Communication Strategies and Organizational Harmony in Local Government Councils in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined communication strategies and organizational harmony in local government councils in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The objectives of this study were to find out the communication strategies employed by the leadership of local government Councils in Akwa Ibom State, find out the rationale for the use of such communication strategies, determine if the communication strategies used by the leadership of local government councils in Akwa Ibom State do enhance organisational harmony, determine communication strategies preferred by the majority stakeholders in the local government councils studied, find out other factors that engender organisational harmony in the local government councils studied. The research design adopted for the study was survey, with questionnaire and interview schedule as research instruments. The population of the study were staff in Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene local government councils in Akwa Ibom State is 1,374. A sample size of 286 was drawn for the study using the Taro Yamane formula. The study which anchored on System theory and the Interactional theory revealed that majority of the respondents in the council studied affirmed that sporting activities contributed to harmony in the council. Also, the study revealed that across the local government councils studied that religious activities similarly led to organisational harmony, the study found out that the leadership of the local government councils in Akwa Ibom State represented by Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene utilised memo, letter, meeting, telephone, seminar and worship (solemn assembly) as a means of reaching out to their employees. Email was not used at all. It was recommended that local government councils should endeavour regularly to carry out communication audit to evaluate their performances. This should prove invaluable in helping them decide necessary changes that they need to make to ensure smooth running of the councils, the leadership of the local government councils need to incorporate the use of email for exchange of messages across the councils, telephone is an important tool that the councils use effectively in communication with subordinates. The principal officers and supervisors need to improve on their telephone etiquette, particularly in the use of language and tone during conversations. The impact of telephone in engendering interaction and relationships are overwhelming and should be embraced by the councils.*
KEYWORDS: communication, communication strategies, organisations, organizational harmony, local government councils

INTRODUCTION

Organisations are entities created to drive people towards the achievement of corporate goals and, by extension, satisfy individual aspirations and visions. To achieve this, organisations rely on the elements of communication such as messages, networks, interrelationships and above all, people. Over the years, communication has been the foundation on which organisations are operated. The success of any organisation depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of communication flow. Local government councils are made up of people, like any other organisation, who work together towards the growth of the organisation. People in organisations operate from different and distinct units, and it is through communication that they relate with each other to achieve organisational goals. When information is properly diffused in an organisation, it engenders organisational harmony.

The pervasiveness of the different communication strategies used in communicating boosts organisational harmony and leads to the attainment of set goals and objectives in the organisation. Communication strategy which is simply a plan for improving an organisation's ability to effectively convey messages to employees, demands that organisational people should master both oral and written forms of communication in order to be effective communicators in the organisation within which they find themselves. A recognised maxim has it that the more complex an organisation is, the greater the need for coordinating it if a high level of employee performance, trust and harmony are to be achieved.

The management or leadership of an organisation that desires a harmonious environment must strive to improve workplace communication through daily e-mail updates, meetings, telephones, access to private chat rooms where employees can raise questions without having to leave their desks, and the bulletin board on the wall which acts as a guide for employees to have an idea about the day to day happenings and running of the local government councils. Open communication channels along with employee participation in the formulation and implementation of communication strategies have proved to be a necessity for organisations. Insight about employees' attitudes and behaviour, and communicating the vision and mission of an organisation cannot be achieved without proper coordination of deliberately created communication strategies understood by the management and employees. Misunderstanding by the members may lead to dissatisfaction, disillusionment or disagreement as to which culminate ultimately in the entrenchment of disharmony in an organisation. Qubein (2006) opines that, "today's successful organisation must be alive with communication flowing in all directions, through all levels and divisions (p.7)." This requires communication skills (human, conceptual and technical skills) on the part of both the management and the workforce. No worthwhile communication can take place until management gains complete attention of the employees by employing communication strategies which allow for effective management of resources and personnel; the local government councils are no exception.

Communication strategy cannot be effective in a workplace if the management hesitates to make employees to be aware of changes and updates within the organisation that can impact on their job. This is because when employees are fully aware of the changes and what is expected of them, they can perform better towards the attainment of the organisation's goals. Hoarding of information leads to rumour, which, if not checked, leads to confusion in the

system. Many organisations fail as a result of poor and or inadequate communication. Therefore, communication, being the pivot of organisations is crucial to the performance of local government councils. Communication strategy helps an organisation to build strong relationship with the employees and interdependent relationship is the hallmark of organisations. Local government councils with functional communication strategies that are skillfully implemented win the hearts and support of their employees because an inclusive communication strategy boosts the self-worth of members of the organisation.

Miller (2009) identifies five critical features of an organisation, namely: the existence of a social collectivism, organisational and individualistic goals, coordinating activity, organisational structure, and the embedding of an organisation within an environment of other organisations. Social collectivism entails carrying other members of an organisation along in key decisions. Organisational and individualistic goals suggest that every individual working in any organisation pursues both individualistic and organisational goals. Organisational goal is simply task-oriented while individualistic goal pays much attention to self-sufficiency. It means therefore, that merging the goals will help to boost harmony in an organisation. Coordinating activity implies that management must have the wherewithal to ensure unity of action among individuals, work groups and departments in performing their tasks in order to achieve what it set out to achieve efficiently. By so doing, the activities of different departments and work groups of the organisation will be harmonised. Organisational structure entails the hierarchical passing down of information in the organisation. Embedding of an organisation within an environment of the organisation entails placing or situating the organisation within its operational environment to the extent that the organisation is influenced by the environment and the environment in turn influences the organisation. In other words, organisations do not exist in a vacuum, but are driven by people to accomplish set goals. Every organisation is made up of people functioning at different levels to facilitate its success and achieve both individual and organisational goals.

Griffin and Moorhead (2007) define communication as "the social process in which two or more parties exchange information and share meaning (p.16)" They further maintain that, "just as the human nervous system responds to stimuli and coordinates responses by sending messages to the various parts of the body, communication coordinates the parts of an organisation (p.17)". The managements of the local government councils should coordinate all parties to work efficiently with a focus towards the attainment of organisational goals in the local government councils. Effective communication strategy is, therefore, one which plays a central role in high-performance, just as information, understanding and knowledge are the lifeblood of an organisational body. A thoughtful and comprehensive communication strategy is a vital factor of any successful change and improvement in organisations and the essence of it is designed to help both management and employees to communicate effectively to meet core organisational objectives. No organisation can communicate unless it has a clarity of purpose which can be expressed concisely. Explicit steps should be taken to ensure that all employees feel they are involved in decisions that affect their day-to-day work as the different strategies give direction and set the tone for the organisation to improve its effort. Communication strategies are useful tools for any organisation to reach its employees by efficiently and adequately communicating ideas, innovations, policies, suggestions and plans towards the

attainment of set goals and objectives in the organisation. Also, a two-way communication flow between management and employees is crucial as organisations whose managers successfully engage employees in conversations and key decisions about their work simply inculcate the culture of inclusiveness, thereby generating positive results. Ajala (2001) notes that there individuals who live and die working in all manner of organisational settings. Local government councils are creations of the law, with an indefinite life span unless the law changes.

Organisational communication as defined by Goldhaber (1993, p.14) is "the process of creating and exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relationships to cope with environmental uncertainty." This implies that an organisation is not a static system but a dynamic, open system which creates and exchanges messages, ideas, thoughts that impact on the members of the organisation by boosting self-worth and sense of belonging among staff in the system. Any communication strategy employed in the local government council may also depend on the flow of communication that is embedded in that organisation. These messages must follow sets of pathways called networks to get to their destinations. Modern organisations do cultivate a process of multi-flow communication patterns, Effective communication strategies involve the multi-directional flow system, or conversations between members of the organisation and not a linear or unidirectional communication flow. This approach helps modern organisations pass messages across to employees in order to create a harmonious environment. The structure and nature of local government councils are founded in such networks.

The foregoing discussion has shown that poor communication flow and inability of management to create a conducive organisational and communication climate for employees to be productive can hinder organisational harmony in the councils. Mastery and effective application of communication strategies and skills across the council is imperative for its success. Also, the complexity of modern organisations does not permit hoarding of information as this can be a hindrance to harmony in the organisation. Communication flow in most organisations is usually top-to-bottom (downward flow) with a snippet of official explanation to activities, issues and events. This trend aborts the much desired organisational harmony as a result of the stifling of other flow patterns.

Therefore, communication in such a setting like the local government council that is made up of elected and political appointees together with career council employees makes administration in the local government councils complex. This complexity can be made simple by employing suitable communication strategies. Effective communication is occasioned by multi-directional flow (downward, upward, horizontal) because where the multi-directional communication flow is in place, it engenders harmony and a good working relationship between the management and staff of the council. Effective communication enhances the coordination of human resources to establish a harmonious workforce and environment for the attainment of set goals and objectives.

Statement of the Problem

The structure of the council is made up of the executive that formulate policies and ensure their implementation, the legislature that make laws for the council in addition to performing oversight functions and the employees of the council who implement the policies and directives of the executive. This marriage makes local government administration complex. Therefore, effective communication strategies become inevitable and imperative for effective administration and harmony in the council.

As a result of the all-important role that communication plays in any organisation, without employing a strategic communication approach, local government administrations may experience disharmony in policy implementation and bonding of the workforce. It has also been observed casually, by local government employees and other key stakeholders in local government councils in the study area that there seems not to be harmony in the local government councils. They claim that the management are not open and transparent with communication, as things are shrouded in secrecy. They also observe that the leadership of local government councils lack clearly defined communication strategies for use in the coordination of activities of the council. Reports of absenteeism, lock outs and bitter disagreements between the executive, legislature and career employees abound in the system and could be attributed in part to ineffective communication.

The question then is: "How do communication strategies in Local Government Councils in Akwa Ibom State relate to organisational harmony in these councils?"

Objectives of the Study.

The objectives of the study were to:

  i.   find out the communication strategies employed by the leadership of local government Councils in Akwa Ibom State;
 ii.   find out the rationale for the use of such communication strategies;
iii.   determine if the communication strategies used by the leadership of local government councils in Akwa Ibom State do enhance organisational harmony;
 iv.   determine communication strategies preferred by the majority stakeholders in the local government councils studied;
  v.   find out other factors that engender organisational harmony in the local government councils studied.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised from the objectives of the study:

  i.   What are the communication strategies employed by the leadership of local government councils in Akwa Ibom State?

 ii.   What is the rationale for the use of the communication strategies currently in place in the local government councils studied?

iii.   What is the outcome of communication strategies used by the leadership of the local government councils; do they enhance organisational harmony?

iv.   What communication strategies do the majority of stakeholders in the local government councils studied prefer?

v.   What other factors engender organisational harmony in the local government councils studied?

Research Hypothesis
The following hypothesis was set and tested in this study:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between communication strategies and organisational harmony in the local government councils studied.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Review of Concepts

Communication

Communication refers to the process by which information is shared and understood between two or more people (McShane and Glinow, 2003). Here, the emphasis is on the word **'understood'** because transmitting the sender's intended meaning to the receiver is the essence of a good communication. Large organisations require innovative strategies to keep communication open, and the extent to which members of an organisation contribute in harnessing the resources of the organisation equally depends on how well the management of the organisation understands and adopts appropriate communication.

Also, people in organisations work together in order to achieve a common goal which can only be reached through communication. Newman and Ober (2013), note that a group of people must interact in order to communicate their ideas, needs, expertise, and plans. Managers in organisations must understand how communication works and how to communicate competently as this will make them more effective in every aspect of business. Communication is said to be successful only when there is understanding of the sender's message. Communication in an organisation relates to the deliberate, intentional application of physical symbol complexes, with a view to bringing out specific meanings in the minds of other individuals (Stewart, 2002).

Certainly, regardless of any type of organisation, communication is the element that maintains and sustains relationships through quality leadership that must be able to share knowledge and ideas to transmit a sense of urgency and enthusiasm to others (De Ridder, 2004). The element that maintains and sustains relationships in any organisation is nothing else than communication. Abugre (2010) is, however, quick to point out that the manner communication works in any organisation is invariably determined by the social dynamics of that particular organisation. This is because such dynamics determine the balance of the organisation and harmonious environment for its staff.

Good communication could be seen as a bond that links people together to achieve a common goal. It is necessary in the coordination of the human elements of the organisation into an efficient and effective working unit. The need for communication pervades all organisations. Omego and Nwachukwu (2012, p.2) posit that, "for communication to be effective, there must be sharing of information or ideas from one person to another". It is also worth mentioning that there are different ways of communicating; by gestures, facial expressions. It could also be in form of written words or symbols. A smile or even silence can constitute communication. Other ways of communicating may include: informal talks, telephone calls, inter-office memos, letters, reports, posters, and planned conferences. Harmonious environments cannot be created, goals cannot be met and even problems in organisations cannot be solved without adequate communication. This concept of communication takes many forms: face-to-face discussions, letters, memos, phone conversations, and notices posted on boards.

Eisenberg and Goodal (2001, p.11) see communication as "the moment to moment working out of the tensions between the need to maintain order (constraint) and the need to promote change (creativity)". It is also the material manifestation of (a) institutional constraints (b) creative potential and (c) contexts of interpretation. They also present some of the more prevalent approaches to communication in organisations to include:

i. Communication as information transfer
ii. Communication as a transactional process
iii. Communication as strategic control
iv. Communication as a balance of creativity and constraint

The information-transfer approach views communication as a metaphoric pipeline through which information is transferred from one person to another thus theorising that managers communicate well when they transfer their knowledge to subordinates and others, with minimal spillage. Communication here is viewed as a tool that people use to accomplish their goals and objectives. According to this perspective, miscommunication occurs only when no message is received or when the message that is received is not what the sender intended. Typical communication problems include information over-load (when the receiver becomes overwhelmed by the information that must be processed); distortion (the effects of noise on the receiver's ability to process the message); and ambiguity (when multiple interpretations of a message cloud the sender's intended meaning).

Although this approach is useful in explaining certain communication situations in organisations, scholars argue that it is simplistic and incomplete, painting a picture of communication as a sequential process (I throw you a message, then you throw one back).

The transactional communication process approach asserts that, in actual communication, clear distinctions are not made between senders and receivers; rather, people play both roles often simultaneously. Each person is constantly sharing in the encoding and decoding processes, and each person is affecting the other. The transactional approach highlights the importance of feedback or information about how a message is received and particularly nonverbal feedback, which may accompany or substitute for verbal feedback.

Unlike the information-transfer approach, where the meaning of a message resides with the sender, the transactional process approach focuses on the person receiving the message and how the receiver constructs the meaning of that message. This approach could be effectively applied to leadership that is interested in shaping the meanings that followers assign to what leaders say or do.

The strategic-control perspective regards communication as a tool for controlling the environment. It sees the communicator as having multiple goals: to be understood and to preserve a positive working relationship. This therefore suggests that a competent communicator is one who chooses strategies that are appropriate for accomplishing multiple goals.

Communication is also viewed as a balance of creativity and constraint. This approach views communication as a balancing act between creativity and constraint. It is closely linked to sociological theories concerning the individual and society translated to the relationship between employees and organisations. This relationship is examined in two perspectives; (a) the macro and (b) the micro

The macro perspective sees individuals as being moulded, controlled, ordered, and constrained by the society and by social institutions. In contrast, the micro perspective sees individuals as creating society and its social systems. This is particularly useful for organisational communication, depending on whether the emphasis is on how employees communicate to create and shape organisations or on the constraints organisations place on that communication. To Soola and Ayoade (2000), organisations begin as micro, two-person or macro creations, structured to foster interdependent relationships and interactions, as well as to facilitate the exchange of messages and information between and among organisation members on one hand, and between them and the organisation's environment, on the other.

Organisational Communication

Organisational communication is an intertwined exchange between organisation and the employees. Rocker (2000) says every business depends on communication, people must communicate to plan products, hire, train and motivate workers; coordinate manufacturing and delivery; persuade customers to buy and bill them for sale. For many businesses, non-profit and government organisations, the "product" is information or services rather than something tangible. This information and services are created and delivered by communication.

McShane and Glinow (2003), state that an organisation is a structured process in which individuals interact for their goals and objectives. Organisations should be established so as to help increase productivity, develop new knowledge and skills, and ensure continuity of leadership. To put it differently, organisations are groups of people who work interdependently towards some purpose.

In every organisation, communication is the way people get their points across and get work done. Communication takes many forms: face-to-face or phone conversations, informal meetings, e-mail messages, letters, memos, and reports. Qubein (2006, p.7) opines that "today's

successful organisation must be alive with communication flowing in all directions, through all levels and divisions." This simply requires communication skills on the part of management (superiors) to the most junior people (subordinates) on the work force. No worthwhile communication can take place in an organisation until the management gains the complete attention of the employees by employing the most suitable communication pattern to allow for effective management of the personnel and resources in the organisation.

An organisation exists mainly to achieve its goals, and this is done by creating value for its stakeholders, employees, customers, suppliers and community. In a nutshell, organisation means working with and through people to achieve goals. Abugre (2010), note that organisations are the product of human ingenuity, created to serve one or more specific needs of a community, be it a neighborhood, a state or multiple nations. The researchers also add that an organisation is a group of people working in a network of relationships and systems towards a common objective of providing value to the people served.

Organisational communication is the process of creating and exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relationships to cope with environmental uncertainty (Goldhaber, 1993, p. 14). This definition contains some key concepts that cannot be ignored: process which simply means that an organisation is a dynamic open system that creates and exchanges messages among its members. The idea of creating and exchanging messages is ongoing, ever-changing, and continuous. The second concept is message; an organisation studies the creation and exchange of messages throughout the organisation. This can be examined through language modality, intended receivers, method of diffusion and the purpose of the flow.

Organisations which are composed of a series of people who occupy specific positions or roles create and exchange messages through or over a set of pathways called communication networks. This may include two people, a few people, or the entire organisation.

The fourth key concept in Goldhaber's (1993) definition is interdependence, which suggests that every individual or member of an organisation must strive to work hand-in-hand in an organisation which is an open system. This presupposes that the nature of relationships is interlocking in such an organisation as all the parts called sub-systems affect and are affected by each other. This means that a change in any part of the system will affect all other parts of the system; thus, communication networks within an organisation overlap and become interrelated.

In every organisation, there must be a relationship, which is the fifth concept. Since an organisation is an open, living, social system, its connecting parts function in the hands of people. It is extremely necessary to study human relationships within the organisation by focusing on the communication behaviours of the people involved in a relationship.

For any organisation to be successful, managers and employees have to work together to build sustainable relationships and thus create a conducive environment for staff to work towards the attainment of set goals and objectives, thereby paving way for harmony in the organisation. Environment, which is the sixth concept in the definition, simply means the totality of physical

and social factors that are taken into account in the decision-making behaviours of individuals in the system. Here, an organisation is defined as an open system because it interacts with its external environment. It should be noted that as environment changes, new information demands are placed upon the organisation.

For any organisation desirous of administrative harmony, management must use employees constructively to achieve that outcome through effective communication. Effective communication is the core of all management activity and every organisation depends heavily on communication to accomplish its goals. This cannot be made feasible without interaction with peers and supervisors in order to gain insights and knowledge about various departments, attitudes, experience and behaviour of other employees. This is so because just about everything an organisation does requires communication (Qubein, 2006).

However, understanding how people communicate in an organisation is vital to help people get along and it boosts interaction with one another thereby eliminating some sort of disharmonious environment. Kim (2002) shows how effective communication incites harmonious environment from employees, 'If managers want to improve safe behaviour, they must be guided by three core truths of effective communication'.

 i. Communication through supervisors (to build strong first line trust and credibility),
 ii. Require that communications be face-to-face (to allow for feedback, expression and dialogue),
iii. Communicate information that is specifically relevant to employees and their work (p.66).

Koontz (2001, p.18) defines organisational communication as 'the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver with the information being understood by the receivers. In deed no organisation can function adequately without the initiator or originator of an idea (sender) which constitute the management to transfer information to the subordinates (receivers).
Ikpe (1990) groups the definitions of communication into three major categories which are:
 i. Definitions that stress sharing of meaning
 ii. Definition that stress intentional influence
iii. Definition that stress any kind of influence with or without intent or the procedure by which one person may affect or influence another through communication.

Communication in organisations emphasises the above categories of definition. Emphasis is on the sharing of meaning, experiences and also the intentional influence on employees of Ikot Ekpene, Eket and Uyo local Government Councils. Ikpe (1990) however stresses that most definitions of the concept tend to emphasise those in category two and three above. He said: "the major emphasis is on the sharing of meanings, experiences and the intentional influence". Here, communication is the process of transmitting information from sender to the receiver. It is therefore the duty of the originator of an idea (sender) to prepare the idea in a way that will be understood by the receiver.

In a knowledge-based organisation, employees require a high level of communication competence. Communication competence refers to a person's ability to identify appropriate communication patterns in a given situation and to achieve goals by applying that knowledge (McShane and Glinow, 2003). A competent communicator quickly learns the meanings that listeners take from certain words and symbols, and they know which communication medium is best in a particular situation.

Also, a competent communicator uses this knowledge to communicate in ways that achieve personal, team, and organisational objectives. Someone with high communication competence would be better than others at determining whether an e-mail, telephone call, or personal visit would be the best approach to convey a message to an employee. It is the duty of the management staff in an organisation to spend most of their time and energy to communicate with employees and other stakeholders to boost a good working relationship, thus creating harmonious environment in such an organisation. Since employees are known to be the brain cells of any organisation, it therefore means that organisation cannot function adequately in coordinating its activities and be productive without effective communication. Communication on the other hand represents the nervous system that carries any shared meaning to vital parts of the organisational body.

Effective communication minimises the 'Silos of knowledge' and problem that undermines an organisation's potential and in turn allows employees to make more informed decisions about corporate actions. Through dialogue, co-workers develop common mental models and broad worldviews that people rely on to guide their perceptions and behaviours in the organisation. Barrett (2006, p.2) says that 'managers spend most of their time and day engaging in communication'. This simply shows that communication occupies 70 to 90 percent of their time daily. Good communication skills enable, foster, and create the understanding and trust necessary to encourage others to follow a leader. Without effective communication, a manager accomplishes little and cannot be an effective leader.

Purposes of Communication in an Organisation

Communication serves four major functions within a group or organisation: control, motivation, emotional expression, and information (Robbins and Judge, 2013).

Communication acts to control members' behaviour in several ways. Organisations have authority hierarchies and formal guidelines that employees are required to follow. When employees are required to communicate any job-related grievance to their immediate boss, to follow their job description, or to comply with company policies, for instance, communication is performing a control function. But informal communication also controls behaviour. When work groups tease a member who produces too much (and makes the rest of the group look bad), they are informally communicating with, and controlling the member's behaviour.

Communication fosters motivation by clarifying to employees what is to be done, how well they are doing, and what can be done to improve performance if it is subpar. The formation of specific goals, feedback on progress toward the goals, and reinforcement of desired behaviour all stimulate motivation and require communication.

For many employees, their work group is a primary source for social interaction. The communication that takes place within the group is a fundamental mechanism by which members show their frustrations and feelings of satisfaction. Communication, therefore, provides a release for the emotional expression of feelings and for fulfillment of social needs.

The final function that communication performs relates to its role in facilitating decision making. It provides the information that individuals and groups need to make decisions by transmitting the data to identify and evaluate alternative choices. Communication is necessary for employers to inform employees of the functions they are to perform, what rules to obey, why management requires certain actions or has taken certain actions, what difficulties or prospects the employer is facing and why workers' demands cannot be met.

No one of these four functions should be seen as being more important than the others. For groups to perform effectively, they need to maintain some form of control over members, stimulate members to perform, provide a means for emotional expression, and make decision choice. One can assume that almost every communication or interaction that takes place in a group or organisation performs one or more of these four functions.

Forms of Communication Network in an Organisation

Every organisation has formal and informal information systems which is the channels through which information is transferred within an organisation from one person to another. D'Souza (2001, p.132) says, "effective communication even at the interpersonal level becomes difficult and, at times, seemingly impossible."

In organisations where hierarchical relationships exist, communication requires greater effort to yield the degree of understanding necessary for effective operations. Ikpe (1990, p.253) states that "in an organisation, messages flow within a network of interdependent relationships." No organisation can depend solely on itself, but upon employees to work hand-in-hand with management towards the attainment of organisational goals. He maintains that communication also flows in two major forms which are formal and informal networks.

(a) Formal communication

Formal communication entails the process by which messages flow according to organisational structure. Qubein (2006, p.78) says, "it is a situation whereby an organisation can control the content, channels and directions of information through formal systems." D'Souza (2001) said that formal communication generally flows in any of three directions: downward, upward, horizontal. Downward communication is the type of formal communication in which messages flow from the higher level (management) to the lower level (subordinates) of staff in an organisation. This has become the most used channel for transmitting orders, instructions, and directives. Also, when management wants to send messages across to all employees, teach new policies or procedures, they employ this flow of communication.

Qubein (2006, p.78) refers to it as top-down communication by saying that, "it has been traditionally used to pass along instructions, to inform employees about policies and procedures, to rally them behind causes to let them know how their performance stacks up

against the company's norm. Executives who employ downward flow in an organisation, direct and control the activities of lower level employees by using an orderly medium for passing on policies and orders.

D'Souza (2001) opines that, if management fails to use the formal channel, the less desirable grapevine will take its place. Most organisations do not make use of it in its totality because it goes strictly in one way: from top to bottom. The challenge posed to an organisation with this form of communication is that the subordinates do not participate in decision making as there is no room for feedback from subordinates. Usually, management often generates more information than the subordinates can absorb, thereby leading to information overload.

In the case of upward communication, when employees communicate with managers; employees have opportunities to make known their ideas and opinions. By using this flow, management are informed of what is happening on the work floor. It also promotes good human relations by enhancing employees' sense of participation in the enterprise. In spite of these, upward communication in organisations is often inadequate. This is because management might view employees' ideas, opinions, and suggestions as unimportant by giving poor listening skills.

Another form of formal communication that is useful in an organisation is the horizontal flow. This is the type of communication in which messages flow on the same or similar organisational levels. It could be from subordinate to subordinate, or between departmental heads. D'Souza (2001, p.134) says, "it is the transmitting and receiving of information between people on the same level of responsibility." It is known to be the strongest of all flows in terms of information and understanding.

People who work closely together have little trouble getting their ideas across to their colleagues. Team work and conflict resolution is enhanced by this flow. Horizontal flow is impeded by lack of motivations; rewards are not given to those who are engaged in meeting organisational goals and objectives.

(b) Informal communication

Informal communication is crucial in every organisation. It is a supplement to the formal channel which is often referred to as the "grapevine". This is the process by which messages are transmitted through unofficial channels within the organisation.

Employees share what is happening in the organisation in person (while eating in the cafeteria or refilling their coffee cups) and online (on social networking sites and blogs). Without good formal communication, the grapevine will take over. This is so because people need information, particularly when they fear changes that may affect them: layoffs, benefit cuts, or organisational restructurings (Newman and Ober, 2013). There is a popular saying that, "in every rumour, there is an element of truth in it. This, most times, contains factual information about the organisation and helps management to provide other members of the organisation with full information. But, managers who let the grapevine function as employees' main source of information miss out on the chance to convey their own messages.

Communication in an organisation goes far beyond sending formal messages up, down or across the organisational hierarchy. To get a complete picture of organisational communication, one must also pay attention to informal communication. Raman and Singh (2006, p.17) say, "people transmit information to those with whom they come in contact, thereby providing conduits through which all sorts of messages can travel." Anyone can tell anyone else anything informally and the result is a rapid flow of information along what is commonly called the grapevine. This simply refers to the pathways along which unofficial information travels. Such information that travels along the organisational grapevine tends to grow rapidly.

Communication climate

Thomas *et al.,* (2009, p. 116) define communication climate as "a subjective experienced quality of the internal environment of an organisation: the concept embraces a general cluster of inferred predispositions, identifiable through reports of members' perceptions of messages and message related events occurring in the organisation". It is the internal environment of information exchange among people through an organisation's formal and informal networks (Buchholz, 2001). The concept, communication climate is invisible (De Ridder, 2004) and consists largely of the perceptions employees have of the quality of relationships and communication within the organisation.According to the Centre for Collaborative Communication (2010), one of the most important factors in creating a positive communication climate is to create an environment in which all employees can express with authenticity and receive with empathy. The Centre for Collaborative Communication presented the following example of these orientations:

Table 1: NVC Model (Centre for Collaborative Communication, 2010, p.1)

	Expressing With Authenticity	Receiving With Empathy
Observations	Expressing what I am observing (seeing, hearing, remembering, imagining) free of judgement or evaluation. "When I..."	Receiving with empathy what the other person is observing (seeing, hearing, remembering, imagining). "When I..."
Feelings	Expressing honestly by revealing what I'm feeling "I feel ...?"	Receiving with empathy what the other person is feeling. "Do you feel ...?"
Needs	Expressing with authenticity more core needs and values. "Because I need/ value... "	Receiving with empathy the other person's needs/values. "Because you need/... value?"
Requests	Expressing my present request in a concrete, positive, and doable way. "Would you be willing to..."	"And would you like me to tell you...?"

Centre for Collaborative Communication (2010)

The Centre for Collaborative Communication's (2010) model emphasises changing the content of communication to improve communication climate. However, Smidts, Pruyn, and Van (2001) argue that communication climate can be improved not only by altering the content of communication to reflect better values but also by building the prestige of an organisation. Organisations perceived as more prestigious by employees are also likely to be perceived as having better communication climate (Smidts *et al.*, 2001).

Smidts *et al.*, (2001) state that specifically, it has been found that communication climate within the organisation is something that will have a significant impact on the nature of perception of the worker.

Communication Barriers

Considering the complexity of the communication process and the many communication channels, messages may not always be received exactly as the sender intends (Newman and Ober, 2013). As communicators, we are almost always over-optimistic about our messages, assuming they will survive unscathed, all the way from our own brains to those of the receivers. In fact, all messages are vulnerable to the phenomenon of 'noise' (Blundel, 2004). Communication barriers are technically referred to as NOISE, but few pervasive problems that will be discussed are perceptions, filtering, language and information overload (McShane and Glinow, 2003).

Perception: The perceptual process determines which messages we select or screen out, as well as how the selected information is organised and interpreted. This process can be a significant source of noise in the communication process if the sender and receiver have different perceptual frames and mental blocks.

Filtering: Some messages are filtered or stopped altogether on their way up or down the organisational hierarchy. Filtering may involve deleting or delaying negative information or using less harsh words so that events sound more favourable (McShane and Glinow, 2003). Employees and supervisors usually filter information to create a good impression of themselves. Filtering, according to Robbins and Judge (2013), refers to a sender purposely manipulating information so that the receiver will see it more favourably. A manager who tells his boss what he feels the boss wants to hear is simply filtering information. An instance of filtering in an organisation occurs whenever there is status differences and desire to please the boss often leads employees to filtering information.

Language: Words and gestures carry no inherent meaning, so the sender must ensure the receiver understands these symbols and signs. In reality, lack of mutual understanding is a common reason messages are distorted. Even when we communicate in the same language, words mean different things to different people. Robbins and Judge (2013) says, age and context are the two biggest factors that influence the differences.

Information Overload: Every day, the average office worker sends and receives more than 150 messages through various media. In the U.S. one survey reports that 49% of managers in the U.S and several other countries feel they are fairly often or regularly incapable of processing this information glut. Robbins and Judge (2013) aver that individuals have a finite capacity for processing data. When the information we have to work with exceeds our processing capacity, the result is information overload.

Communication Strateg

Every member of an organisation desires a communication strategy which ensures that members of the workforce understand the mission and vision of that organisation. For communication strategies to be effective in the workplace, managers should endeavour to ensure that employees are always aware of changes and updates within the organisation. The essence of communication strategy is to help both management and employees in an organisation to communicate effectively to meet core organisational objectives. No organisation can communicate effectively unless it has clarity of purpose which can be expressed concisely.

However, any strategy used in communicating in any organisation should follow explicit steps to ensure that all employees feel they are involved in decisions that affect their day-to-day work. Organisations whose managers successfully engage employees in conversations and key decisions about their work simply inculcate the culture of inclusiveness thereby generating a positive result.

Communication strategy helps the organisation to build strong relationships with the employees and interdependent relationships is the hallmark of organisations. Local governments with functional communication strategies that are skillfully implemented win the hearts and support of their employees because an inclusive communication strategy boosts the self-worth of members of the organisation.

Griffin and Moorhead (2007) define communication as "the social process in which two or more parties exchange information and share meaning." They further maintain that, "just as the human nervous system responds to stimuli and coordinates responses by sending messages to the various parts of the body, communication coordinates the parts of an organisation." This is the role which the managements of the local government councils should play to coordinate all parties to work efficiently with a focus towards the attainment of organisational goals in the local government councils. Effective communication strategy is, therefore, one which plays a central role in high-performance, just as information, understanding and knowledge are the lifeblood of an organisational body. A thoughtful and comprehensive communication strategy is a vital factor of any successful change and improvement in organisations and the essence of it is designed to help both management and employees to communicate effectively to meet core organisational objectives. No organisation can communicate unless it has a clarity of purpose which can be expressed concisely. Explicit steps should be taken to ensure that all employees feel they are involved in decisions that affect their day-to-day work as the different strategies give direction and set the tone for the organisation to improve its effort.

Communication strategies have subsequently become recognised as a useful tool for any organisation to reach its employees by efficiently and adequately communicating ideas, innovations, policies and plans towards the attainment of set goals in the organisation. Also, a two-way communication flow between management and employees is crucial as organisations whose managers successfully engage employees in conversations and key decisions about their work simply inculcate the culture of inclusiveness, thereby generating positive results. Ajala (2001, p.22) notes that individuals are organisational people who live and die working in all manner of organisational settings. Local government councils are creations of the law, with an indefinite life span unless the law changes.

Raman and Singh (2006, p.34) assert that "given how difficult it is for people in organisations to communicate with each other in a clear, open, and accurate fashion, it is worthwhile to consider ways of improving communication in an organisation". Raman and Singh go ahead to mention several tried and tested strategies for improving communication in an organisation. According to them, organisations generally:

i. **Encourage open communication and feedback:** Any organisation that wants to succeed should encourage open communication and feedback which enables the communicator to know the impact of his or her message upon the receivers. Also, it encourages the workforce to express ideas and views as well as suggest improvements. Feedback is known to be a prime source of information.

ii. **Use simple language**: Every field has its own jargon or special language. If individuals in the organisation understand the language which the speaker is using to address the listeners, it is pertinent to go ahead and use it as this can help facilitate understanding. However, when addressing audiences whose members are unfamiliar with the specialised language, simple and straightforward language is bound to be effective. In either case, the rationale is the same: communicators should speak the language of their audience.

iii. **Avoid information overload**: The human processing system has a limit to which it can process information. Processing information which is more than one's brain can handle is bound to pose serious problems. Therefore, practice queuing which involves lining up incoming information so that it can be attended to in an orderly manner.

iv. **Walk the talk:** This is another strategy which means making sure that management are able to match deeds to words, not saying one thing and meaning or doing the other as this will hamper communication thereby paving way for disharmony in the system. For words to be heard as loud as actions, the two must match.

v. **Be a good listener:** A good work of comprehending messages is much better than only presenting the message. Communication is not just all about you doing the talking. A great deal of communication involves effective listening to other people's messages. When we speak of effective listening, we are not referring to the passive act of taking in information. Rather, effective listening involves being non-judgemental while taking in information from others, acknowledging speakers in ways that encourage them to continue speaking, and attempting to advance the speaker's ideas to the next step. The mistake people make is that when someone else is talking, they tend to be thinking

about what they will say when it is their turn to talk instead of listening to what is being said. That is when key information is missed.

vi. **Get to the point:** Just as speakers are probably extremely busy with their daily tasks, so are their colleagues. Sometimes a little more background information is needed; at other times it is not. Speakers must ensure that they are concise and clear in what their expectations are in their messaging and they will see a quick turn-around in the results.

By mastering these simple communication strategies, the superior can communicate effectively in the office. Also, listening fully and watching out for non-verbal cues, and not making assumptions will go a long way to show that the communicator is a reliable, respectable, and indispensable employee or member of an organisation.

Communication among individuals and groups is vital in all organisations. The ability to communicate in a professional manner can help business and personal life. That is why it is so important to learn to communicate effectively at work, and this should be tilted towards achieving the goals of the organisation. Organisational communication as defined by Goldhaber (1993, p.14) is "the process of creating and exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relationships to cope with environmental uncertainty." This implies that an organisation is not a static system but a dynamic, open system which creates and exchanges messages that impact on the members of the organisation.

Any communication strategy employed in the local government council may also depend on the organisational communication pattern that is embedded in that organisation. These messages must follow sets of pathways called networks to get to their destinations. Modern organisations do cultivate a process of multi-flow communication patterns, Effective communication strategies involve the multi-directional flow system, or conversations between members of the organisation and not a linear or unidirectional communication flow. This approach helps modern organisations pass messages across to employees in order to create a harmonious environment. The structure and nature of local government councils are founded in such networks.

Types of Communication strategies

Communication strategies can be verbal, nonverbal, or visual. Integrating all the strategies together will allow you to attain the most success. This allows a business to meet employee needs and increase workplace knowledge.

(a) **Verbal communication strategies** can be broken down into two categories of **written** and **oral** communication. Written communication strategies consist of avenues such as e-mails, texts, and chats. Examples that fall into the oral category are phone calls, video chats, and face-to-face conversation. Example of verbal communication strategy: imagine you are trying to ask your co-worker for help with a project, you send an e-mail: 'I NEED YOU TO FINISH THE PRESENTATION FOR THE MEETING **RIGHT NOW**! IT IS IMPORTANT AND CANNOT BE LATE'. In your mind, you just sent out a cry for help. The recipient of this e-mail, however thinks you are yelling at them. Why the

miscommunication? it is the capital and bold letters, as well as the demanding tone. When using written communication, it is difficult to express yourself and people feel like the use of capital and bold letters is equivalent to yelling. Instead, make use of proper capital and lowercase letters. Also, explain yourself well; ask for help by using more gracious words like 'I would appreciate your help'. It is more professional and will help ease tension that is unnecessary. Another scenario is if a boss just called you into his office, and said "Oh no! What did you do?" If this is the first thought every time your boss wants to speak with you face-to-face, then the boss may want to work on communicating with employees face-to-face on a regular basis. That way it will not be so scary when he wants to talk.

Written communication is one of the strategies that enhance positive outcomes among employees. In an organisation, many things are documented which act as reference points for employees to be conversant with their duties and work towards positive outcomes. Edego (2013, p. 5) says "it comes in the form of direct mails, memoranda, letters, formal contracts to help members of an organisation to have better understanding of organisational policies".

Oral communication strategy makes use of oral software method of diffusion of messages in an organisation (Ikpe, 1990). Communication is carried out in oral, face-to-face activities such as conversations, meetings, interviews, and discussions. It helps to boost harmonious environment as it reduces uncertainties and enhances mutual understanding by encouraging immediate feedback. Speech making is an indispensable art for any organisation as it provides a two-way communication between the communicators and the communicatees.

Mediated communication is another strategy that is crucial in an organisation. Communicating in any organisation enables employees to communicate using instant messenger applications because it saves time. Ikpe (1990, p. 252) says "it is a process of diffusing oral and written information in an organisation using electrical and mechanical power supply for dissemination". This strategy is encouraged in large complex organisations because face-to-face interaction between members may be impossible. Also, it takes two forms: written and oral. Telephones, videotape, radio phone, walkie-talkie are orally encoded, while on-line computer hook ups, teletype, telegrams, electronic mails are encoded by writing.

Edego (2013, p. 6) opines that "it is when communication takes place by ways of some technology, such as a telephone or a computer, the channel is known as mediated communication". In an organisation this strategy is encouraged because a great number of organisations have large numbers of people.

(b) **Nonverbal communication strategies** consist of mostly visual cues, such as body language, facial expressions, physical distance between communicators, or the tone of one's voice. Most of the time, these cues are typically not intended. However, it is important to realise the message you are sending. Otherwise, you may be saying one thing, yet the receiver is hearing another.

(c) **Visual communication strategies** can be seen through signs, webpages, and illustrations. These strategies are used in the workplace to draw attention to issues and provide documentation.

Communication strategies consist of four components communication goals, target audience, communication plan and communication channels. Therefore, for effective and credible functioning, organisations envisage what the outcome of their communication activities will be, based on their communication goals. Communication goals are structured to be measurable by the content advanced in the communication plan.

Organisations have their publics (audiences), these are usually the stakeholders in the organisation that could be participants and or beneficiaries of communication. Consequently, communication strategies crafters consider their interest, while communication plan consist in the outline of how communication strategy is to be achieved, that is the schedule and responsibilities. Communication channels are the purveyors of communication messages in organisations, and are broken down to letter, memo, direct mail, internet, intranet, radio, television, print, events and in store.

Organisational Harmony

Organisational harmony refers to a friendly and cooperative agreement on working relationships between employers and employees for their mutual benefit. It is simply a situation where employees and management cooperate willingly in pursuit of the organisation's aims and objectives. In an organisation where there is absence of disagreement and the presence of peace in the workplace, such an organisation can be said to have harmony. An atmosphere of mutual harmony is essential since no human effort thrives in an atmosphere of disorganisation. Also, it is important since corporate organisations operate with goals in mind. Some of such goals are security of life and property, service to humanity, maintenance of law and order, training of the requisite manpower for some strategic purposes, among others.

However, organisations can only achieve these goals under a harmonious state of affair which follows strict implementation of some organisational set standards (rules) which are not constituted but logically implemented to keep work and behaviour within the corporate empire under control (Ratnam, 2006). Organisational harmony does not occur in isolation, it is rather the outcome of the demonstration of a responsible corporate attitude by management and employees in an organisation. It is simply concerned with the relationship between management and employees with respect to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. Harmony in an organisation enhances growth, creates a peaceful working environment which is conducive for tolerance, dialogue and other alternative means of resolving conflict thus, creating a high level of employee satisfaction.

Communicating efficiently in an organisation helps to promote harmonious relations between management and employees and it is critical to productivity in the local government councils. An administrator can best achieve these objectives by adopting the inverted triangular system of communication which brings management closer to the workers, thus smoothening the relationship between them and easing the decision making process. Management should make themselves accessible to subordinates which should be done by maintaining effective communication to facilitate meaningful interaction and exchange of information or ideas

among members. Communication should be open, and administrative functions coordinated harmoniously.

Besides, the provision of a democratic atmosphere in the workplace which encourages frank expression of feelings and emotions by employees is vital if the quest for organisational harmony must be realised. Griffin and Morehead (2007) argue that, for organisational harmony to result, there must be organisational justice which is the perceptions of people in organisation regarding fairness. If the reverse is the case, where employees are only seen and not heard in key decision making processes nor expression of their displeasure over an organisational action attended to, then a cloud of uncertainty hovers over the organisation and its operations.

Theoretical Framework

The research made use of two theories namely: System Theory and the Interactional Theory.

System Theory

System Theory was proposed by a Biologist named Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1940. It is the theory that focuses on the way organisation interacts with the organisation as a whole. It relations between the parts connects them into a whole. The interdisciplinary study of systems is cohesive groups of interrelated, interdependent component that can be natural or human-made. Every system or organisation is influenced by its context, defined by its structure, function and role, and expressed through its relations with other systems. Synergy becomes the hallmark of system theory, therefore, if one component of a system changes, it may affect other components or the whole system. The theory views organisations as a system of mutually dependent variables, involving the individual and the personality structure in the organisation. There is congruence between the individual expectancies and those of the organisation. The theory advocates for a system approach where the organisation is seen as a unit with highly integrated and interdependent units. In this regard, the organisation recognises both its formal and informal structures and their communication systems. Thus, communication is the vehicle that ensures the efficient functioning of the system and its interdependent parts. It is also vital to any social system as it creates an environment of trust, harmony and proficiency.

Therefore, relating the strategic communication and how the strategy enhances or hinders organisational harmony situates itself properly in this context. Effective communication strategy provides task messages, maintenance messages, human relations messages, and innovative messages to local government and its sub-systems. These messages help to maintain harmony in local government administration.

Interactional Theory
Interactional Theory was formulated by Paul Watzlawick in 1967. It is one of the theories of relationship maintenance. Watzlawick (1978) formulated the theory of social interaction by looking at dysfunctional patterns within families, in order to gain insight about healthy communication. The theory is based on four axioms. First, that one cannot not communicate; secondly, that communication = content + relationship; thirdly, that the nature of relationship

depends on how both parties punctuate the communication sequence; and fourthly, that all communication is either symmetrical or complementary.

The first axiom proposes that even when individuals do not want to communicate, their silence is communication. In the second axiom, every communication has a content and relationship aspect to the extent that the latter clarifies the former and is meta communication (Griffin, 2000).

Griffin observes that what is said is the content; the relationship is how it is said. He states further that the relationship aspect has to do with how an individual sees himself and how he sees others. He asserts that relationship messages are always the most important element in communication. The third axiom suggests that the way the message is punctuated has a way of affecting the receiver's understanding of the message. In Watzlawick's own view, "what is typical about the sequence and makes it a problem of punctuation is that the individual concerned conceived of himself only as reacting to, but not as provoking these attitudes" (Griffin 2000). The fourth axiom according to Watzlawick's symmetrical interchange is based on equal power; complimentary communication is based on differences in power. He makes an attempt to label one type as good and the other is as bad. A healthy relationship has both kinds of communication. Griffin adds that symmetrical or complimentary communication requires a sequence of at least two messages in a statement from one person, and a response from the other.

Although this theory was designed for relationship maintenance in family relationship, it has application in communication strategies; a plan on how to improve communication in work place as he asserts that relationship messages are always the most important element in communication particularly in the communication between managers and their subordinate or employees.

Going by the first axiom, a leader who chooses not to communicate has created a gap between himself and the subordinate, thereby affecting harmony in the organisation. By the second axiom, effective management communication is important to ensure effective coordination of activities since management must communicate to achieve organisational goals. The communication must be such that the employees understand, otherwise disharmony sets in. On the third axiom, if the wrong language and attitude are used to disseminate information, it will be of no use but will rather create disillusionment.

As a result, all communication must be constructed with the receiver in mind. The fourth axiom posits that, for management to engender organisational harmony, communication must be effectively employed.

These theories are related to the current study because they help to highlight the need to reduce uncertainty in communication situations and the value of interaction with employees for harmony to prevail in the local government councils.

REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Akarika et al (2017) assessed the role of communication flow in creating industrial harmony in Tertiary Institutions in Akwa Ibom State. It sought to bring to the limelight, communication flow patterns prevalent in tertiary institutions, assess the extent to which communication policy and organisational structure affect the communication flow to reveal the influence of leadership style on communication flow in the institutions. It also sought to know the extent to which communication flow patterns help to guarantee institutional harmony.

The research design used was survey. Purposive and systematic sampling techniques were adopted to have 10% respondents systematically drawn from the population of each tertiary institution. Questionnaire and scheduled interviews were used as the research instruments.

The findings of the study show that the prevalent communication flow patterns in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State are formal and informal. The formal flow is characterised by vertical (downward and upward) together with horizontal communication. The patterns are in accordance with the formal structure. The informal pattern used is the grapevine. Vertical downward communication flow pattern dominates which makes the employees dissatisfied. Communication policy and organisational structure have affected the communication flow patterns in each institution positively in principle. However, the union leaders in the three institutions remarked that, in practice, communication policy is often in favour of management in cases like conflict situations, strikes and in delicate and strategic decisions. Leadership style influences communication flow patterns effectively in those institutions. The index of relational influences is 55% -60%.

The study confirmed that there is a correlation between effective communication flow and institutional harmony. The study is similar to the present study in the sense that (a) it investigated communication flow patterns and how these lead to harmony in the work place (tertiary institutions). (b) the data collection techniques (interview and questionnaire) used in the study were the data collection techniques for this study, the present study concentrates on communication strategies and how it engenders organisational harmony in local government councils. Some gaps obviously occur in the empirical research of the reviewed studies on their relationship with Communication strategies and Organisational Harmony in select Local government councils in Akwa Ibom State.

This could be seen in the measuring instrument used by Akarika (2012) in his study; that is Interview Schedule and Questionnaire leaving out focus group discussion, whereas this could have avail the researcher firsthand information for the study. Again, unlike Mojaye (2015), Akarika et al (2017) did not use ANOVA in testing hypothesis but Pearson Product Correlaion Coefficient (PPMC), which the present research has helped using a testing method that has the properties of both ANOVA and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Mojaye (2015) established the link between communication and good industrial relations and industrial peace in the civil service of Delta State of Nigeria. The study found that the

communication patterns that were prevalent in Delta State Civil Service are; downward (management to workers), upward (workers to management), and horizontal (inter-departmental). The researcher also identified Communication as one of the factors that aided good industrial relations. In order to achieve its primary objective, the study adopted the survey design with the questionnaire as its data gathering instrument. A total of 299 respondents correctly gave answers to the questions asked and returned same. Descriptive Statistics and statistical inferences were used. In analysing the research data, simple percentages and frequency tables were used to summarise and understand the data. To test the hypothesis to establish relationship, ANOVA was used in testing the first hypothesis and T-test was used in testing the second hypothesis at 95% confidence level.

The main finding of this study was that respondents believed that there was a cordial relationship between the Delta State Government and civil servants. Effective communication was also discovered to be the critical factor that led to industrial harmony in the Delta State Civil Service. Although the findings of this study revealed that effective communication between the state government and workers alongside the unions was a critical factor for industrial peace in Delta State Civil Service, test of hypothesis one of the study, showed that there is no significance relationship between effective communication and good industrial relations.

According to the study, effective communication may be responsible for industrial peace, but this does not necessarily engender good industrial relations. This means that the absence of conflict is not a good measure of good industrial relations although it reflects industrial peace. The study issued a note of caution that not all absence of conflicts shows that peace is genuine, but could be superficial and cosmetic. It concluded that, for industrial harmony to prevail in any organisation, there should be effective communication which the study posits could be achieved by encouraging the free flow of communication in the organisation.

Although the study was not on local governments, it is relevant because the populations studied share similarities since there are no clear differences between workers under the state government and local government in terms of welfare, entry qualification and conditions of service. The study was on the influence of communication on industrial harmony, while the present study focused on communication strategies and organisational harmony. Both studies aimed at establishing contribution of communication to harmony in the workplace.

Iwok (2018) The study sought to determine whether leadership communication in the Universities of Calabar and Uyo leads to organisational harmony in both universities. The study looked at the use of leadership communication skills of listening, speaking and writing. It therefore has relevance to this study. The study used five objectives and research questions as a guide. The mixed method of research approach involving survey, content analysis and focus group was adopted for the study.

Proportionate sampling and systematic stratified sampling method were used, while the sample used was 384 comprising of management, students and workers was used. In the aspect of methodology and composition it is relevant to this study. Communication in organisation works

through patterns; upward, downward and horizontal, the previous study explored the flow through pattern which my study also employed.

The study found out that there is a relationship between leadership communication and organisational harmony in the universities. It is related to this work as looks at how communication strategies lead to organisational harmony. It also found out that communication flow was predominantly downward. Though the main focus was not on communication strategy, the previous study looked into the availability of communication policy and its implementation in the two universities which is also relevant to this work.

Some gaps obviously occur in the empirical research of the reviewed studies on their relationship with communication strategies and organisational harmony in select local government councils in Akwa Ibom State. This could be seen in the measuring instrument used by Akarika (2012) in his study; that is interview schedule and questionnaire leaving out focus group discussion, whereas this could have availed the researcher firsthand information for the study. Again, unlike Mojaye (2015), Akarika did not use ANOVA in testing hypothesis but Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), which the present research has helped using a testing method that has the properties of both ANOVA and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Mojaye (2015) did not consider the diagonal pattern of information flow which over the years have proved exceedingly useful as a pattern for organisational communication and harmony. Iwok (2018) focused on leadership communication and organisational harmony, specifically, on the leadership skills and modes of communication adopted by the leaders. The study established a relationship between skills and modes leading to harmony but did not look at the strategies used in communicating messages across the organisation. It made it appear in his work, as though strategies are less important in internal communication. Iwok (2018), investigated policies made in an organisation and how such policies are implemented, but left out the strategies adopted for dissemination and implementation.

The gaps create opportunity for more scholarship in this study, Communication Strategies and Organisational Harmony.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study of this nature requires the survey method for gathering data. Babbie (2010, p. 254) notes that "survey research is probably the best method available to the social science researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly". The survey method is also useful in opinion studies. The research was done using both quantitative and qualitative methods, for according to Creswel (2012), the use of both methods provides a better understanding of the research problem and question(s) than either method by itself, adding that when one research method is not enough to address the research problem, more data are needed to extend, elaborate on or explain the first data-base

(p.535). Two research instruments were used, namely: the questionnaire and personal interview.

The questionnaire was administered on employees while personal interview was administered on the principal officers of the council: The Chairmen, Head of Service (HOS), Secretaries, Treasurers and Directors who are the heads of departments in the local government councils that formed the study area. The population of staff in Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene local government councils in Akwa Ibom State is 1,374.

A sample size of 286 was drawn for the study using the Taro Yamane formula.

Equation 3.1

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e2)}$$ Equation 3.1

Where n= Sample size

N = Population

1 = Constant

E = error of sampling

The multistage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. This is because the sampling technique needed different procedures at different stages of the sample selection. At the first stage, three Local Government councils were purposively selected. There were Eket, Ikot Ekpene, Uyo being the Headquarters for Akwa Ibom North South, North West, North East Senatorial Districts of the State. These three Local Government Councils had a combined population of 1,374 staff. Based on this population, the proportionate sampling method was applied. This was to allocate sample in accordance with the population of each of the councils available in the sample size of 286. To determine the actual number of respondents to pick from each department (cluster), the researcher used proportionate stratified sampling procedure. The researcher divided the number of staff per department by the number of staff in the council, and then multiplied it by the sample per local government. Accidental or convenience approach was used by the researcher, assisted by trained research assistants to administer copies of the questionnaire to the actual respondents in their various departments.

Table 2: Proportionate sample allocation of each Local Government Council

Local Government Councils	Population Per Local Government Council	Proportionate Calculation Per Local Government Council	Sample Per Local Government
Uyo	457	457x 286 ÷ 1,374	95
Eket	455	455 x 286 ÷ 1,374	95
Ikot Ekpene	462	462 x 286 ÷ 1,374	96
Total	**1,374**		**286**

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 3: Showing number of staff in each department in the Local Government Areas

S/N	Department	Population Uyo	Eket	Ikot Ekpene
1	Administration and General Duties	160	154	157
2	Finance and Supplies	70	83	85
3	Budget planning and Research	25	20	17
4	Agriculture	40	14	11
5	Health	77	94	97
6	Works	40	38	35
7	Education	45	52	60
	Total	**457**	**455**	**462**

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 4: Proportionate stratified sample of employees per department in each   Local Government Council

Population Per Local Government Council	Sample per Local Government Council	DEPARTMENTS						
		Admin.	Finance and supplies	Budget	Agric.	Health	Works	Education
(Uyo) 457	95	160	70	25	40	77	40	45
		33	15	6	8	16	8	9
(Eket) 455	95	154	83	20	14	94	38	52
		32	17	4	3	20	8	11
(Ik.Ekp.) 462	96	157	85	17	11	97	35	60
		33	18	4	2	20	7	12

Source: Field survey, 2019

Data obtained were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using frequency tables and simple percentages. Data from the interview schedule were analysed qualitatively using explanation building based on the research questions. The hypotheses for the study were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.005 level of significance+1degree of freedom. The formula for Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) is given in Equation 3.2

$$r = \frac{N\sum XY - \sum X\sum Y}{\sqrt{N\sum(X^2 - (\sum X)^2}\sqrt{(N\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2}}$$ Equation 3.2

Where x and y = original scores

N= number of pairs of scores

= summation of symbol

Xy= sum of the products of each x and y

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data Presentation and Analysis

The study was aimed at finding out how communication strategies relate to organisational harmony in Local Government Councils in Akwa Ibom State. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis were used. Below is the analysis based on the research questions, results of hypothesis testing as well as the discussion of the findings. Out of 286 copies of the questionnaire that were served on respondents, 278 were returned, yielding a return rate of 97%. The questionnaire addressed issues raised in the research objectives which also helped in generating data for hypothesis testing.

Table 5: **Strategies of communication utilised in Local Government Councils**

	Memo	%	Letter	%	Telephone	%	Meeting	%	Email	%	S/workshop	%	Gossip/Rumour	%	Total	%
Uyo	19	21	24	26	10	10	31	34	-	-	1	1	7	8	92	100
Eket	19	20	38	41	6	6	20	22	-	-	7	8	3	3	93	100
Ikot Ekpen	30	32	26	27	8	9	24	26	-	-	4	4	2	2	94	100
Total	68	73%	88	94%	24	25%	75	82%			12	13	12	13	279	300

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 5 shows that virtually all the strategies with the notable exception of email are used in all the local governments. Meetings and letters recorded 31 (34%) and 24 (26%) per cent in Uyo, while in Eket letter polled 38 (41%) and meetings recorded 20 (22%) respectively. In Ikot Ekpene, letters 26 (27%) and meeting recorded 24 (26%) For utilization of memo Uyo, Eket, Ikot Ekpene recorded 19 (21%), 19 (20%), 30 (32%) respectively.

Table 6: The Strategies Preferred in Order of Preference

	Memo	%	Letter	%	Telephone	%	Meeting	%	Email	%	S/workshop	%	Gossip/Rumour	%	Total	%
Uyo	41	45	17	19	2	2	28	31	-	-	2	2	1	1	91	100
Eket	15	16	20	22	18	19	40	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	93	100
Ikot Ekpen	30	32	25	27	4	4	22	23	-	-	13	14			94	100
Total	**86**	**93**	**62**	**68**	**24**	**25**	**90**	**97**			**15**	**16**	**1**	**1**	**278**	**300**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 6 indicates, in order of preference, that 41 (45%) of respondents in Uyo preferred memos followed by meetings 28 (31%) and 17 (19%) for letters. Whereas 40 respondents (43%) in Eket preferred meetings, 20 (22%) opted for letters, while 18 (19%) preferred telephone. In Ikot Ekpene 30 (32%) of respondents preferred memos, 25 (27%) preferred letters while 22 (23%) opted for meetings. Summary of the table shows that across the three local government areas, 97% preferred meetings, followed closely by memos and letters with 93% and 68% respectively.

Table 7: Reasons for the Preferred Options in 2 Above

	Memo	%	Letter	%	Telephone	%	Meeting	%	Email	%	S/workshop	%	Gossip/ Rumour	%	Total	%
Uyo	39	43	17	19	2	2	30	33	-	-	2	2	1	1	91	100
Eket	15	16	20	22	18	19	40	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	93	100
Ikot Ekp.	30	32	25	27	4	4	22	23	-	-	13	14	-	-	94	100
Total	**84**	**91**	**62**	**68**	**24**	**25**	**92**	**99**			**15**	**16**	**1**	**1**	**278**	**300**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table **7** shows that 39 (43%) of respondents in Uyo said that their reason for preferring memo is because it is easily understood, while 30 (33%) per cent said their reason for preferring meeting is because it allows for face to face interaction. In Eket 40 (43%) of the respondents said they chose meeting because it creates room for active participation and interactivity. In Ikot Ekpene 30 (32%) of respondents reported that their reason for their preference of meetings is the opportunity it offers for interaction, followed closely by letters with 25 (27%) and reason advanced is that letters are easily comprehended. Across the three Local Government Areas, 99% of the respondents chose meetings because of the offer of interactivity, while 91% chose memos because they were written by use of special jargons in ways that aid understanding.

Table 8: Language used in memos by management promotes organisational harmony

	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	53	58	10	11	28	31	91	100
Eket	67	72	17	18	9	10	93	100
Ikot Ekpene	75	80	5	5	14	15	94	100
Total	**195**	**70**	**32**	**11.4**	**51**	**18.6**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 8 indicates that respondents in Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene representing 53 (58%), 67 (72%) and 75 (80%) respectively agreed that language used in memos promotes organisation harmony.

Table 9:   Language used in letters promotes organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	70	77	13	14	8	9	91	100
Eket	63	68	13	14	17	18	93	100
Ikot Ekpene	78	83	7	7	9	10	94	100
Total	**211**	**76**	**33**	**11.7**	**34**	**12.3**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 9 shows that respondents in Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene representing 70 (77%), 63 (68%) and 78 (83%) respectively report language used in letters engender organisational harmony in the local governments.

Table 10: Language used in telephone conversations by management promotes organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	38	42	49	54	4	4	91	100
Eket	70	75	10	11	13	14	93	100
Ikot Ekpene	70	75	20	21	4	4	94	100
Total	**178**	**64**	**79**	**28.7**	**21**	**7.3**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 10 shows that 49 (54%) respondents in Uyo posited that the language used on telephone conversations does not engender organisational harmony, whereas 70 (75%) in Eket and 70 (75%) respondents in Ikot Ekpene respectively said that the language used in telephone conversations with the subordinates promotes organisational harmony.

Table 11: The way meetings are conducted promotes organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	75	82	8	9	8	9	91	100
Eket	81	87	4	4	8	9	93	100
Ikot Ekpene	80	85	5	5	9	10	94	100
Total	**236**	**84.6**	**17**	**6.1**	**25**	**9.3**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 11 indicates that across the local government councils, the way meetings are conducted promotes organisational harmony. A breakdown shows Uyo 75 (82%), Eket 81 (87%) and

Ikot Ekpene 80 (85%) respondents respectively opined that the way meetings are conducted led to organisational harmony in the councils.

Table 12: Tone of telephone conversations promotes organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	21	23	56	62	14	15	91	100
Eket	34	37	56	60	3	3	93	100
Ikot Ekpene	29	31	30	32	35	37	24	100
Total	**84**	**30.3**	**142**	**51.3**	**52**	**18.4**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 12 shows that in Uyo 56 respondents, representing 62%, said the tone of telephone conversations does not promote organisational harmony, followed by Eket with same result, while in Ikot Ekpene 35 respondents representing 37% said they were not sure whether it does.

Table 13:   Rumour promotes organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	11	12	71	78	9	10	91	100
Eket	18	19	48	52	27	29	93	100
Ikot Ekpene	15	16	60	64	19	20	94	100
Total	**44**	**15.7**	**179**	**64.7**	**55**	**19.6**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 13 indicates that 71 (78%) in Uyo, 48 (52%) in Eket, and 60 (64%) Ikot Ekpene posited that the rumour mill does not promote harmony in the Local Government areas.

Table 14: Two-way flow of information promotes organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	55	60	15	16	21	23	91	100
Eket	64	69	8	9	21	23	93	100
Ikot Ekpene	58	62	4	4	32	34	94	100
Total	**177**	**63.6**	**27**	**9.8**	**74**	**26.6**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Data on table 14 was to establish whether two-way flow of information from superior to subordinate and vice versa promotes organisational harmony. The data show that 55 (60%) respondents in Uyo affirmed that it does, similarly, 64 (69%) respondents in Eket, and 58 (62%) in Ikot Ekpene respectively affirmed that two-way communication flow promotes organisational harmony.

Table 15: Sporting activities in Local Government Councils promote organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	33	36	11	12	47	52	91	100
Eket	76	82	7	8	10	11	93	100
Ikot Ekpen	18	19	28	30	48	51	94	100
Total	**127**	**45.4**	**46**	**16.6**	**105**	**38**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Data from Table 15 indicates that, in Uyo, 47 respondents (52%) said they were not sure whether sporting activities promote organisational harmony; in Eket 76 respondents (82%) affirmed that sporting activities does, while Ikot Ekpene and Uyo said they were not sure.

Table 16: Religious activities in Local Government Councils lead to organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	82	90	3	3	6	7	91	100
Eket	88	95	1	1	4	4	93	100
Ikot Ekpen	79	84	5	5	10	11	94	100
Total	**249**	**89.6**	**9**	**3.1**	**20**	**7.3**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Data on table 16 was to find out if religious activities in these Local Governments councils promote organisational harmony. It was discovered that 82 respondents (90%) in Uyo, 88 (95%) of respondents in Eket, and 79 (84%) in Ikot Ekpene respectively affirmed that religious activities promote organisational harmony.

Table 17: Payment of salary and wages on time promotes organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	80	88	10	11	1	1	91	100
Eket	58	62	5	6	30	32	93	100
Ikot Ekpen	60	64	13	14	21	22	94	100
Total	**198**	**71.3**	**28**	**10.4**	**52**	**18.3**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Data on table 17 show that, in Uyo, 80 (88%), Eket 58 (62%), and Ikot Ekpene 60 (64%) said that payment of salary and wages on time promotes organisational harmony.

Table 18: Workshops and seminars promote organisational harmony

	YES	Percentage	No	Percentage	Not sure	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyo	40	44	24	26	27	30	91	100
Eket	7	8	72	77	14	15	93	100
Ikot Ekpen	63	67	20	21	11	12	94	100
Total	**110**	**39.6**	**116**	**41.4**	**52**	**19**	**278**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2019

Table 18 indicates that, in Uyo, 40 (44%) and Ikot Ekpene 63 (67%) said seminars and workshops promote organisational harmony, while in Eket 72 (77%) respondents said it does not.

Presentation of Data from Interviews

The interviews were intended to:

i. find out the communication strategies employed by the leadership of the Local Government Councils in Akwa Ibom State;
ii. find out the rationale for the use of such communication strategies;
iii. determine the outcome of communication strategies used by leadership of the Local Government Councils in the study area;
iv. determine the communication strategies preferred by majority stakeholders in the Local Government Councils studied;
v. find out other factors that engender organisational harmony in the councils.

In the three local government councils that formed the study area, principal officers were interviewed. In Ikot Ekpene Local Council, the officers interviewed were; Head of Service (HOS), Director of Budget Planning and Research, Director of Administration, Director of Works and Leader of the House who stood in for the Executive Chairman. In Eket Local Government Council, the HOS, Director of Administration and Secretary were interviewed. In Uyo, the Director of Administration was interviewed alongside the HOS, the Secretary as a referral by the Executive Chairman and the Director of Finance.

According to all the interviewees, the general communication strategies employed by the leadership in Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene Local Government Councils that were studied include; meetings, memos and letters. In addition, all the interviewees said that the reason why the above communication strategies are most preferred in the councils was because they allowed for sharing of ideas, policies, changes, updates and experiences based on the task to be performed and for prompt action. The Head of Service across the local government councils added that the flow of messages from the Local Government Service Commission to the councils is done through circulars. The circular is a letter that conveys directives, messages and instructions from the local government commission to the Local Government Councils. The researcher was told that circular is culturally the vocabulary used in order to differentiate it from memos and other letters.

The Director of Administration in Eket Local Government Council noted that the language used in memos and letters to the subordinates is usually simple, concise and straightforward for ease of understanding. The Director of Works, Dir. of Administration in Ikot Ekpene, and the Secretary in Uyo Local Government Council also added that there are special jargons (language) in memos and letters which is best understood by employees across the three local government councils. The jargons include; K.I.V (Keep in view), B.U (Bring Up), F.N.A (for necessary action), * * *(Very Important). Also, the HOS in the councils said employees' reaction in response to such messages in the aspect of performing their different duties is quite accommodating, yielding positive results towards the attainment of set goals and objectives.

Concerning the preferred communication strategies in the local government councils, the interviewees said they prefer internal memos and meetings. Internal memo is preferred for the purpose of dissemination of simple and concise information alongside communicating ideas, policies and task-oriented messages. Meeting is also preferred by them because it gives employees a chance to participate in issues raised, air their views on matters bothering them and most especially for its prompt feedback.

In Eket Local Government Council, the communication flow is said to be multi-directional, leading to organisational harmony. Circulars which are sent in by the Local Government Service Comission are directed to the HOS, who in-turn comments on the circular and generates a memo and forwards same to the appropriate Head of Departments (Directors) for implementation. Lack of free flow of communication in Ikot Ekpene on matters of finance was discovered.

The leaders (interviewees) across the councils agreed that the subordinates are aware of the communication plans and strategies as these help to boost their reactions and the performance of their duties are positive. Accordingly, the communication problems that have over the years caused disharmony in the system generally include: lack of advance information on up-coming trainings, delay in dissemination of crucial information on matters like promotions and salary, lack of clearly defined hierarchy (expectations not clear), one-way communication, hoarding of sensitive information especially that bordering on finance and motivation.

However, the Secretary to the Council in Uyo Local Government Council said the factors that have contributed to harmony in the council across board are: religious activities whereby all staff in the council do unite by gathering for prayers (solemn assembly) every Monday and such are made compulsory. By so doing, he added, a sense of belonging is created, leading to a higher self-esteem among staff. Also, during face-to-face meeting on matters that concern the vision of the councils generally, staff are allowed to partake in decisions and changes are also well communicated to them. Another such factor that has contributed to harmony in the system is giving of awards to staff that merit such. Employees that are punctual and diligent to their duty and well dressed staff members are given such awards during the end of year party as a motivation. Sporting activities, they said, are not left out as these do involve staff in a number of competitions thus building team spirit, leading ultimately to harmony.

Test of Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between communication strategies and organisational harmony in local government councils studied.

Table 19: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-Efficient Analysis of the relationship test between communication strategies and organisational harmony

	Σx Σy	Σx^2 Σy^2	Σxy	Rcal	df	rcrit	Decision
Communication strategies	1056	4062					
			3823	0.741	284	0.163	Reject H_O
Organisational harmony	994	3716					

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 19 gives the summary of the significant relationship test between communication strategies and organisational harmony in Local Government councils studied. The result of the analysis shows an r-value of 0.74. This indicates that communication strategies had a very high positive relationship with organisational harmony. The critical r value is 0.163 at 284 degree of freedom and .05 alpha level. The calculated r-value is 0.741. Since the rcal is greater than the rcrit, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate is accepted. Thus, there is a significant relationship between communication strategies and organisational harmony in local government councils studied.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings in relation to research questions, theoretical framework as regards the focus of the study, from data gathered from the questionnaire presented on Tables 5-18; explanation building for interview and the hypothesis formulated for this study.

Research Question One: What are the communication strategies employed by the leadership of local government councils in Akwa Ibom State?
Organisations, institutions and communities depend strongly on smooth internal flow of communication to function optimally. As noted by Goldhabber (1993), organisational communication is the process of creating and exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relations to cope with uncertainty. This means that since organisations are seen as living systems, the flow of messages (communication) across the broad spectrum of the organisation is important for the survival of the organisation. However, organisations differ in structure, size, culture, staffing, vision and mission. Instructively, organisations are bound to adopt different communication strategies.

For effectiveness and the drive for participation of all organisational members in the activities of the organisation, the leadership of some organisations plan their communication. This is being proactive and not waiting to react to issues as they occur. Creating and sustaining communication strategies that are adaptable, practicable and easily understood by employees is the responsibility of the leadership.

To answer research question one, Table 5 shows that the local governments utilised all the strategies with the exception of email. Comparatively, Uyo used more of meetings (34%) to get across to its employees, while Eket adopted more of letters (41%), whereas Ikot Ekpene used 32% of memo. It could be observed that although the same legal instruments established the councils, the operations of the councils are facilitated by different persons from diverse backgrounds which gave rise to the application of different strategies based on who is saddled with the responsibility of leadership.

Another manifestation of note in the three local government areas as far as utilisation of communication strategies is concerned, was that the rumour mill was of little significance. The researcher is of the view that the wide spread use of meetings allows for employee participation, thereby reducing gossips and rumours to the barest minimum. According to Harsen (2004), 'if managers want to improve safe behaviour, they must be guided by three core truths of effective communication of which one is 'communication must be face-to-face to allow for feedback, expression and dialogue. Meetings must have accounted for the minimal occurrence of rumour (8%, 3% and 2%) respectively in the three local councils. There was congruence of opinion as the principal officers interviewed agreed to the use of memo, meeting and letter to disseminate information to the employees. The researcher was told in Eket that mails coming from the Local Government Service Commission to all the councils are culturally referred to as "circular." This, he said, was to differentiate them from internally generated memos and letters. To answer the research question, the study revealed that the leadership of the local governments under study do employ the following communication strategies: memos, letters, meetings, telephone, seminars and workshops to communicate with their employees.

Research Questions Two: What is the rationale for the use of communication strategies currently in place in the local government councils studied?

Every organisation has set goals and objectives to achieve. Based on this they create communication strategies not only to inform their employees about the goals and objectives, but to intimate them with the method of engagements towards the realisation of the goals and objectives. Given the different backgrounds of administrators of local government councils, there are obvious needs to evolve strategies based on personal beliefs, composition of the councils, educational background of the employees and available resources.

From the principal officers interviewed across the local government councils studied, the rational for the use of communication strategies currently in place was because they allowed for easy sharing of ideas and transmission of information. This assertion was corroborated by respondents who expressed their preference for these strategies because they are familiar with them in addition to the simple language and tone used in passing information.

According to Soola (2000), 'communicating in organisations is to seek and sustain other corporation, as well as to coordinate activities. Indeed, this is about the single most critical need for the purpose of communication.' (p.14). To achieve this, organisations adopt the right strategies.

Table 6 shows that 41 (45%) of respondents in Uyo preferred memos, followed by 28 (31%) respondents who preferred meetings, and 17 (19%) chose letters. The reason for such preference by employees in Uyo indicated by 39 (43%) respondents shown on Table 4.4 was because memos were written by using special jargons, simple languages and style that aid easy understanding. For meetings, 30 (33%) respondents said the reason for their preference was the face-to-face interaction that meetings offer.

Comparatively, 40 (43%) of Eket respondents preferred meetings as against Uyo's memos, followed by letters with 20 (22%) respondents and telephone 18 (19%) respondents. It could be seen here that individual differences have played out here. In spite of Eket also being a local government, the order of their preferred strategies differ.

However, Table 7 shows the reason for the preferences. In Eket 40 (43%) respondents preferred meetings because of the offer of active participation and joint decision making, while 20 (22%) preferred letters because of ease of understanding. An exceptional occurrence is the third preference of telephone by 18 (19%) respondents in Eket; and their reason was that the telephone aids interactivity with their immediate bosses. It must be noted here that it is only Eket respondents that opted for the telephone as the third preferred strategy of communication.

In Ikot Ekpene, 30 (32%) respondents preferred memos; 22 (23%) respondents preferred meetings while 25 (27%) preferred letters. Their reasons for such preferences were because of offering ease of understanding and opportunity for employee participation. To buttress the respondents' claims, the principal officers across the local government councils were unanimous in their responses to the interview question. They reported that their choice of these strategies were informed by their resolve to make the language of memos and letters simple enough for employee understanding; while meetings were seen an avenue to reach out, mingle and interact with employees for first-hand information and feedback.

This agrees with Raman's and Singh's (2006) assertion that management should regularly have interface with employees to inform them of developments in the organisation. The Modern Organisation Theory emphasises the transactional nature of communication and the importance of feedback. Eisenberg and Goodal (2001) similarly highlight the importance of feedback and the observance of non-verbal feedback in interactions in organisations, urging management to endeavour to apply channels and strategies that will ensure achievement of set goals and objectives.

Research Question Three: Does the outcome of communication strategies used by the leadership of the local councils studied engender harmony?

Language was the substance used in the various communication strategies in determining the outcome of communication and interaction. Edego (2013) language is 'any system employed in giving, transmitting, receiving, sharing, exchanging or hiding information.'(p. 88). Therefore, not only is communication important in organisations, the language deployed is critical to the success of such communication activity.

According to Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth and Harter (2003, p. 88) "language is a collection of symbols or letters with arbitrary meanings that are governed by rules and used to

communicate." This means, to share meaning and achieve envisioned outcome, proper and adequate language is vital in organisations.

Effective communication strategy can do much more than managing and distributing information. It fosters a sense of belonging between employers and employees, cultivates relationship, and trust for any team working towards collective goals: this can only be achieved if organisations are able to fully communicate their goals and objectives to their employees. Therefore, the media of communication, language and content are crucial to the outcome of communication.

To answer this research question, Table 4.5 indicates that the language used in memos in Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene Local Government Councils, 53 (58%), 67 (72%) and 75 (80%) respectively promotes organisational harmony in the councils. Similarly, Table 4.6 shows that the language used in letters in Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene with these results 70 (77%), 63 (68%) and 78 (83%) respectively leads to organisational harmony.

However, in Table 10; (54%) respondents in Uyo said that language used in telephone conversation by their bosses does not promote organisational harmony compared to Eket where 70 (75%) and Ikot Ekpene 70 (75%) respondents respectively affirmed that the language used in telephone conversations promotes organisational harmony. This corresponds with Hamman (2004) who opines that the right communication strategy incites harmonious environment for employer and employee relationship.

Table 11 indicates a uniform acceptance by respondents in all the local government councils that the way meetings are conducted which allows inclusiveness and participation promotes organisational harmony. The figures are Uyo 75 (82%), Eket 81 (87%) and Ikot Ekpene 80 (85%) respondents respectively. Finding corroborates Edego (2013, p. 5) assertion that the use of strategy in communication helps members of an organisation to have better understanding of organisational life and this engenders harmony.

Axiom 3 of the interactional theory posits that, if the wrong language and attitude are used in the dissemination of information, it will be of no use but will rather create disillusionment. That was the reason that telephone was less preferred.

Table 4.9 shows that the tone of telephone conversation according to 71 (78%) respondents in Uyo, 48 (52%) in Eket and 60 (64%) in Ikot Ekpene does not promote organisational harmony. On further enquiry by the researcher, the respondents said that their bosses are usually harsh on phone or use the telephone to scold. Overall, findings agree with the hypothesis of this that there is a relationship between communication strategies and organisational harmony in the local government councils studied.

Research Questions Four: What communication strategies do the majority of the stakeholders in the local government councils studied prefer?

Abugre (2010) says 'rather than wait for employees to access the unofficial sources, leadership should exploit avenues such as meetings, emails, telephones to quickly reach and discuss with

employees.' They reiterated that 'the free flow of information within the organisation allows managers to stop rumours and communicate their messages to employees.' Findings correspond with Abugre's position as the leadership of the local governments studied deployed these strategies with meetings being the most preferred.

Table 6 indicates that the majority of the respondents across the three councils studied, that is 20 (97%) prefer meeting as a strategy, followed by memo with 86 (93%) respondents and lastly letter with 62 (68%) respondents.

The principal officers in their separate interviews affirmed that they preferred memo and meeting. They said with memo, they can give simple instructions and directives in a written form, it can be stored, referred to and allowed for acknowledgement of receipt. The director of works in Ikot Ekpene and the secretary of Uyo Local Government Councils said that with memos and letters "jargons" or 'vocabularies' that are known to the local government system are used and are widely understood by the subordinates.

The principal officers said that the subordinates felt carried along when meetings were convened, therefore they adopted meeting as their major strategy. This agrees with Adenyinka, cited in Soola (2000) who documents that groups operate best when there is mutual trust and open communication among group members. (p. 35).

Research Questions Five: Find out other factors that engender organisational harmony in the local government councils studied

No doubt, sporting activities provide a sense of belonging, strengthen organisational pride and bind organisational members together through shared experiences. The researcher tried to establish if sporting activities in the local government studied contributed to organisation harmony.

Data from Table 15 show that in Uyo 41 (52%), Ikot Ekpene 48 (51%) respondents said they were not sure if sporting activities occasionally held in the council contributed to harmony in the councils, as against Eket where 76 (82%) respondents affirmed that sporting activities engender harmony in the council.

Sporting activities should, and in many cases are a vehicle for inclusion, drawing together people from different backgrounds, religions and cultures, but comparatively findings indicate that out of the three local government areas studied, only Eket expressed in clear terms that sports foster organisational harmony. In spite of the outcome, the position of Eket corroborates the postulation of the interactional theory axiom two, that there was need for managers to effectively manage their communication activities, otherwise intended outcomes may be illusive. Also, findings differ from the study by Iwok (2018), "Leadership Communication and Organisational Harmony: Comparative study of the University of Calabar and University of Uyo. In that study, the respondents all agreed that sporting activities led to organisational harmony". However, the principal officers interviewed in the local governments said sports have helped in bonding them together.

With different levels of percentage outcomes, there was concordance across the three local government councils that religious activities engender organisational harmony. The researcher found out that monthly, the local governments conducted interdenominational services; also some units and departments customarily held morning devotions before commencement of the day's business. This agrees with similar outcomes received from the study by Iwok reviewed in this work.

The HOS for Ikot Ekpene, Mr. Kirian Thompson asserted that religions activities, (solemn assemblies and prayer sessions) are deliberately put in place by the leadership of the Local Government Area to foster unity, peace, love and understanding by all stakeholders of the Local Government Area. The Directors of Information in Uyo and Eket were of the same opinion. They confirmed that the strategy has been of tremendous advantage to the administrators because workers are usually mindful of their faith in their decisions and actions. The transactional nature of the Modern Organisation Theory is manifest here, as seen in the way the leadership engages the subordinates in religious activities not only to bring them closer to God, but to open an informal avenue for conversation and interaction. This exchange creates integration, peace and harmony necessary for the success of local government administration.

Table 17 indicates that respondents in Uyo 80 (88%), Eket 58 (62%) and Ikot Ekpene 60 (64%) were unanimous in affirming that timely payment of wages and salaries contributed to organisational harmony. Whereas workshops and seminars (Table 4.15) showed that Eket with 72 (77%) respondents said, that it does not contribute to organisational harmony compared to Uyo and Ikot Ekpene that with 40 (44%) and 63 (67%) respondents who affirmed that workshops and seminars engender harmony in their Local Government Areas.

From the above, the study revealed that, aside from memos, meetings, letters and the telephone being communication strategies widely used in the local governments studied; the structure, language, content and style of application and other factors like sports, religious activities, prompt payment of emoluments, seminars and workshops combined to engender harmony in the local governments studied.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study examined Communication Strategies and Organisational Harmony in 'Local Governments in Akwa Ibom State with Uyo, Eket, and Ikot Ekpene as sample. The study attempted to find out the communication strategies employed by the leadership of the local government councils in Akwa Ibom State, the rationale for the use of such communication strategies, determine the outcome of communication strategies used by leadership of the local government councils in the study area, to know the communication strategies that is preferred by majority stakeholders in the local government councils studied and the factors that engender organisational harmony in the councils studied.

i. The study found out that the leadership of the local government councils in Akwa Ibom State represented by Uyo, Eket and Ikot Ekpene utilised memo, letter, meeting, telephone, seminar and worship (solemn assembly) as a means of reaching out to their employees. Email was not used at all.

ii. In order of Preference as indicated on table 6, Uyo preferred memo, meeting and letters; Ikot Ekpene preferred memo, letter and meeting, whereas Eket preferred meetings, letter, and telephone. Typically, it was only Eket that preferred telephone conversations. The rationale for the preference of memo and letter was because of the simplicity of language used and for the use of special jargons and slangs which were understood by employees across the three local government councils, culminating to boosting harmony, while meeting was preferred because it allowed for interaction, participation and for its unique feature of immediate feedback.

iii. The language, content and style of memos and letters contributed to harmony in the councils. Meetings led to integration and participation in the activities of the council by employees in the councils thereby engendering harmony.

iv. The study found out that majority of the stakeholders preferred meetings and memos. A breakdown of this showed that the subordinates preferred meetings more, while the superior used both.

v. The study found out that majority of the respondents in the council studied affirmed that sporting activities contributed to harmony in the council. Also, the study revealed that across the local government councils studied that religious activities similarly led to organisational harmony.

Conclusion

Communication galvanises and integrates organisational stakeholders together. Any organisation wishing to succeed in achieving set goals must realise effective internal communication is the fluid that mutually links and unites management and employees. Communication strategies properly used leads to organisational harmony, which is a catalyst for a peaceful work environment.

Based on the findings of this research, the study concludes that communication strategies led to organisational harmony in the local government councils studied. The strategies used in the studied local government councils were the same but with varying degrees of utilisation in the councils studied. The investigation concludes that telephone was not maximally used. In the case of Eket, where telephone was used, the percentage was low and the employees complained that the tone of conversation from their bosses was harsh and sometimes abusive. As a result of the major findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

i. The leadership of the local government councils need to incorporate the use of email for exchange of messages across the councils.

ii. Telephone is an important tool that the councils use effectively in communication with subordinates. The principal officers and supervisors need to improve on their telephone etiquette, particularly in the use of language and tone during conversations. The impact

of telephone in engendering interaction and relationships are overwhelming and should be embraced by the councils.

iii.   The study found out that sport was a major factor in engendering harmony in Eket with 82%, whereas respondents in Uyo and Ikot Ekpene averred that they did not know whether it actually promoted harmony. This study therefore recommends that other councils should use sports effectively because across the globe sports have proven to be a unifying factor.

iv.   Councils should, in addition to the traditional channels, craft communication plans or blueprint to guide them and also endeavour to follow the plans or blueprint.

v.   The councils should endeavour regularly to carry out communication audit to evaluate their performances. This should prove invaluable in helping them decide necessary changes that they need to make to ensure smooth running of the councils.

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