculty members, representing 48% of the entire faculty population ($N = 143$), male 39, female 30. The sample included a wide variety in terms of the several years of service and education level.

The questionnaire was developed through many informal discussions with the faculty members. The questionnaire included five major sections that express the faculty perceptions about the communication importance in the fields (administration, education, science, student affairs, and social). Each section has a number of statements that show the response level according to Likert scale (1 = Important, 2 = Important to some extent, 3 = Not important).

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The research questions answered through descriptive analysis, to describe the opinion of faculty members (male and female) about the communication system importance in the fields (administrative, education, scientific, student affairs and social). *t*-Test used to check the differences among faculty members perception about the communication importance.

✱ cogent ·· business & management

7. The results

The purpose of this quantitative research was to explore the importance of communication by examining the perceptions of the faculty members in five fields (administration, education, scientific research, students' affairs and social). The study was also designed to test for the differences among faculty member's perceptions of the importance of communication which may that are attributed to gender.

The results were structured according to the study questions in the following section.

7.1. What are faculty members perceptions of the communication system importance in the fields (administrative, education, scientific, student affairs and social)?

A look at the Table 1 shows that:

Table 1. Frequency distribution of faculty members (male and female), according to perception of the communication system importance in the fields: (administrative, educational, scientific and student affairs and social)

Fields/statements	Male			Female		
	Important (%)	Important to some extent (%)	Not important (%)	Important (%)	Important to some extent (%)	Not important (%)
The administrative field						
To improve coordination and teamwork	66.7	33.3	0	76.7	23.3	0
To exchange of letters, and files	84.6	15.4	0	76.7	23.3	0
Publication, implementation, and follow-up the decisions	79.5	20.5	0	76.7	23.3	0
To practice of administrative task	69.2	30.8	0	83.3	16.7	0
Controlling of the educational institution	57.5	20.5	0	66.7	23.3	
The education field						
To presenting scientific lectures and lessons	70.0	30.0	0	76.7	23.3	0
To exchange of notes, educational materials and references	69.2	30.8	0	33.3	66.7	0
Participation in practical applications and scientific experiments	59.0	41.0	0	76.7	23.3	0
To follow-up and participation in the curriculum	64.1	35.9	0	50.0	50.0	0
The scientific field						
Preparation of joint scientific research	51.3	48.7	0	63.3	36.7	0
To sharing the scientific method,	59.0	41.0	0	53.3	46.7	0
To sharing literature, science material	46.2	53.8	0	86.7	13.3	0
To cross-check information and to confirm research results	30.8	69.8	0	46.7	53.3	0
The student affairs field						
Academic Advising for students	82.1	7.7	10.3	76.7	23.3	0
To follow-up cultural and scientific activities	61.5	28.2	10.3	53.3	46.7	0
Establish social relationships with students	51.3	43.6	5.1	70.0	30.0	0
To communicate with students for scientific support	66.7	28.2	5.1	66.7	33.3	0
The social field						
To find common ground to work	25.6	66.7	7.7	66.7	7.7	0
Sharing public information to recognize important issues	30.8	61.5	7.7	66.7	23.3	10.0
Participate the various events and social events	30.8	69.2	0	70.0	30.0	0
To build a sense of identity and unity	30.8	61.5	7.7	46.7	53.3	0

The importance of communication system as perceived by male faculty members in the administrative field was represented in the exchange of letters and files, publication of decisions implementation and follow-up, a practice of administrative tasks, improve coordination and teamwork and controlling of the educational institution, respectively. While the importance of communication system as perceived by female faculty members in the administrative field was represented in a practice of administrative tasks, improve coordination and teamwork, exchange of letters and files, publication of decisions implementation and follow-up, and controlling of the educational institution, respectively.

The communication system importance as perceived by male faculty members in the educational field was represented in giving lectures and lessons, exchange of notes, educational materials and references, follow-up and participation in designing curriculum, share practical applications and academic experiences, respectively. While the communication system importance as perceived by female faculty members in the educational field was represented in giving lectures and lessons, exchange practical applications and academic experiences, follow-up and participation in designing curriculum, and exchange of notes, educational materials and references, respectively.

The importance of communication system as perceived by male faculty members in the scientific field was represented in sharing the methodology, preparation of joint scientific research, sharing common science material, and cross-check of information and to confirm research results, respectively. While the communication system importance as perceived by female faculty members represent in the scientific field was represented in the preparation of joint scientific research, sharing the methodology, sharing common science material, sharing common science material, and cross-check of information and to confirm research results, respectively.

The importance of communication system as perceived by male faculty members in the student affairs field represented in academic advising of students, offer the academic support, follow-up cultural and scientific activities, and supporting the supervision for students, respectively. While the importance of communication system as perceived by female faculty members in the student affairs field was represented in academic advising of students, supporting the supervision for students, offer the academic support and follow-up and cultural and scientific activities, respectively.

The importance of communication system as perceived by male faculty members in the social field was represented in participating in the general and social events, building a sense of identity and unity, sharing public information to recognize important issues, and finding common ground to work, respectively. While the importance of communication system as perceived by female faculty members in the social field was represented in participating in the general and social events, finding common ground to work, building a sense of identity and unity, sharing public information to recognize important issues and building a sense of identity and unity, respectively.

7.2. Are their significant differences among the faculty members (men and women) about the perceptions of communication importance in the administrative, education, scientific, student affairs, and social fields?

Tables 2 and 3 show significant differences among faculty members ($\alpha < 0.05$) in the perception of the importance of communication that are attributed to gender variable in the administrative field, (male $m = 1.15$, female $m = 1.00$), in the scientific field (males $m = 1.49$, females $m = 1.00$), and in the social field (males $m = 1.77$, females $m = 1.00$), while there are no statistically significant differences in the educational and student affairs fields.

✳ cogent ·· business & management

Table 2. Group statistics

	النوع	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Average in the administrative field	Male	39	1.15	.366	.059
	Female	30	1.00	.000	.000
Average in the educational field	Male	39	1.26	.442	.071
	Female	30	1.13	.346	.063
Average in the scientific field research field	Male	39	1.49	.506	.081
	Female	30	1.00	.000	.000
Average in the student affairs field	Male	39	1.44	.680	.109
	Female	30	1.20	.407	.074
Average in the social field	Male	39	1.77	.583	.093
	Female	30	1.00	.000	.000

Note: *t*-Test for differences between faculty members about the communication system importance which may attribute to gender.

Table 3. Independent samples test

		Levene's test for equality of variances		*t*-Test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Average in the administrative field	Equal variances assumed	31.648	.000	2.301	67	.024	.154	.067	.020	.287
	Equal variances not assumed			2.629	38.000	.012	.154	.059	.035	.272
Average in the educational field	Equal variances assumed	7.064	.010	1.256	67	.213	.123	.098	−.072−	.319
	Equal variances not assumed			1.297	66.974	.199	.123	.095	−.066−	.312
Average in the scientific field	Equal variances assumed	46.282	.000	5.261	67	.000	.487	.093	.302	.672
	Equal variances not assumed			6.008	38.000	.000	.487	.081	.323	.651
Average in the student affairs field	Equal variances assumed	12.615	.001	1.680	67	.098	.236	.140	−.044−	.516
	Equal variances not assumed			1.789	63.547	.078	.236	.132	−.028−	.499
Average in the social field	Equal variances assumed	60.847	.000	7.212	67	.000	.769	.107	.556	.982
	Equal variances not assumed			8.238	38.000	.000	.769	.093	.580	.958

Note: *t*-Test for differences between faculty members about the communication system importance which may attribute to gender.

8. Conclusion

The challenge of increasing the benefits gained from the communication system in the educational institution should be based on the understanding of the most important fields which they are used in the communication system. This study provided the most important areas in which communications system is used in one of the Saudi Higher education institutions—Najran Community College: case study—where the results showed the importance of the communication system in the fields (administrative, educational, scientific, student affairs and social field). The study presented some implications for the communication system in the KSA education institutions. The findings may aid the makers of the strategic policies to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities toward a continuous improvement of the communication system in education. The findings of this study assist in the development of communication system in the educational institutions according to the requirement of gender segregation.

cogent ·· business & management

Author details
Abdel Moneim Ghanim Ezzeldin[1]
E-mail: dr_ghanim@hotmail.com
[1] Department of Business Administration, Community College, Najran University, P.O. Box 1988, Najran 61441, Saudi Arabia.

References
AlMunajjed, M. (1997). *Women in Saudi Arabia today*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.doi:10.1057/9780230373105
Brewer, N. T. (2011). *Communicating risks and benefits: An evidence-based user's guide*. Silver Spring, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services.
Fraser, C., & Villet, J. (1994). *Communication: A key to human development*. Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
Downs, C. W., & Adrian, A. D. (2004). *Assessing organizational communication: Strategic communication audits*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
Ergin, A., & Birol, C. (2005). *Communication in Education*. Ankara Anı: Yayıncılık.
Gratz, R. D., & Salem, P. J. (1982). *Organizational communication and higher education*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
Habaci, I., Çelik, E. E., Habaci, M., Adigüzelli, F., & Kurt, S. (2013). Effective communication in educational administration. *US-China Education Review, 3*, 690–702.
Hargie, O., & Tourish, D. (2000). *Handbook of communication audits for organisations*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (1982). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Random House.
Ministry of Higher Education. (1424). *National report on education development in Saudi Arabia*. Riyadh: Research and Strategic Studies Center.
Morreale, S. P., & Pearson, J. C. (2008). Why communication education is important: The centrality of the discipline in the 21st century. *Communication Education, 57*, 224–240. doi:10.1080/03634520701861713
Morreale, S. P., Valenzano, J. M., & Bauer, J. A. (2016). Why communication education is important: A third study on the centrality of the discipline's content and pedagogy. *Communication Education*, 1–21, doi:10.1080/03634523.2016.1265136.