

## **An Appraisal of Organizational Communication and Job Satisfaction Among Academic Staff in Akwa Ibom State University**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study appraised organisational communication and job satisfaction among academic staff in Akwa Ibom State University. The objectives of the study were ascertain the organisational communication flow pattern prevalent in Akwa Ibom State University, assess the extent to which the organisational communication policy/structure affected job satisfaction among academic staff of Aksu, find out the barriers to effective organisational communication flow and job satisfaction among academic staff of Aksu, determine from the perception of academic employees whether the organisational communication flow in their institution help to guarantee job satisfaction. The study adopted the survey research design, with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The population of the study comprise subjects who are academic staff of Aksu. The academic staff strength of Aksu stands at 488. The sample size for the study was determined at 10% systematically drawn from the population. The study which was anchored on the theory of transactional process and modern organaisational theory revealed that majority of respondents 25 (57%) were of the opinion that the prevalent communication flow pattern that management uses in communicating with academic staff in Aksu is vertical downward communication, furthermore, majority of respondents 24 (55%) agreed that organisational communication policy and structure greatly influence job satisfaction. This implies that policy and structure on job satisfaction. Majority of respondents 20, 10 (30) representing 45%, 23% (68%) were not satisfied with the present patterns of communication flow to enhance their job satisfaction. It was recommended that management of Aksu should encourage the use of upward communication. That is communication from the subordinates to those at the top, usually for the purpose of asking questions, providing feedback and making suggestions in order to improve morale and attitude of academic staff, management of Aksu should trust their academic staff and encourage them to participate effectively in decision making.*

**KEYWORDS:** Appraisal, communication, organisational communication, job satisfaction academic staff.

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## INTRODUCTION

There are and have been various general definitions of communication: Beattie & Ellis (2014) defines communication as the human language that is used to transmit information, whilst the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines communication as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour. (1980). Hellriegel & Slocum (2002) define communication as that instrument which leaders use to direct the activities of others. Communication is often described as the “social glue that holds the organisation together (Alvesson, 2002). As such, organisational activities cannot be coordinated without communication among the various departments or parts of the organisation.

Communication refers to the process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more people (McShane & Von Glinow, 2005). Communication is an integral part of the organisational process as the flow of communication up and down the organisational hierarchy has its effects on efficiency, decision-making and morale of organisations. Thus, effective communication is regarded as the foundation of organisations today (Witherspoon, 1997; Von Krogh et al., 2000).

Despite the recognition of the importance of communication in business and organisational life, Soola (1998 cited in Akarika, Ekanem and Ukpe 2017) observes that it is yet to be accorded a pride of place in many professions and businesses. Perhaps, the reason is the misconceptions surrounding the concept of communication. So, it is pertinent to examine the concept in relation to organisational activity. Murphy and Hildebrandt (1991 cited in Akarika et al., 2017), define communication as a process of transmitting and receiving verbal and non-verbal messages that produce a response. Luthan's (1985 cited in Akarika et al., 2017) sees communication as the flow of material, information, perception and understanding between various parts of an organisation.

According to Northcott the purpose of organisation is to co-ordinate the activities of various individuals working in the organisation for the attainment of enterprise goals. Haney, defines it as harmonious adjustment of specialized parts for accomplishment of some common purpose or purposes. Organisation is the adjustment of various activities for the attainment of common goals. In academic setting, organisational communication and job satisfaction are paramount for fostering an environment conducive to both personnel and institutional growth. Effective organisational communication in educational institutions is akin to the arteries that carry vital information, facilitating collaborative decision-making, knowledge sharing, and innovation (Keyton, 2019). Job satisfaction, on the other hand, stands as a cornerstone for faculty and staff engagement, productivity and retention (Shahnawaz & Jafri, 2009). In the academic world, where knowledge dissemination and learning thrive, the nexus between organisational communication and job satisfaction becomes particularly crucial.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the past two years, many tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria have witnessed changes in their condition of service, which have resulted in lack of promotion of academic staff due to non-visibility in google scholar and inadequate citations. A good example is the Akwa Ibom State University where some academic staff of the institution were not promoted in the last appraisal furthermore year 20223. This has led to some perceived grievances by members of academic staff who felt that management did not communicate these changes in condition of service early enough and that the time frame for the implementation is too short.

Nevertheless, since communication is an integral part of the organisation process as the flow of communication up and down the organisational hierarchy has its effect on efficiency, decision making and morale of organisations. Hence the central problem underlying study is to what extent have organisational communication flow enhanced this academic staff job satisfaction in Aksu?

### **Brief History of Akwa Ibom State University**

The conception of Akwa Ibom State University (Aksu) started in October 2000 as Akwa Ibom State University of Technology (AKUTECH). The Akwa Ibom State University is a multi-campus institution, with two campuses; the main campus is located in Ikot Akpaden, Mkpato Enin Local Government Area and Obio Akpa Campus in Oruk Anam Local Government Area. Full academic activities commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010 with the admission of 300 students into four departments with 9 faculties including General studies and library. The Akwa Ibom State University has since grown with over 8,000 students in 38 departments within 9 faculties including General Studies and Library. The University has undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with a total of 488 academic staff members as at August 2023 (Directorate of Human Resource, Aksu).

### **Objectives of the Study**

- i. Ascertain the organisational communication flow pattern prevalent in Akwa Ibom State University.
- ii. Assess the extent to which the organisational communication policy/structure affected communication flow and job satisfaction among academic staff of Aksu.
- iii. Find out the barriers to effective organisational communication flow and job satisfaction among academic staff of Aksu.
- iv. Determine from the perception of academic employees whether the organisational communication flow in their institution help to guarantee job satisfaction of academic staff in Aksu.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the prevalent organisational communication flow patterns in Aksu?
- ii. What extent have the organisational communication policy and structure affected communication flow and job satisfaction among academic staff in Aksu?

- iii. What are the barriers to effective organisational communication flow and job satisfaction in Aksu?
- iv. Based on academic staff perception, to what extent have organisational communication flow help to enhance job satisfaction of academic staff in Aksu?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The concept of organisational communication**

Communication, which is expressed as the system that form the basis of human relations and social life, contributes to the formation of an environment that can develop effective solutions for employees by ensuring that the organisational structure operates flawlessly. Organisations managed with an open system approach are in constant interaction with their internal and external environments. In this interaction process, it is possible to manage organisations in accordance with their objectives and to operate basic management functions with successful communication (Tutar, 2016).

Organisational communication is the set of activities that organisations carry out. The concept of organisational communication, which emphasizes the process beyond any result and makes important contributions to achieving organisational goals, points to the process of sharing information between managers and employees, who are actors of organisational communication, and making sense of this information (Shockley-Zalabak, 2015) and in addition to sharing information and opinions within the organisational structure, it also has an important place in creating a positive work environment for employees (Kalla, 2005). In other words, organisational communication is the creation of a process and system that will enable all units to work in harmony and coordination in a way that can achieve organisational goals and objectives (Akgoz & Sezgin 2015).

Organisational communication has important contributions to organisations in many issues such as controlling the behaviour of employees, increasing motivation, developing relationships in the work environment, adaptation, conflict management, negotiation, and bargaining skills (Spaho, 2012). Among the most important functions of communication within the organisation are the functions of providing information, influencing, persuading, giving orders and combining with education and training. Within the framework of the strategic planning of the organisations, the proactive, effective regulation of organisational communication and its effectiveness in terms of usability play an important role in the realization of organisational goals (Kuchi, 2006).

### **Communication Flow Patterns in Organisations:**

Goldhaber (1993), Ikpe (1990) and Soola (1998) classify organizational communication flow patterns into formal and informal communication flow is further sub-divided into downward, upward and subordinates. It radiates from the top-most point of organisational hierarchy to the

next vertically. It can be oral, written and mediated mode of message. Downward communication is the flow of messages from the superiors, to conversations, company bulletins, notice boards, and letters, by telephone, e-mail, video conference etc. (Ikpe, 1990).

Goldhaber (1993), identified five types of downward communication. these are job instructions, job rationale, procedures and practices. Feedback messages appraising how well subordinates do their jobs, and indoctrination of goals. The possible drawbacks to downward communication include: lack of accuracy, information overload, channel distortions, poor timing and problems associated with filtering.

### **Upward Communication**

This is actually the key problem area which hinders or tends to promote institutional disharmony. In many organisations little if any, upward communication exists apparently due to the prevailing tendency by organisational leaders to run a closed environment. Upward communication refers to messages which flow from subordinates to superiors.

### **Horizontal Communication**

Horizontal communication is a lateral exchange of messages among people in the same organisational environment (Ikpe, 1990). Messages likely to occur in this format usually relate to task or human purposes. For example, messages about coordination, problem solving, conflict resolution and information sharing. Horizontal communication can function to facilitate common understanding, resolve differences and develop supportive and productive relationships (Reuben, 1988 cited in Ikpe, 1990). The key problems usually associated with horizontal communication include rivalry, specialization and lack of motivation.

### **Informal Communication Flow in an Organisation**

Informal communication is the communication how that does not flow the scalar functional lines network in an organisation. Many writers use the word grapevine as synonym for this type of message behaviour. The term grapevine applies to all informal communication. thus, the grapevine is an unstructured and informal network founded on social relationships rather than organisational chart or job descriptions. According to some estimates, 7-10% of employees typically receive news from the grapevine before they hear about it through formal channels (EPB 1997).

### **Communication Barriers**

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).

Perceptions: the perceptual process determines which messages we select or screen out, as well as how the selected formation is organized 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 evolve deleting or delaying negative information or using less harsh words so that events sound more favourable (McShane and Hino, 2003). Employees and supervisors usually filter communication to create a good impression of themselves to supervisors. Filtering is most common where the organisation rewards employees who communicate mainly positive information and among employees with strong career mobility aspirations (Glauser 1984).

**Language:** Words and gestures carry no inherent meaning, so the sender must ensure receiver understand these symbols and signs. In reality, lack of mutual understanding is a common reason messages are distorted. Two potential language barriers are jargon and ambiguity (McShane and Von Glinow 2003).

**Information overload:** Everyday, the average office worker sends and receives more than 150 messages through various media in the U.S. One survey reports that 49 percent of managers in the U.S and several other countries feel they are fairly often or regular incapable of processing this infoglut. More than 40 percent of them say that receiving so much information weakens their decision making ability, delays important decisions, makes it difficult to concentrate in their main tasks. Some medical experts also warn that the bombardment of electronic information is causing memory loss in young people (Koski 2001).

### **Concept of Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction, a cornerstone of employee well-being and organisational performance, has garnered extensive research attention (Pincus, 1986). It encompasses a diverse array of factors, including compensation, supervision, benefits, working conditions, the nature of work, and notably, communication (Carriere & Bourque, 2009). To understand the intricate relationship between communication and job satisfaction, it's essential to first define and appreciate what job satisfaction represents. Locke (1976) succinctly defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable, positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experience". Essentially, it signifies how content and fulfilled an individual feels in their role within an organisation. However, job satisfaction is not a one-size-fits-all concept; it can vary significantly based on individual expectations and experiences (Tutuncu & Kozak, 2007).

### **The Role of Organisational Communication**

Effective organisational communication serves as a cornerstone of a thriving academic institution. It encompasses the exchange of information, ideas, and feedback among faculty, staff and administration. In academic settings, communication channels operate on various levels; from the institution as a whole to departmental communication and interactions among peers (Alegre et al., 2016). Communication satisfaction theory posits a close connection between the quality of communication within an organisation and the job satisfaction of its members. When communication is transparent, open and efficient, employees, including academic staff, are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. Conversely, poor communication or a lack of effective communication channels can lead to dissatisfaction (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

### **Communication and Job Satisfaction**

Understanding the intricate relationship between communication and job satisfaction requires consideration of various factors:

- i. Communication styles: Different individuals and institutions adopt distinct communication styles. Effective communication styles, characterized by clarity, transparency, and active listening, tend to positively influence job satisfaction.
- ii. Leadership styles: The leadership within an academic institution significantly influences communication practices. Leaders who prioritize clear, respectful and open communication foster an environment conducive to job satisfaction (Men and Yue, 2019).
- iii. Organisational culture: Organisational culture, shaped by shared values and norms, directly impacts communication. An open and supportive culture enhances the effectiveness of communication practices and contributes to employee satisfaction (Meng & Berger, 2019).
- iv. Peer interaction: Communication among academic peers is equally vital. Collegial relationships and knowledge sharing contribute to cooperation and job satisfaction (Hanaysha, 2016).
- v. Communication with the organisation: Effective communication with the organisation, including clear information flow and a sense of community, enhances job satisfaction (Uysal, 2016).

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

Akarika et al (2017) assessed the role of communication flow in creating industrial harmony in tertiary educational institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The research method used for data collection was opinion survey. Personal interviews were conducted with the management and union leaders in the institutions. Purposive and systematic sampling procedures were used for selecting samples for the study. The data collected from personal interviews were analyzed qualitatively using explanation building based on the research question. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed in simple percentages and the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The major findings were: the prevalent communication flow patterns in the tertiary educational institutions in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria are formal and informal. The communication flow patterns are characterized by vertical downward, upward and horizontal flow patterns. Vertical downward flow dominates between 65% to 70% of respondents in the three tertiary institutions perceived that communication flow patterns are inadequate to guarantee institutional harmony in the tertiary institutions. The hypotheses tested show that effective communication flow patterns influence institutional harmony positively. It was recommended that communication audit should be carried periodically followed by communication training to maintain effective communication flow. Furthermore, the management of these institutions should encourage their employees to participate effectively in decision making.

Akarika (2020) examined communication flow and harmony in Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly was carried out to assess the level of communication flow between House of assembly

members and employees of Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, assess the influence of communication flow on harmony in Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly. The research design used for the study was survey. Questionnaire was used to gather data for the research. The population of the study comprise of 182 staff of Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly. A sample size of 73 respondents was chosen for the study. The study found out that the predominant communication flow in Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly is vertical (downward) represented by 6% of respondents. Furthermore, the study found out that communication flow affects harmony. The study recommended that members of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly should encourage upward communication and also should create an enabling communication climate to ensure industrial harmony among members and staff.

The reviewed study are relevant to the present study in the sense that they deal with organisational communication flow in organisation. But the point of departure is that the current study carried out an appraisal of organisational communication and job satisfaction among academic staff in Akwa Ibom State University.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study relied on two theories namely; theory of Transactional process in organisational communication and modern organisational theory.

The theory of transactional process in organisational communication states as follows; “All persons are engaged in sending and receiving messages simultaneously. Each person is constantly sharing in the encoding and decoding process and each person is affecting the other” (Wenberg and Wilmont, 1973 cited in Akarika et al 2017). The transactional-process approach according to Eisenberg and Goodal (2001) 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.

The transactional process model differs significantly from the information approach in terms of the presumed location of the meaning of the message. In the information-transfer model, the meaning of a message to others. The transactional model rejects this idea in favour of one in which meanings are in people not words (Berlo, 1960 cited in Akarika et al 2017). It focuses on the person receiving the message and on how the receiver constructs the meaning of that message. The transactional process theory is also relevant to this study because in addition to information transmission in tertiary institution, persons engaged in sending and receiving information contribute a lot to the content, meaning, adequacy and effects of communication on individuals, departments and the industry. The extent of communication transaction affects the extent of job satisfaction.

The modern organisation theory sees modern organisations as a system of mutually dependent variables, involving the individual, his 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 recognizes 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.

Therefore, relating the flow of communication and how that flow enhances or hinders institutional harmony situates itself properly in this context. Effective communication flow provides task messages, maintenance messages, human relations messages, and innovative messages to tertiary institutions and their sub-systems. These messages help to maintain harmony in the tertiary institutions.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study made use of the survey research design. The study undertook an appraisal of organisational communication and job satisfaction among academic staff of Akwa Ibom State University. The research instrument for the study was questionnaire, which was administered on academic staff of the institution. The population of the study is made up of subjects who are academic staff of the institution. The academic staff strength of Akwa Ibom State university stands at 488 as at August 2023, according to Directorate of Human Resources, Aksu.

The sample size for this study was determined at 10% systematically drawn from the population of the institution. This was considered an adequate representation. Wimmer and Dominick (2006) cited in Akarika, et al 2017) assert that there is no fixed number or percentage of subjects that determine the size of an adequate sample. It may depend on the nature or the population of interest or data to be gathered and analyzed. Based on the preceding submission, the sample size for study was 48. The study adopted the census sampling technique. Cluster sampling was used by the researcher to divide Aksu into clusters (Departments) while the available sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Out of 48 copies of the questionnaire administered on respondents, 44 copies of the questionnaire were returned and found useable for the study, representing a return rate of 91% and a mortality rate of 9%. Data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Sex of Respondents

Option	No of Respondent	Percentage
Male	30	68
Female	14	32
Total	44	100

Table 1 shows that majority of respondents 30 (68%) were male. This implies that male academic staff provided the bulk of response to the research question.

Table 2 Job cadre of Respondents

Option	No of Respondents	Percentage
Management Cadre	4	9
Middle cadre	30	68
Lower cadre	10	23
Total	44	100

Table 2 shows that majority of respondents 30 (68%) and 10 (23%) were from the middle cadre and lower cadre of the university. Both have a combined percentage of 91%. This implies that the middle cadre and lower cadre provided response to the issues raised in the research.

Table 3: Organisational communication flow patterns in AKSU

Option	No of Respondents	Percentage
Vertical downward communication	25	57
Vertical upward communication	5	11
Horizontal communication	10	23
Informal communication	14	9
All of the above	-	-
Total	44	100

Table 3 shows that organisational communication flow patterns in Aksu. Majority of respondents 25 (57%) agreed to the predominance of vertical downward communication. This implies that communication comes solely from top to bottom.

Table 4: Extent of influence of organisational communication policy and structure on job satisfaction

Option	No of Respondents	Percentage
A very great extent	10	23
A great extent	24	55
Undecided or neutral	-	-
A little extent	6	14
A very little extent	4	8
Total	44	100

In table 4, 24 (55%) respondents are of the opinion that organisational communication policy and structure greatly influence job satisfaction. This implies that there is a relationship between organisational communication policy and structure on academic staff job satisfaction.

Table 5: Barriers to effective organisational communication flow and job satisfaction among academic staff in Aksu

Option	No of Respondents	Percentage
Leadership style	-	-
Administrative policy	-	-
Poor communication policy/infrastructure	-	-
Non-participation in decision making by staff	-	-
Lack of trust	-	-
Communication gap between management and staff	-	-
Lack of trust	-	-
Communication gap between management and staff	-	-
All of the above	44	100
Total	44	100

Data gathered and presented in table 5 shows that 100% of respondents indicated that all the factors listed in table 5 constitutes barriers to effective communication flow and job satisfaction among academic staff in Aksu. The barriers are: leadership style, administrative policy, poor communication policy/infrastructure, non-participation of academic staff in decision making, lack of trust and communication gap that exist between management and academic staff.

Table 6: Extent of academic staff satisfaction with the present patterns of communication flow to enhance job satisfaction in Aksu

Option	No of Respondents	Percentage
A very great extent	8	18
A great extent	4	9
Undecided/neutral	2	5
A very little extent	20	45
A little extent	10	23
Total	44	100

Table 6 shows that 20, 10 (30) respondents representing 45%, 23% (68%) are not satisfied with the present communication flow patterns to enhance job satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are described in line with the research question raise for the study.

**Research Question 1:** What are the prevalent organisational communication flow patterns in Aksu?

Data gathered and presented in table 3 provides answer to this question. Table 3 shows that majority of respondents 25 (57%) were of the opinion that the prevalent communication flow

pattern that management uses in communicating with academic staff in Aksu is vertical downward communication. This implies that communication from management to academic staff is solely from top to bottom.

Downward communication is the flow of messages from the supervisors, through conversations, company bulletins, notice boards, letters, by telephones, e-mail, video conferences among others. Finding of this study support the finding b Akarika et al (2017) which found that the predominant communication flow pattern was characterized by vertical downward represented by 233 (54%) of respondents agreeing to such. The finding of this study further corroborates the study by Akarika (2020) whose study revealed that majority of respondents 48 (66%) were of the opinion that the predominant communication flow pattern in Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly was vertical (downward) communication.

**Research Question 2:** What extent have the organisational communication policy and structure affected communication flow and job satisfaction among academic staff in Aksu?

Table 4 captured the extent of influence of organisational communication policy and structure on job satisfaction. Majority of respondents 24 (55%) agreed that organisational communication policy and structure greatly influence job satisfaction. This implies that policy and structure on job satisfaction. The finding of this study corroborate the study by Akarika et al (2017) whose study showed on great extent of influence of communication policy and structure on communication flow as depicted by 49% of respondents affirming to that.

The finding of this study further affirm with the theoretical framework of this study, namely theory of transactional communication process and modern organisational theory. Finding of this study corroborate the notion that job satisfaction, a cornerstone of employee well-being and organisational performance, has gathered extensive research attention (Pincus, 1986). It encompasses a diverse array of factors, including cooperation, supervision, benefits, working conditions, nature of work, and notably communication (Carriere & Bourque, 2009).

**Research Question 3:** What are the barriers to effective organisational communication flow and job satisfaction in Aksu?

Table 5 provide answer to this research question. All respondents 44 (100%) indicated that all the factors listed in table 5 constitutes barriers to effective communication flow and job satisfaction among academic staff in Aksu. The factors are; Leadership style, administrative policy, poor communication policy, poor communication infrastructure, non-participation of academic staff in decision making, lack of trust and communication gap that exist between management and academic staff.

The findings of this study, confirm the study by Akarika et al (2017) and Akarika (2020) in barriers to communication flow which include; Administrative policy, undemocratic leadership, lack of trust and non-participation in decision making. Furthermore, the findings of this study gives

credence to the importance of modern organisation theory and the theory of transactional process in organisational communication. these theories support the need for effective communication flow in an organisation for attainment of organisational goals and objectives as well as job satisfaction.

**Research Question 4:** Based on academic staff perception, to what extent have organisational communication flow help to enhance job satisfaction of academic staff in Aksu?

Table 6 shows that majority of respondents 20, 10 (30) representing 45%, 23% (68%) were not satisfied with the present patterns of communication flow to enhance their job satisfaction. The finding of this study confirms Akarika et al (2017) finding whose study revealed that majority of respondents 266 (62%) were not satisfied that their present pattern of communication flow enhanced institutional harmony.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that ineffective communication flow in an organisation will led to job dissatisfaction. Therefore, effective organisational communication flow should be encouraged in organisations, since it promotes stability, harmony, growth, productivity and job satisfaction.

## Recommendations

- i. Management of Aksu should encourage the use of upward communication. That is communication from the subordinates to those at the top, usually for the purpose of asking questions, providing feedback and making suggestions in order to improve morale and attitude of academic staff.
- ii. Management of Aksu should trust their academic staff and encourage them to participate effectively in decision making.

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