

# ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION: THE MODES, BARRIERS AND IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS AS ASSESSED BY EMPLOYEES

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## ABSTRACT

Present study was conducted among 112 employees of three different types of organizations to assess the modes and barriers in communication in the organizations. Suggestion towards improvement of organizational communication was also assessed by the employees themselves. Positive attitude come out as the most important suggestion for better organisational output by the employees. E-mail was found to be the overall most preferred mode of communication and fax being the least preferred one. However, Government people relied most on written communications and telephone communication was preferred in non-government organisations. Both government and non-government employees ranked video conferencing as the weakest mode of communication. Language and medium used are found to be the most common barriers, which hamper the communication process in all the three organisations i.e Government, Non-Government and Corporate. Technological advancements have made the communication faster and better in almost all the organisations. However, the traditional office culture of Government organisation is also changing so as to keep pace with other two organisations. Communication flow equipped with sound technical knowledge on computer can lead to better performance of employees in organisations. The present study focuses on the different modes, and barriers of communication in organizations and how employee's suggestions, recommendations and feedback lead to increased productivity of the employees and better organisational performance.

**Key words:** Assess, Barrier, Communication, Mode, Organisation.

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is a primary perspective for understanding how organizations function. It was observed that organizations do not exist independently of their members, but are created and recreated in the acts of communication between members (Iedema and Wodak, 1999).

The study of communication is important, because every administrative function and activity involves some form of direct or indirect communication, whether planning and organizing or leading and monitoring. This implies that every person's communication skills affect both personal and organizational effectiveness (Brun, 2010; Summers, 2010). It seems reasonable to conclude that one of the most inhibiting forces to organizational effectiveness is lack of effective communication (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Moreover, good communication skills are very important to one's own success. A recent study indicated that recruiters rated communication skills as the most important characteristic of an ideal job candidate (Yate, 2009).

Communication can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011). The word communication is derived from the Latin word, *communis*, which means *common*. The definition underscores the fact that unless a common understanding results from the exchange of information, there is no communication. The elements in the communication process determine the quality of communication. A problem in any one of these elements can reduce communication effectiveness (Keyton, 2011). Carrying out of any job or implementation of any programme with targeted end result rests on common understanding by the planner and executer.

Communication is the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another. Effective communication is a two-way process that requires effort and skill by both sender and receiver. The elements of the communication process are the sender, encoding the message, transmitting the message through a medium, receiving the message, decoding the message and feedback. A number of barriers retard effective communication in the organisation. The factors associated with this should be eliminated to improve the effectiveness of communications. The employees working under particular set up can assess the intensity of such factors and prioritize those.

Keeping the above facts in backdrop, the present study is aimed at ranking of modes of communication and barriers in communication in the organization by employees themselves and prioritizing suggestions towards improvement of organizational communication.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

The present study was conducted at Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha. Data on 112 employees of three different types of organizations, taken at random were included in the present study.

Modes and barriers in communication were identified in consultation with the experts and by observations in all organizations. The respondents were asked to rank the modes and barriers proposed to them through the questionnaire. Garrett's Ranking Technique was adopted to rank the modes and barriers of communication in this study. Suggestions of employees on improvement in communication were also studied through this method. The prime advantage of this technique over simple frequency distribution is that the preferences are arranged based on their intensity from the point of view of respondents. Hence, the same number of respondents on two or more preferences may have been given different rank. Garrett's formula for converting ranks into percent is:

$$\text{Percent position} = 100 * (R_{ij} - 0.5) / N_j$$

Where,  $R_{ij}$  = rank given for  $i^{\text{th}}$  factor by  $j^{\text{th}}$  individual;

$N_j$  = number of factors ranked by  $j^{\text{th}}$  individual.

The percent position of each rank was converted into scores referring to the table given by Garrett and Woodworth (1969). For each factors, the scores of individual respondents were added together and divided by the total number of the respondents for whom scores were added. These mean scores for all the modes were arranged in descending order; the modes of communication were accordingly ranked.

The respondents were asked to rank the seven modes of communication identified for the purpose of this studies as 1, 2, 3, 4 .....7 in order to know their preference in the organisation. The calculated percentage position for the rank 1, 2, 3,.....7 and their correspondent Garrett table are shown in Table 1. For individual modes of communication, the total score was calculated by multiplying the number of respondents ranking that factor as 1, 2, 3,.....7 and then the mean score of the individual mode was calculated by dividing the total number of respondents and further ranked with regard to the mean score. The same table values were taken for barriers in communication; however, adopting similar procedure, Table 2 was taken for obtaining Garrett table value towards suggestions for improvement in communication.

Table 1. Percentage positions on mode and barriers in communication and their corresponding Garrett's Table values

Rank	Percent Position		Garrett Table
1	$100(1-0.5)/7$	7.14	78
2	$100(2-0.5)/7$	21.43	66
3	$100(3-0.5)/7$	35.71	57
4	$100(4-0.5)/7$	50.00	50
5	$100(5-0.5)/7$	64.29	42
6	$100(6-0.5)/7$	78.57	34
7	$100(7-0.5)/7$	92.86	21

Table 2. Percentage positions on employees' suggestions towards better organizational communication and their corresponding Garrett's Table values

Rank	Percent Position		Garrett Table
1	$100(1-0.5)/4$	12.5	73
2	$100(2-0.5)/4$	37.5	56
3	$100(3-0.5)/4$	62.5	44
4	$100(4-0.5)/4$	87.5	27

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Modes of communication

Results obtained in Table 3 reveals that, e-mail was found to be the overall most preferred mode of communication and fax was the least one, taking all the organisations into account. Other modes of communication were placed in between these two. Almost similar trends of preference was recorded in corporate sectors; however, written circular was found to be the most preferred communication method in government organisations and telephone communication was preferred in non-government organisations. Both government and non-government employees ranked video conferencing as the weakest mode of communication, followed by fax and individual feedback. This is in accordance with the finding of Weihrich and Koontz; 1994 who stated that the function of communication in the organisation is to connect the employees of that organization through different modes in order to reach mutual goals. Hence, these modes of communication in the organisation are important because of the company's goal setting agenda, practical achievable plans, proper human resources management, monitoring progress, performance appraisal of employees, proper communication climate, and the control over realization. Graphical representation of ranking of different modes of communication in different organizations is made in Fig. 1. The trend in preference of mode of communication indicated that, infrastructure must have played a vital role in deciding the preference of organisational communication. Corporates must have the computer and internet facilities with almost all the employees, resulting in quick and effective communication among employees. The facilities in government might have been poor and the system must have been dependant on written circulars to ensure effective communication. NGOs, mostly involved in project implementation with field or society as the area of operation, might have been relying the telephonic calls and messages towards carrying out the policy and planning decisions with high level of trust among employees.

**Barriers of communication**

Language was found to be overall most important barrier in communication as per the results depicted in Table 4. In contrary, psychological preconceived notion was found to be the last and weakest barrier, taking all the organisations into account. Other barriers of communication were placed in between these two. Similar most and least barriers of communication was recorded in government sectors. However, intermediate barriers were little different in this sector. NGO employees ranked language as the major constraint, but social power as the least constraint as barrier in communication. Counterparts in corporate preferred medium used as the most important constraint and psychological preconceived notion as the weakest barrier in this regard. Emotions, dialect and jargon, medium used and complexity of the message were ranked as intermediate or moderate barriers in organisational communication by all the employees with little difference in ranking. Critical analysis of present study clearly revealed that, language and medium used are the two most powerful barriers, which govern the barrier in communication. This is in accordance with the finding of Beal and Torquato (2004) who revealed various levels of basic psychological phenomena such as human emotion, perception, attention/memory, thinking and language, motivation, learning that involve communication and stressed that these phenomena need to be understood first to have better understanding on communication in organizations. Further to add on Lunenberg (2010) also opined that the barriers which retard effective communication can be checked through active listening skills. Graphical representation of ranking of barriers in communication for different organizations is made in Fig. 2.

Table 3. Ranking of different modes of communication in different organizations

Sl.No.	Mode of communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total Score	No.of Respondents	Mean	Overall Rank	GOVT	NGO	Corporate
1	Meeting / GD	15	18	25	10	12	14	18	5641	112	50.3661	4	4	3	4
2	Written circular	24	17	15	14	16	16	10	5975	112	53.3482	3	1	4	3
3	Telephone	26	14	12	18	16	18	8	5988	112	53.4643	2	3	1	2
4	Fax	12	14	16	17	13	15	25	5203	112	46.4554	7	6	6	7
5	Email	32	22	18	16	12	9	3	6647	112	59.3482	1	2	2	1
6	Video Conferencing	12	14	18	24	12	18	14	5496	112	49.0714	6	7	7	6
7	Individual feedback	12	14	15	18	12	16	25	5188	112	46.3214	5	5	5	5

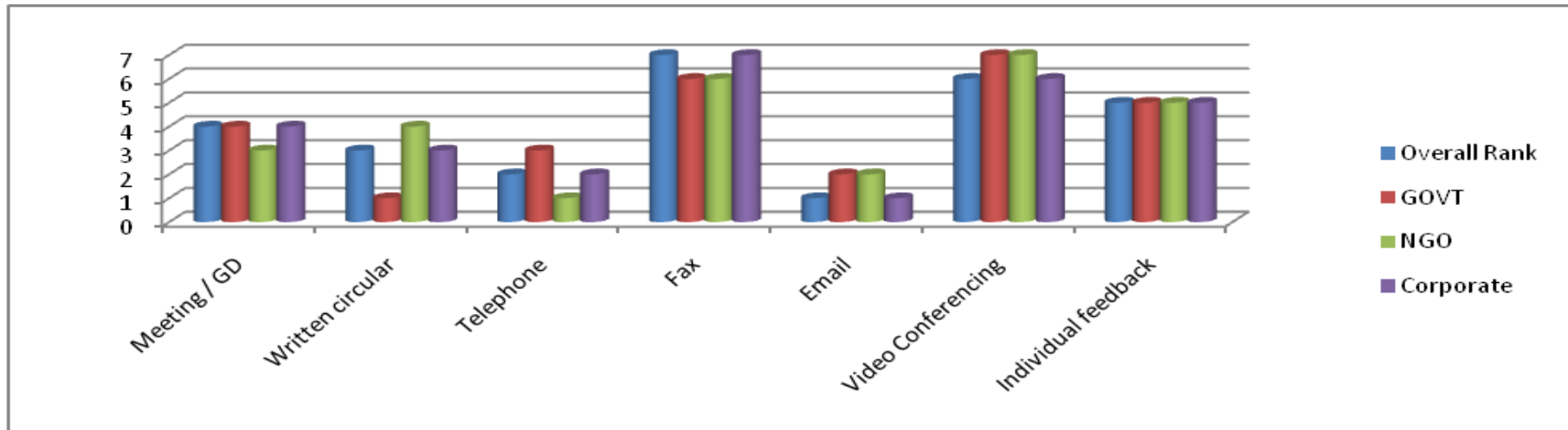


Fig 1. Ranking of different modes of communication in different organizations

Table 4. Ranking of barriers of communication in different organizations

Sl.No.	Barriers of communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total Score	No.of Respondents	Mean	Rank	GOV	NGO	Corporate
1	Language	31	22	18	16	13	9	3	6611	112	59.0268	1	1	1	2
2	Emotions	28	14	12	16	14	18	10	6002	112	53.5893	2	3	2	3
3	Dialect and Jargon	15	17	26	10	12	14	18	5632	112	50.2857	3	2	3	4
4	Medium used	12	15	16	25	12	18	14	5498	112	49.0893	4	6	5	1
5	Complexity of the message	14	15	15	16	12	18	22	5315	112	47.4554	6	4	4	5
6	Psychological, preconceived notion	13	14	15	18	14	17	21	5300	112	47.3214	7	7	6	7
7	Social Power	14	16	17	17	13	15	20	5443	112	48.5982	5	5	7	6

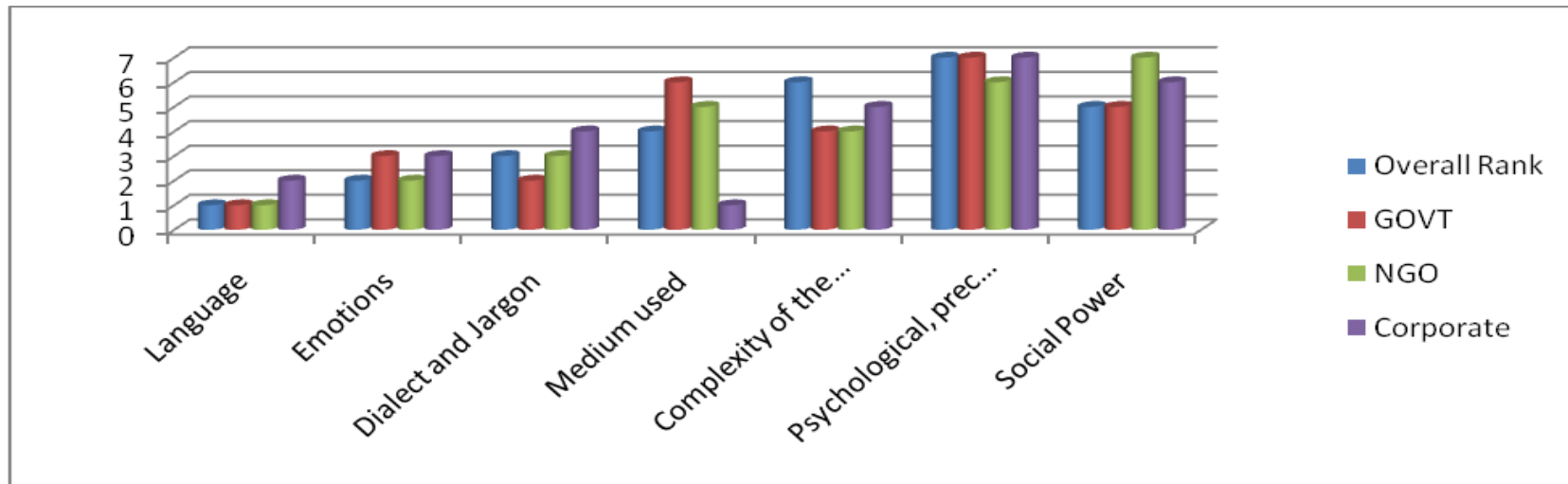


Fig. 2. Ranking of barriers of communication in different organizations

**Suggestion towards better communication**

Taking all types of organisations into account, positive attitude emerged as the most important suggestion towards achieving better organisational communication in the present study, followed by effective team management; open to change and share personal opinions and support and cooperation among employees (Table 5). Equivalent suggestions of corporate employees were recorded in the present study. Effective team management, support and cooperation among employees were given more weightage by employees of NGOs and government sector, respectively. Similarly the least importance was marked as open to change and share personal opinions by both government and non-government employees towards achieving better organizational communication. This is in accordance with the finding of Siburian (2013) who explained that the commitment and willingness to remain for long time in the part of an employee depend on the effectiveness of interpersonal communication, organizational culture, job satisfaction and achievement motivation. Manzoor (2010) also stated that recognition and empowerment play an important part in enhancing employee motivation towards organizational assignments. Further appreciation and recognition of employees stimulates them towards working with more energy and dedication to the organization (Kalimullah.etal,2010). Graphical representation of suggestion towards better communication in different organizations is made in Fig. 3. The trend in preference of mode of communication indicated that, working environment must have played a vital role in deciding preference for suggesting towards improvement of organisational communication. Indirectly the preferred suggestion may be taken as prevailing lacunae in respective organisations. Thus, corporate sectors lack optimum positive attitude among employees, may be due to career competition among them. Similarly team management ranked high among NGO employees, which demands for strong and effective leadership in achieving better organisational communication. However, government employees suggested support and cooperation among employees as the most important intervention towards developing better communication, which may be attributed to non cooperation among employees and prevalence of bossism in government institutions.

Table 5. Ranking of employees' suggestions towards better organizational communication

Sl.No.	Suggestions	1	2	3	4	Total Score	No.of Respondents	Mean	Rank	GOVT	NGO	Corporate
1	support and cooperation among employees	35	32	30	15	6071	112	54.2054	4	1	3	4
2	Open to change and share personal opinions	43	40	15	14	6417	112	57.2946	3	4	4	3
3	Effective Team Management	45	40	17	10	6543	112	58.4197	2	3	1	2
4	Positive Attitude	50	40	12	10	6688	112	59.7143	1	2	2	1

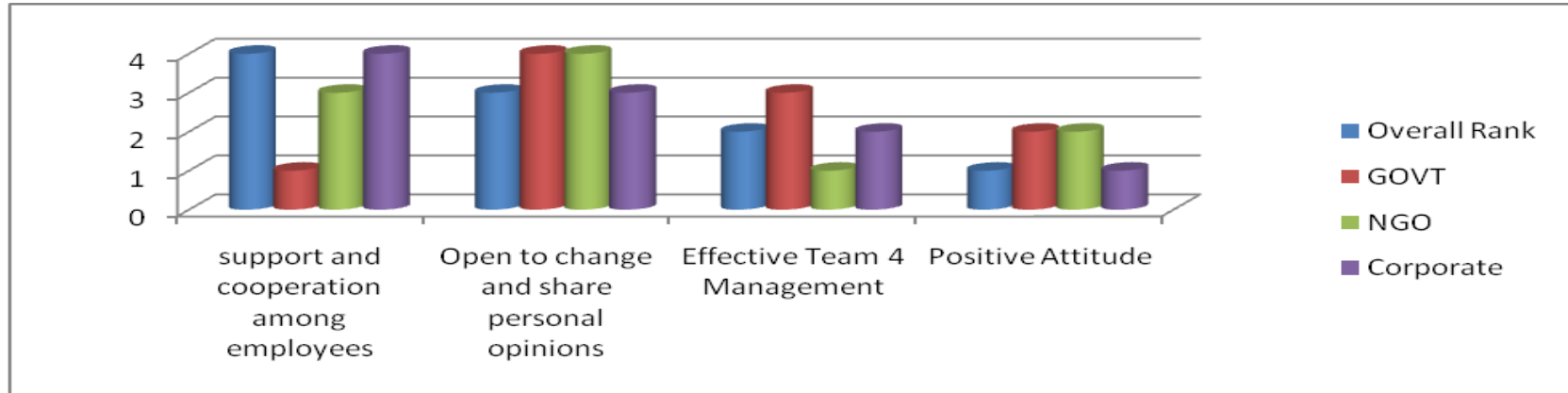


Fig. 3. Ranking of employees' suggestions towards better organizational communication



## CONCLUSION

The trend in preference of mode of communication indicated that, infrastructure must have played a vital role in deciding the preference of organisational communication. E-mail was found to be the overall most preferred mode of communication and fax was the least one. Language and medium used are the two most powerful barriers, which govern the barrier in communication. Positive attitude emerged as the most important suggestion towards achieving better organisational communication. Positive attitude in corporate sector, team management in non-government organisations and support and cooperation among employees in government institutions were found to be key and most important intervention factors towards enhancing respective organisational communication.

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