THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION IN ENHANCING STAFF PERFORMANCE: A CASE OF FACULTY OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

BY

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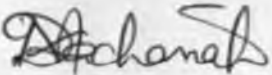
October 2011

DECLARATION

I declare that this project is my original work and that it has not been presented for examination to any other university.
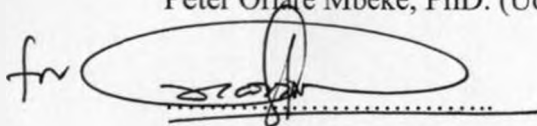
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Date   24|11|2011

DEDICATION

To my wife Serah, and sons Brayden and Bellamy: the three jewels of my life. You have been my greatest source of encouragement.

ACKNOWLEGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. The main objective of the study was to assess the importance of employee communications in enhancing staff performance at the Faculty. More specifically the study sought to identify the approaches to employee communications used at the Faculty; examine the perceptions of staff on these approaches; establish the uses of employee communications; determine staff performance; and make recommendations on interventions to improve employee communications at the Faculty.

The study employed the survey research design in which data was sought from a stratified random sample of 41 employees. Primary data was collected using a structured study questionnaires which were self administered to the sampled respondents. The data collected was then analyzed using EPi Info statistical analysis software and presented in form of tables, pie charts and bar charts.

It was found out that the three approaches to employee communications (top-bottom, bottom-up and informal/lateral/horizontal) were used at the Faculty though the top-bottom was the dominant approach. Internal memos, staff meetings, the website, interactions with the supervisors and grapevine were cited as the main channels of communications. Majority of the respondents agreed that the Faculty had changed for the better over the last five years and this was attributed to the introduction of ISO procedures. Employee communications was used to keep staff aware of the happenings in the organization, organizing and managing internal events and enhancing staff morale, and enhancing the image of the University. Employees were found to be rather skeptical about the staff performance appraisal process and did not fully understand the concept of performance contracting. Channels of communication were found to be fairly open and accessible, interpersonal relations were good and amicable and that there was an atmosphere of openness and teamwork.

This study recommended that the top-bottom approach to employee communications should be backed up by other approaches especially the informal/lateral/horizontal approaches. The Faculty should uphold the spirit of openness and teamwork and also hold interactive sessions with staff to demystify and explain the concept of performance contracting. To further improve employee communications, the study recommended further opening up of channels of

communication, holding of regular consultative meetings and provision of the necessary tools of communication. The Faculty should also consider setting up a fund to reward good performers. It was also recommended that a further study be carried out covering the entire University to assess the importance of improving employee communications in order to raise staff performance as well as assess understanding of staff on performance contacting.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

The University of Nairobi, a corporate body established by an Act of Parliament, is the pioneer institution of higher learning in Kenya. As the only university in Kenya for a long time, the University of Nairobi responded to the national, regional and Africa's high level manpower training needs by developing strong, diversified academic programmes and specializations in health sciences, applied sciences, technology, humanities, social sciences and arts. Currently, the university offers over two hundred academic programmes in diverse disciplines.

In the 1990s, the University opened its gates to self-sponsored students through the introduction of Module II popularly known as parallel programmes. This move gave an invaluable opportunity to thousands of Kenyans and even foreigners who met the minimum university admission requirements, but who could hitherto not access university education due to restricted admission into the regular programmes that is determined by the limited resource allocation by the central government. Today, the University prides itself for its distinguished achievements in teaching, research, development and consultancy while strategizing for a greater future as the centre for academic, research and professional excellence.

The University has several clients or publics including among others employees, students, parents, suppliers, alumni, the community and the general public. The University has to constantly communicate to all its publics as it seeks to achieve its mandate. This study focuses on employee communications.

Effective communication is an important aspect in all spheres of life - be it in interpersonal relationships, group relationships or social relationships. At the organizational level, the management has to continually communicate with the employees in order to achieve its objectives. The organization through the management has to clearly communicate its vision, mission and objectives to its employees. Oftentimes, most organizations employ a top-down approach to communication and some have been able to achieve their objectives. This top-down

approach however, is not the only strategy that organizations can employ to achieve their stated goals.

The University is composed of various faculties, schools and institutes. This study which was carried out at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine sought to identify the various communication approaches used to communicate with employees. The employees are categorized into teaching and non-teaching staff. The study examined the perceptions of staff on these approaches, how effective the approaches were considered by the staff and also suggest practical ways that could be considered to effectively communicate with staff to enhance their performance. It was considered that enhanced employee output would as a consequence definitely lead to the achievement of overall organization's objectives.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

The University of Nairobi became an ISO 9001:2008-certified institution of higher learning in August, 2008. This followed a vigorous process of upgrading its Quality Management Systems (QMS) that saw the University develop a number of procedures that would provide guidelines on how various services were offered to its clients.

It is worth noting that the university has over the past few years been on an improvement trend. As a matter of fact, the University of Nairobi has for a second year in a row been scored as the best performing public university in Kenya among the State Corporations that were on performance contract in 2009/2010. The University was also ranked number three nationally, among 162 State Corporations. The University was the best ranked institution among those in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

While the above scenario on the University's performance both locally and internationally was commendable, it would seem that the university would do much better if all its employees were fully educated on the direction it was moving. Through ISO 9001:2008-certification, the University embarked on a process of continual improvement. All staff need to be brought on board in this process of continual improvement which can only be done through effective

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communication between employees and management. At this juncture, it is important to understand the term ISO.

The acronym 'ISO' is derived from the Greek word *'isos'* which means 'equal'. The short form of the organization name is ISO which has since been treated as an abbreviation for International Organization for Standardization. ISO's mission is to develop, promote and publish international standards. ISO develops voluntary technical standards, which add value to all types of services offered. They can contribute to making the development, and supply of products and services more efficient, safer and cleaner. ISO standards also serve as safeguard to consumers and users in general, of products and services – and to make their lives simpler. The standards are market-driven and developed on the basis of international consensus.

One wonders whether the introduction of ISO 9001:2008 standards at the University has resulted significant spurring of the performance of staff thus leading to improvements in service delivery. It is also important to assess the communication approaches employed at the University to disseminate information about the developments in the organization. This study seeks to investigate the role employee communications has played in enhancing staff performance with a focus on the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi. The study seeks to establish whether there is a positive relationship between effective employee communications and staff performance.

1.3   Research Questions

This study was being guided by the following research questions:
1. What approaches to employee communications are used at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi?
2. What are the perceptions of staff on the effectiveness of these approaches?
3. What are the uses of employee communications at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi?
4. Is employee communications an important factor in staff performance at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi?

5. What interventions can be used to improve employee communications at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi?

1.4   Objectives of the Study

1.4.1   General Objective

The main objective of this study was to assess the importance of employee communications in enhancing staff performance at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi.

1.4.2   Specific Objectives

1. Identify the approaches to employee communications used at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi.
2. Examine perceptions of staff on these approaches in terms of their effectiveness.
3. Establish the uses of employee communications at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi.
4. Determine staff performance at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi.
5. Make recommendations on interventions to improve employee communications at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi.

1.5   Justification of the Study

Wilcox (1992) asserts that the employees of a company form a crucial audience for its public relations. The public relations department, often working with or within the human resources department, must concentrate on communicating with employees just as vigorously as it does on delivering the corporate story to the outside world. A workforce that respects its management has pride in its products and believes that it is a key factor in corporate success.

Allowing ease of communication within an organization is a basic tenet that each manager should uphold. Depending on the organization's size, it is good practice to provide effective equipment to enable communication flow between staff, such as email, intra-net, extension lines and the like. This reduces the amount of time and paperwork spent on writing notes, requests and memos on hardcopy, particularly where quick action is often needed. Lack of proper communication is listed as one of the stress factors in organizations.

This study is anchored on the fact the Faculty, like many other organizations is comprised of publics who rely on communication for coordination to achieve its mission, goals and objectives. These publics who include members of staff, students, the general public and other stakeholders require information to enable them discharge their roles effectively. Internal communications and its tenets are largely ignored in service delivery and attainment of set organizational objectives. The most frequently cited source of interpersonal conflict is poor communication. Robbins (2005) asserts that because we spend nearly 70 per cent of our working hours communicating through reading, writing, speaking, and listening; it seems reasonable to conclude that one of the most inhibiting forces to successful group performance is lack of effective communication.

The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine has been assessing various interventions to improve the way it communicates with its employees. By examining and assessing the approaches used to communicate with members of staff, this study identified and recommended approaches that were most effective for employee communications at the Faculty. The study also tested whether effective employee communications can be used as a tool for enhancing staff performance in organizations.

1.6   Operational Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, the following terminologies were used as follows:

Employees

These are the people who work in the University from the highest in the organization structure to the lowest. The success of any organization depends to a large extent on the caliber of people working for it. Having the right people in the right place at the right time, willing and able to work effectively and at a cost that the organization can afford is something all managers strive for. Employees therefore form an important public in the University and indeed any organization.

ISO 9001:2008

ISO 9000 family represents an international consensus on good management practices with the aim of ensuring that the organization can deliver product/services that meet the clients' quality requirements. These practices have been distilled into a set of standardized requirements for a quality management system, regardless of what your organization does, its size or whether it's in the private or public.

Publics

A public is any group that has a potential interest in or impact on a company's ability to achieve its objectives. It is an identifiable group that has a stake in an organization. Publics are categorized into internal and external publics. Internal publics are those groups an organization communicates to within the organization; they include associate companies, candidate employees, existing employees, management, overseas associates, shareholders and even trade unions.

Performance

This refers to work output by a worker or productivity by an employee. Performance means both behavior and results. Behaviour emanates from the performer and transforms performance into action. Not just the instruments for the results, behaviours are also outcomes in their own right the product of mental and physical effort applied to tasks and can be judged from results.

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Performance Management

Performance Management can be defined as a strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to organization of people who work in them and developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributions.

University

A body corporate established by an Act of Parliament, is the pioneer institution of higher learning in Kenya. It is head office is located within the central business district of the city of Nairobi, Kenya. It comprises of six colleges namely; College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, College of Architecture and Engineering, College of Biological and Physical Sciences, College of Education and External Studies, College of Health Sciences and College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Faculty

A department or group of related departments in a college or university. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine comprises of five departments and one teaching farm.

1.7   Theoretical Framework

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), a theory is a set of concepts or constructs and the interrelations that are assumed to exist among those concepts. It provides the basis for establishing the hypotheses to be tested in a study. A good theory can logically be broken down into a set of hypotheses which can be verified through experiment or observations. This research study was be guided by the Classical Management Theory.

1.7.1 Classical Management Theory

According to Griffin (2009), Classical Management Theory places a premium on productivity, precision and efficiency. These are qualities that one expects from a well-designed smoothly running machine. In Classical Management Theory, workers are seen as cogs in vast machines that function smoothly as long as their range of motion is clearly defined and their actions are lubricated with an adequate hourly wage.

In the Classical Management Theory, machines repeat straightforward, repetitive tasks and have interchangeable parts that can be replaced when broken or worn out. The employees of the university perform repetitive straightforward tasks and are usually replaced thorough recruitment of new staff whenever old employees attain the mandatory retirement age or other processes of natural attrition like death, resignation or termination. This process of staff replacement ensures continuity in service delivery at the University.

Perhaps what brings out the concept of employee communications in the organization through the Classical Management Theory are the principles of the theory itself. First, there is principle of the unity of command. In this principle, an employee should receive orders from only one superior. The second principle of classical management theory is the scalar chain. In this principle, the line of authority from superior to subordinates runs from the top to the bottom of the organization; this chain, which results from unity of command principle, should be used as a channel for communication and decision-making. Thirdly, there is the division of work. The management should aim to achieve a degree of specialization designed to achieve the goals of organization in an efficient manner. The fourth principle touches on authority and responsibility. Here, attention should be paid to the right to give orders and to exact obedience. An appropriate balance between authority and responsibility should be achieved. Fifthly, there is the principle of discipline. This principle is about obedience, application, energy, behavior and outward marks of respect in accordance with agreed rules and customs. Lastly, there is the principle of subordination of individual interest to general interest. This is achieved through firmness, example, fair agreement and constant supervision.

The University of Nairobi is a large organization with a work force of over 5,000 employees. These employees are scattered in its six colleges, some of which have regional centers all over Kenya. The employees, therefore, are the cogs and have diverse roles all aimed at offering services to the University's clients thus enabling it to achieve its objectives. A close look at the University shows that there is unity of command whereby each employee is attached to only one supervisor. The University also employs specialized staff in various disciplines; thus each employee performs tasks commensurate to their professional qualifications and training. Additionally, all the University employees are expected to operate within the established rules outlined in the various policy documents that are issued by the university from time to time.

1.8   Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study would inform policy and therefore guide the formulation of an employee communications policy/strategy at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine which may then be borrowed by the entire University of Nairobi, other public universities and other public institutions.

1.9   Assumptions of the Study

This study assumed that there are various media of communication in organizations. The media are used to pass intended messages to the various publics of an organization. However, the various media produce different effects on the audiences. It is assumed that the employees of the organizations are crucial to the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives and as such ignoring effective communication to these internal publics may spell doom for the organization.

1.10   Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine which is one of the faculties in the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences. Due to time and budgetary constraints, it was not possible to sample employees of the other faculties/schools/institutes of the University.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

In undertaking this study, it is important to define the following two key terms:

a) Communication.

b) Employee Communications

2.2   What is Communication?

Sillars (2005) defined communication as the giving, receiving or exchange of information, opinions or ideas by writing, speech or visual means – or any combination of the three – so that the material communicated is completely understood by everyone concerned.

Conrad and Poole (2005) hold the view that communication is the process through which people, acting together create, sustain and manage meanings through the use of verbal and non-verbal communication signs and symbols within a particular context.

ACA (2010) defines communication as the transfer and exchange of ideas, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and feelings from one person or point to another.

In my view, communication refers to the transfer of thoughts, ideas, feelings and information - either by speech, non-verbally or the written word – from one mind to another so that it is understood by the receiver. Communication thus entails the process of conveying or exchanging ideas through writing, oral or other symbols.

Good communication is the foundation of successful relationships, both personally and professionally.   The process of communication uses both verbal and non-verbal methods including body language. In fact, research shows that the majority of our communication is non-verbal.   Non-verbal communication or body language includes our facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture and even the tone of our voices. Non-verbal communication is hugely important in any interaction with others; its importance is multiplied across cultures. This is

because we tend to look for non-verbal cues when verbal messages are unclear or ambiguous as they are more likely to be across cultures. Some elements of non-verbal communication are consistent across cultures. For example, research has shown that the emotions of enjoyment, anger, fear sadness, disgust and surprise are expressed to similar ways by people around the world.

When we interact with others, we continuously give and receive countless wordless signals. All our non-verbal behaviours - the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make-send strong messages.

Being an effective communicator takes real skill. Communication skills have to be developed, honed and added to an on-going basis. They are the heart of interpersonal skills and the greater one's awareness of how it all works, the more effective the communication will be. Conventional wisdom and research says that good communication can improve relationships, increase intimacy, trust and support. The converse is also true: poor communication can weaken bonds, creating mistrust and even contempt.

For effective mutual communication, the language or expressions should be clear, simple and understandable. Effective communication calls for an attempt to understand the situation and to understand and tolerate other people's feelings. It also requires empathy rather than sympathy, that is, the ability to walk in other people's shoes so as to develop a common understanding. Effective communication requires a keen sense of the reaction of the other party which could include excitement, boredom, confusion, indifference, and even hostility. Asking for feedback is useful as it allows for a change of the communication style or approach to the subject or situation.

2.3   What is Employee Communications?

Employee communications entails the interaction between the employees and the management and interaction among the employees that can be harnessed for the achievement of overall organization objectives.

Turow (2009) says that corporate communications involves the creation and presentation of the company's overall image to its employees and to the public at large. Employers believe that if their workers share an understanding of company goals and activities, they will be more satisfied with their jobs and more productive. Executives also want members of the public to believe that the company is a good corporate citizen, since that image might encourage purchases and help the firm get favourable treatment from the local, state and federal governments.

Conrad and Poole (2005) state that organization communication allows large numbers of people from different backgrounds, ways of thinking, needs, and goals to coordinate their actions and create "organizations" that at least seem to be stable containers within which information flows from person to person.

Sietel (1987:361) asserts that the first step in promoting positive external public relations is achieving good internal public relations. If management speaks out of one side of its mouth to its external constituencies and out of the other to its internal ones, it will lose credibility. Employees must be solidly on management's side. Without their support, a company is unlikely to communicate convincingly with the outside world. At base, every employee is a public relations spokesperson for the organization. Therefore, to marshal the support of all employees in an organization, there has to be effective leadership.

Effective leadership is determined by the ability to create a work environment that meets the needs of both the organization and the employees. The coordination and mediation necessary for doing that calls for communication – upward, downward, and sideways throughout the organization. That requirement puts the public relations staff with its communication savvy and skills square in the middle of managing internal communication relationships.

The day-to-day working relationships involve a great deal of contacts, but effective communication depends on satisfactory employees relations built on a climate of trust. Communication must be reviewed as the key resource in leadership. The chief executive must therefore establish the right climate.

Torrington, D. et al (2008) hold the view that employee communications is only as good as the quality of interpersonal communication that is taking place. It is not practicable for employees to develop confidence in a communications system; they can only acquire confidence in what the system produces and in those of other members of the organization with whom they interact. That confidence is not only built by the substance of what people say and do, but also by a climate in which people are encouraged to express ideas, make suggestions and question decisions they cannot understand. Communications and behavior are so closely interlinked that everything influencing behavior also influences communication.

Much employee communications work is relatively standard – distribution of information about working conditions, retirement benefits, new company products, changes in management and supervisory personnel, and corporate plans for expansion or alterations in operating procedures.

Barret (2002) maintains that effective employee communications uses all vehicles to reach its audience, but most importantly, it relies on direct face to face communication over indirect, print or electronic media. Thus, interpersonal communication training, meeting management, and facilitation skills are necessary for all managers. Abbot (2010) states that for employees, effective communication makes work easier, faster, and more satisfying. For managers or leaders, it makes the team or department more productive, aids in employee retention, and ensures work done aligns with business priorities.

2.4   Importance of Employee Communications

Public relations should have the responsibilities for employee communications. The specific objectives of employee communications are tied to the goals of the organization as a whole and to established personnel and human resource development programs. Clarifying who does what and reporting relationships in employee communications helps to avoid conflict and friction, and

makes coordination efforts possible. Programming for employee communications calls for periodic surveys and audits to determine what the internal publics know or feel about their jobs and place of employment.

In many companies, a public relations firm works in conjunction with the human resources department to carry out employees relations tasks. These companies provide their employees with company handbooks, newsletters and magazines. Experts in this area emphasize that all forms of interaction between a firm's leadership and its rank and file - even email - are vehicles for maintaining good morale and a sense of purpose.

Wilcox (1992) holds the view that in these days of corporate turmoil, with companies being bought and sold almost casually and mass layoffs resulting from cost-cutting moves, unrest and uncertainty among employees create a greater need than ever for effective employee communications. Surveys indicate a drop-off in employees' loyalty to their companies based in part on their belief that remote corporate management feels no loyalty for them. Without doubt, it has been shown that company loyalty helps to stabilize the work force, an important need of management. In the words of Sietel (1987), now good management realizes that a satisfied and enthusiastic employee is an extremely effective and credible public relations advertisement.

Internal communications like external messages must be targeted to reach specific subgroups. Communications must be continuous to consistently reinforce management interest in its employees. The better informed employees are, the less likely they are to spread erroneous and possibly damaging misinformation. Gossip flourishes in an information vacuum. The company grapevine always exists, because humans like to talk and speculate, but a flow of accurate information from management can make the company grapevine a positive rather than a negative force. Good employee communications is thus an important tool for dealing with gossip.

Wilcox (1992) asserts that employee relations and communications would be a priority for a number of reasons. First, because mergers and acquisitions, generally resulting in discharge of some employees (downsizing), is likely to continue, employee loyalty and trust of their employers will remain at an all-time low. Second, the general composition of the work force is

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changing to include more women, minorities, and foreign-born persons. Communicating with a multi-ethnic workforce will therefore be a major public relations challenge.

Waswa (2011) states that in the workplace, the need to matter, the need to be proud of your work and your employer, and the need for autonomy are a few of the experiential needs that impact morale. If they aren't met, no material "solution" or event will make a difference.

2.5   Goals of Employee Communications

Cutlip et al. (1994) hold the view that as part of the larger public relations function, the broad goals of employee communications are to identify, establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and the employees on whom its success or failure depends. To these authors, establishing organization culture and enculturating new employees are basic goals of employee communications.

Cutlip et. al. (1994) further add that communication establishes the relationship between the organization and its employee publics, builds and transmits the organization culture and contributes to the achieving the goals of employee communications. They outlined the specific goals of employee communications as follows: to create among all hands and awareness of the organization basic operations, problems and goals; to keep all hands informed on significant developments that affect the organization; to increase effectiveness of all hands as ambassadors on the job; to solicit and encourage employee input for improving operations; and to satisfy employees desires to be kept informed and to participate in the organization.

Sietel (1987) postulates that the general goal of employee communications must be credibility. The task for management is to convince employees that it not only wants to communicate with them but that it wishes to do so in a truthful, frank and direct manner. Sietel (1987) later stated that the following tactical objectives are common in employee communications efforts: achievement of production quotas to meet delivery on schedule; achievement of quality standards and reduction of defects to meet customer needs; achievement of cost reduction goals; achievement of productivity improvements from new equipment and procedures and from

changes in facilities, machines and methods; introduction of new practices, changes in works standards, restructuring of jobs and changes in classifications and pay rates; and resolution of employee dissatisfaction, strike threats, and strikes through sound understanding of issues.

Barret (2002) says that there are five primary goals for effective employee communication during major change; thus change communication must;

1. Ensure clear and consistent messages to educate employees in the company vision, strategic goals and what change means to them;
2. Motivate employees support for the company's new direction;
3. Encourage higher performance and discretionary effort;
4. Limit misunderstandings and rumours that may damage productivity;
5. Align the employees behind the company's strategic and overall performance goals.

2.6   Employee Communications and Staff Performance

The importance of employee communications cannot be underscored. Watson Wyatt, a public relations firm in the United States, conducted a research in 2003 that focused on the relationship between organization's internal communications. Their findings included that:

1. A significant improvement in the communication effectiveness is associated with 29.5 per cent increase in market value.
2. Companies with the higher levels of effective communication experienced a 26 per cent return to shareholders compared to 15 per cent return experienced by firms that communicated less frequently.
3. Organizations that communicate effectively are likely to report employee turnover rates below or significantly below their peers.

In a study conducted in 500 service industries in Taiwan by Tsai and Chuang (2009), the results indicated that employees' perceptions of a high communication satisfaction are positively associated with their job performance, and negatively related to turnover intention.

In organizational communication research it has been found that when employee needs are met through satisfying communication, employees are more likely to build effective work

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relationships (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004). As Downs and Andrian (2004) and Hergie and Tourish (2000) have noted, effective and satisfactory communication may contribute to an organizations productivity, performance and external customer orientation. However, poor employee communication satisfaction can result in increased occupation stress, higher staff turnover, absenteeism and burnout. (Angle & Perry 1981, Hergie, Dickson & Tourish, 1999; Ray, 1993; Steers, 1977).

Communication that provides information and clarifies work tasks and roles may contribute to employee communication satisfaction. (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004).

In previous empirical studies, it has been reported that communication satisfaction has a positive impact on job performance, (Clampitt & Downs, 1993; Hergie, Tourish & Wilson, 2002; Pincus, 1986). Empirical studies of communication satisfaction have shown that there is a positive relationship between communication satisfaction and job performance and productivity (Clampitt Downs, 1993; Pincus. 1986). Hergie et.al (2002) found that employee communication satisfaction is positively related to productivity. Synder and Morris (1984) reported that communication satisfaction has a significantly positive relationship to organizational performance. The rationale for the positive relationship is that communication satisfaction enhances employees' sense of achievement; it also encourages employees to make more efforts to reach job targets.

Tsai & Chuang (2009) also found that certain facets of employees communication satisfaction that exhibit both information and relationship features - supervisory communication, personal feedback and communication climate – were found to be the major contributors to the communication job performance relationships.

The results also indicated that while focusing on the overall communication satisfaction of the employees, the dimension with the most predictive power of job performance was personal feedback.
Barret (2002) says that without effective employee communication, change is impossible and change management fails. In his article, "Leading Change: why transformation efforts fail",

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Kotter (1995) lists "under-communication" as one of the major reasons change efforts do not succeed. As he states:

> Transformation is impossible unless hundreds or thousands of people are willing to help, often to the point of making short-time sacrifices. Employees will not make sacrifices, even if they are unhappy with the status quo, unless they believe that useful change is possible. Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured. (Kotter, 1995).

Thus if management can be coached into realizing that employee communication is a key ingredient in becoming a high-performing company, they will give it time and energy it needs and deserves.

This study seeks to establish the relationship between effective employee communications and staff performance with a focus on the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi.

2.7 Role of Public Relations Department in Employee Communications

Cutlip et al. (1994) state that seen in their proper roles, employees make up an organization's most important publics. This means that a constructive, mutually beneficial relationship with these publics is the first job of the public relations function. The public relations department, even more than personnel or human resource development, is positioned to inform management objectively of employee concerns. In fact, it is positioned to help all other staff functions carry out their missions by providing two-way communication support needed for success.

2.8 Approaches to Employee Communications

Jefkins (1998) says that internal communications can be of three kinds: downward from employers to employees; upward from employees to employers; and sideways between employees.

2.7.1 Formal Downwards channels

This form of communication moves instructions and other directive information through a hierarchy from top to the bottom of the organization structure. It might be thought of as a basic building block of organizational activity. It makes possible delegated, specialized, and coordinated activities, key requirements of any organization of more than one person. At each stage in the downward flow of communication, people in the organization receive information to help them do their jobs. And, at each stage the information becomes less abstract, more specific, and more detailed.

Conrad and Poole (2005) assert that the formal structure of the organization constitutes part of the organizational network. The hierarchy specifies who should talk to whom in the chain-of-command. Information flowing up and down the hierarchy helps to coordinate and control work. Traditional organizations try to limit the flow of communication in the organization to formal channels on the assumption that other types of communication detract from job performance and are therefore not desirable.

Torrington et al (2008) assert that when a company is operating internationally, one logical main channel for communication could be the workflow pattern. Job instructions, guidance notes, queries, telephone calls, specifications, requisitions, order forms are some of the many ways in which groups of people communicate with those before and after them in the workflow.

Some examples of channels used in the downward communication include:

a) House organ (the internal newsletter/magazine)

The broad concept of informing the staff through one major corporate publication is considered a good way to prevent barriers between management and employees. In general, publications should clearly interpret management's policies to staff and whenever possible serve as a two-way communication vehicle for expressing staff concerns as well. Employee newsletters should appear regularly, on time, with a consistent format. Employees should expect them and look forward to them. Specifically, large companies with far –flung networks have begun to transmit

employee newsletters electronically over proprietary data networks. The advantage of internal publications is that they allow the organization to narrowcast and tailor the information to suit their specific targets. It is also cheaper to produce with the advent of desktop publishing.

b) *Annual reports*

Treadwell and Treadwell (2005) state that annual reports are statements of an organization's activities for a 12-month accounting period – its financial or fiscal year. They are mandated for public companies and are a staple for most non-profit organizations that want to demonstrate their fiscal responsibility. Sietel (1987) maintains that it often makes sense to print a separate annual report just for employees. Frequently, the lure of this report is that it is written for, about and by the employees. Most employees do care about their organization, how it functions, and what its management is thinking. The annual report to staff is a good place to discuss issues informally, yet candidly. While the report can be both factual, explaining the performance of the organization during the year and informational, reviewing organizational changes and significant milestones during the year, it can also be motivational in its implicit appeal to team spirit and pride.

Treadwell and Treadwell (2005) further assert that organizations that produce annual reports for employees send a clear message that employees are a valuable public. Employee reports are likely to differ from their public cousins to reflect employees' special interests and concerns. The purpose of an employee report is as much to raise employee morale as to provide information. Employee reports are an opportunity to raise morale, cultivate an image of the company, answer questions, and improve the ability of employees to become spokespersons for the organization. They also provide a welcome opportunity for the Chief Executive Officer to address employees directly.

c) *Memos*

Memos can be written and strategically placed on notice boards. Alternatively, they can be distributed to each member of staff. Memos are the most common tools of communication in

majority companies. Their advantage is that they are brief and relatively inexpensive. Furthermore, people tend to take them very seriously.

d) Letters

Letters communicate the organizational goals to staff in a more intimate way compared to memos. Organizations use letters to communicate to individual employees as opposed to memos. Furthermore, each letter sent to an individual employee is copied to their personal file for future reference.

e) E-mail

Electronic mail is fast becoming a popular tool of internal communication. Most organizations have given their employees e-mail addresses from which they can access messages. At the University of Nairobi, all employees are provided with internal e-mail addresses through which important communication is disseminated. E-mail is an effective way of reaching all employees who can access the message(s) at times convenient to them.

f) Short Text Messages (SMS)

The current era of information technology has witnessed the extensive use of mobile telephony to reach the intended clients. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine maintains a database of mobile numbers for all its academic staff and most technical staff. The use of the database to convey urgent messages to staff has been very successful as evidenced by over 90% attendance of faculty meetings.

2.7.2 Formal Upwards Channels

The formal upward communication, also known as bottom – up model of communication, refers to communication from staff to management as seen with speak-up schemes, quality circles, open door policies, work councils, co-partnerships and house journals with candid reader

comments. In this approach to communication, the flow of communication is upward, from employee to supervisor, supervisor to departmental head, departmental head to vice-president, and vice-president to president and so on.

Abbot (2010) maintains that in upward communication, we see upward flows, flows of compliance information. There is therefore feedback that helps superiors understand how well subordinates have carried out the instructions that came in the downward flow. And having that compliance information come back up to the top allows the person at the top, whether Chief Executive Officer or any other manager, to issue appropriate new instructions that will be communicated down the chain of command. It is worth noting that as information is communicated back up the chain, as it flows upward, it becomes less detailed and more abstract.

Some examples of channels used in the upward communication include:

a) *Special meetings/Face-to-Face Meetings*

Sietel (1987) holds the view that for good staff-management relations, many organizations have concluded that there is no substitute to face-to-face meetings. Just as with any other form of communication, the value of meetings lies in their regularity and substance. Meetings held only occasionally will not be as productive as meetings scheduled periodically to realize communication objectives. Periodically, the entire staff of a section may come together for a meeting. These meetings provide two-way communication channels. They should be planned carefully and staged with a clear agenda to ensure that they are not a waste of time. Cutlip et al (1994:271) asserts that every meeting should have specific objectives, be well planned and staged, and be skillfully directed.

2.7.3 *Informal / Lateral Communication Channels*

According to Conrad and Poole (2005), informal communication networks emerge in every organization. Because communication through informal ties is outside management's control, supervisors in traditional organizations often try to suppress the informal ties. Relational strategies suggest that informal communication networks are an important part of the

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organizational structure. Through informal networks, employees form meaningful interpersonal relationships, gain a sense of self-respect, meet their sociability needs, and exercise some degree of control over their working lives. People who are actively involved in informal networks have higher morale, job satisfaction, and commitment to their organizations; know more about how their organizations operate; and are better able to meet others' communication needs than employees who are not so involved.

Relational strategies do not necessarily improve productivity by increasing morale. But they do seem to pay off for other reasons. Open and supportive supervisory communication helps compensate for the problems in formal communication. Openness creates trust, and trust reduces the withholding or distorting of information.

Abbot (2010) maintains that in lateral communication, information flows back and forth between peers, whether front-line workers, managers or members of the board of directors. Thus lateral communication moves between peers to maintain or improve operational efficiency. In lateral communication, no superior/subordinate relationship exists; it's strictly a case of two people with roughly equal amounts of power and prestige. That makes this form of communication voluntary and discretionary. There is also the idea of reciprocating. The quality of information we provide to our peers generally reflects what we get back.

Some examples of informal / lateral communication channels include:

a) *Conferences/Seminars/Workshops*

Most organizations hold conferences/seminars/workshops for different purposes e.g. to deliberate on a new idea, to launch a new product or corporate identity, or to discuss a restructuring programme. Jefkins (1998) maintains that such conferences help to bring staff together and to foster good relations between the management and the employees.

b) *The Grapevine*

Grapevine refers to information based on rumour. It can be provoked by lack of information, or exploited as a means of leaking information. Grapevine is regarded as one nemesis of good

employee communications. In most organizations, the rumor mill can be devastating. Rumors, once they pick up steam, are difficult to stop. An organization must work to correct rumors as soon as possible, because employees distort future events to conform to the rumor. Identifying the source of a rumor is difficult, if not impossible. Also it's not worth the time. However, dispelling the rumor quickly and frankly is another story. The best defense against damaging rumors is a strong and candid employee communications system.

Abbot (2010) says that grapevine is a communication channel that no one owns and no one controls. And while we might complain about gossips and busybodies, we all use it sooner or later. Despite its many faults though, grapevine does have a place, a function, in all organizations. It fills in gaps left behind by conventional and official communication.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

Methodology is about an orderly step by step process of the events leading to the acquisition of data required for research. Nachmias and Nachmias (2005) state that methodology is a system of explicit rules and procedures upon which research is based and against which claims for knowledge are evaluated. The rules are constantly improved; scientists look for new means of observation, analysis, logical inference, and generalization. In any research project, one uses a number of methods to get the required data. Sometimes it is necessary to combine a number of methods which supplement one another to provide the researcher with fairly reliable data. The selection of methods to use in data collection depends on the number of people from whom information is sought (respondents). The researcher therefore needs to know the population under study fairly well in order to decide on the appropriate methods.

In most cases, it is hard to get information from all the members of a study population. A researcher therefore selects a sample of the population, which refers to a proportion of the population which is considered representative of all. First, the researcher needs to identify the location of the study and the respondents. This is followed by selection of a sample population and then deciding on which data collection tools to use. Following this is the process of data collection, that is, how to go about collecting the research data. The raw data gotten from the field has then to be analysed into useable information.

This chapter describes the procedures that were undertaken in accomplishing this study. The chapter highlights the research design, site selection, population and sample, instruments to be used for data collection, data collection procedure as well as techniques in data analysis.

3.2   Research Design

Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) hold the view that research design is the process the researcher follows from the inception to conclusion of the study for data collection.   Nachmias and Nachmias (2005) hold the view that the research design is the "blueprint" that enables the investigator to come up with solutions to problems and guides him or her in the various stages of research. The research design to be employed in this study is the survey method. A survey is an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to establish the current status of the population with respect to one or more variables. The survey design is a method of data collection in which information is gathered through (oral or written) questioning. It seeks to obtain information that describes the existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, behaviours or values. It is also used for explaining or exploring the existing status of two or more variables at a given point in time, Mugenda & Mugenda (2003). Survey research is among the most commonly used methods in research.

Surveys constitute excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes orientations, opinions and behaviours in a large population. Survey research enables the PR practitioner to know whether target audiences are receiving and decoding intended messages correctly (Sietel, 1987: 122). The survey method has been selected as a research design because it will enable the study to find out individual opinions, attitudes and behaviors of the selected sample of employees of the University of Nairobi.

3.3   Research or Study Site

This study was conducted at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, one of the faculties in the College of Agriculture & Veterinary Sciences, University of Nairobi. The Faculty offers training of veterinary, wildlife and biomedical related fields and began as part of Makerere University in 1962. The site was been chosen to represent the University since it is not possible to study the entire university which has a workforce of approximately six thousand (6,000) employees who are scattered in its six colleges located within and out of the city of Nairobi.

3.4   Population and Sample

For purposes of this study, the population or sampling frame to be examined were the employees of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi. Deacon et al (1999) state that a sampling frame is a list that should contain all (or most) of the elements in a population that is to be sampled. The sampling frame in this study was the list of 270 employees (both permanent and temporary) working in the five departments and one farm which comprise the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.

Because of the limited time and resources, a stratified random sample of 15% of the population was studied, which means 41 respondents. Nachmias and Nachmias (2005) state that researchers use stratified sampling primarily to ensure that different groups of population are adequately represented in the sample so as to increase their level of accuracy when estimating parameters. Furthermore, all other things being equal, stratified sampling considerably reduces the cost of execution. Sampling from the different strata can be either proportional or disproportional. If you select the same number of sampling units from each stratum, or a uniform sampling fraction (n/N), the sampling is known as a proportionate stratified sample because the sample size drawn from each stratum (n) is proportional to the population size of the stratum (N).

The five departments and one farm in the faculty constituted the strata from which sample respondents were selected in proportion of the size of each unit to the entire population as shown in the following table.

Fig 1: Sample Size

Department/Unit	Population	Sample
Department of Animal Production	40	6
Department of Clinical Studies	63	10
Department of Public Health, Pharmacology & Toxicology	41	6
Department of Veterinary Anatomy & Physiology	48	7
Department of Veterinary Pathology, Microbiology & Parasitology	46	7
Veterinary Farm	32	5
TOTAL	270	41

N = 270   n = 41

3.5 Data Collection Tools/Instruments

Primary data was collected in this study using a structured questionnaire designed for that purpose. The questionnaire is considered as the basic tool in a survey research. It standardizes and organizes the collection and analysis of data. Once it is printed, each respondent is asked the same questions in exactly the same way.

The questionnaire (combining both closed and open ended questions) which was self-administered was issued to the selected sample population. It consisted of two sections; Section I comprised of demographic characteristics which were aimed at creating some kind of rapport with the respondents while Section II consisted of questions concentrating on the pertinent data required for this study.

The questionnaire as a data collection instrument was chosen because of its efficiency in getting a lot of reliable data from many respondents within a short time. The choice was also guided by the fact that the researcher needs not be there to obtain the information required in person. This saved on time and even cost, though at times the respondents may not seriously respond to it. In

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this regard, I endeavoured to be with some of the respondents in a kind of face-to-face interview to take their responses. This was mostly with the lesser educated respondents among the faculty staff.

3.6   Data Collection Procedure

This entails the step by step actions completed by the researcher in order to get the data required for the project. Immediately after the acceptance of my proposal, I sought the authority of the relevant officers of the University to carry out my research. After the authority was granted, I did a pilot study in two departments in the faculty to pretest the data collection instrument. The purpose of a pilot study was to come up with a final questionnaire, with the aim of achieving a higher degree of validity and enhancing the participants' understanding of the questions. The piloting exercise also enhanced the appropriateness of the questionnaire length to avoid overburdening of the respondents. Wimmer and Dominick (2003) state that long questionnaires cause fatigue, respondent mortality, and low completion rates.

Following the piloting exercise, I established a link person in every department/unit to assist in identifying the respondents. This was followed by the distribution of the questionnaires to my sample population in every department/unit. Through my link person, I personally issued the questionnaires to the sampled respondents. The respondents were requested to hand in the filled questionnaires within two weeks either in person or through the organization's internal mail delivery system. Where possible, I guided my respondents through the questionnaire filling process, clarifying some of the questions where necessary. I assured the respondents of confidentiality and stressed anonymity when responding to the questions and also indicated that respondent(s) were free to omit answers to any questions that they felt uncomfortable with. I also indicated that in writing my report, I would report anonymously without identifying any of the respondents. The researcher closely monitored the returning of the questionnaires through the link persons in every department/unit which were then filed in a folder in readiness for data analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

After collecting the primary data, it is important to analyse it in order to establish the common variables amongst the selected sample population or respondents. The analysis allowed the researcher to translate the raw data into useable information. Both qualitative and quantitative data was be generated from the research. Qualitative data from the questionnaires was analyzed manually while quantitative data will be analyzed using the EPi Info statistical analysis software. The results of the data analysis were presented statistically using tables, bar charts and pie charts. These tables and charts were then used in data interpretation and drawing of the findings of the study. The interpretation and findings of the study led to making some conclusions. It is from these conclusions that the recommendations of the study were drawn.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

While administering the questionnaires, the researcher made it clear that filling of the questionnaire was on a voluntary basis and that high levels of confidentiality would be maintained on the data so provided. The respondents were not required to provide any names on the questionnaire and that the data collected was to be used only for purposes of the study and was not to be revealed to any other party. However, the findings and recommendations of the study may be shared with the University administration with a view to improving on employee communications.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It entails how the data was analyzed and the outcomes of the study which were sought in the questionnaire, with focus on those questions geared towards the achieving the objectives of the study.

In the beginning, the purposes of this study were to identify the approaches to employee communications used at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine; to examine the perceptions of staff on the effectiveness of these approaches; to establish the uses of employee communications at the Faculty; to determine staff performance; and to make recommendations on interventions to improve employee communications at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi.

For the purposes of this study, responses were sought from a sample of fourty one (41) employees of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine who are in both permanent and temporary terms of employment. The data provided by the respondents was then analyzed. This was done in tables, pie charts and bar charts under various subheadings as shown below, starting with the respondents demographic characteristics.

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4.2   Demographic Characteristics

Figure 2:   Gender of subjects
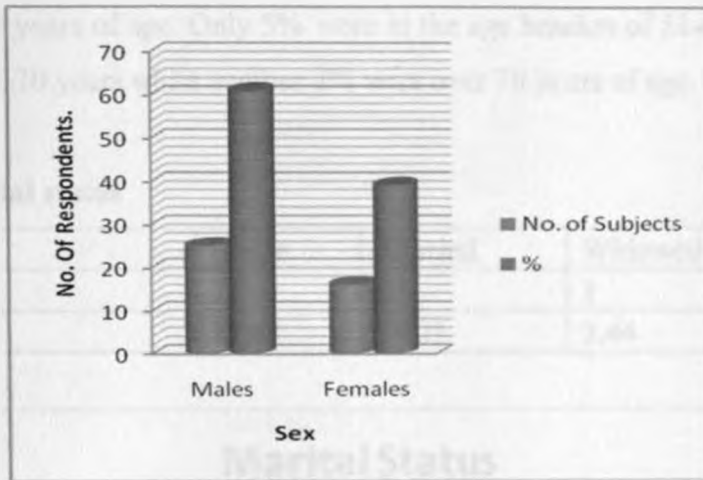
According to the information provided in Figure 2 above, sixty one percent (61%) of the respondents were male while thirty nine (39%) of the respondents were female.

Figure 3:   Age

	21-30yrs	31-40yrs	41-50yrs	51-60yrs	61-70yrs	Above 70yrs
No. of Subjects	18	12	7	2	1	1
%	43.9	29.27	17.07	4.88	2.44	2.44
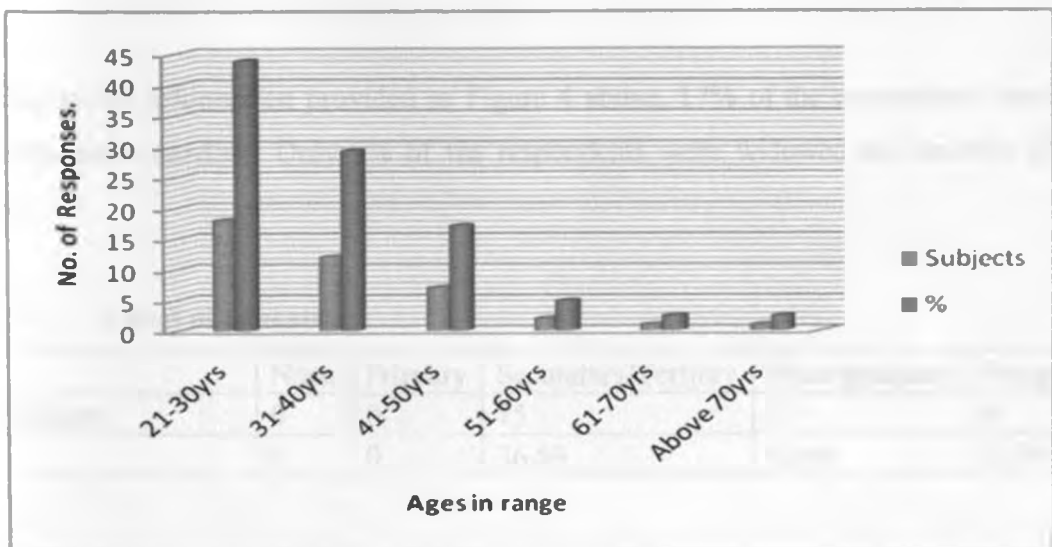
In terms of age distribution as per Figure 3 above, fourty four (44%) of the respondents were in the age bracket of 21-30 years, 29% were in the bracket of 31-40 years while 17% were in the age bracket of 41-50 years of age. Only 5% were in the age bracket of 51-60 years, 2% were in the age bracket of 61-70 years while another 2% were over 70 years of age.

Figure 4:   **Marital status**

	Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced
No. of subjects	7	32	1	1
%	17.07	78.05	2.44	2.44
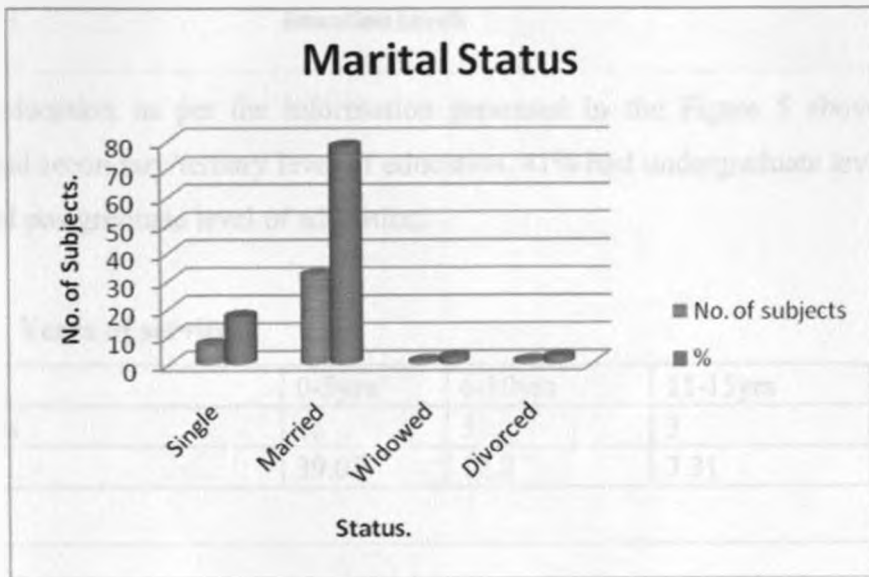
According to the information provided in Figure 4 above, 17% of the respondents were single while 78% were married. Only 2% of the respondents were widowed and another 2% were divorced.

Figure 5:   **Level of education**

	None	Primary	Secondary/Tertiary	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
No. of subjects	0	0	15	17	9
%	0	0	36.59	41.46	21.95
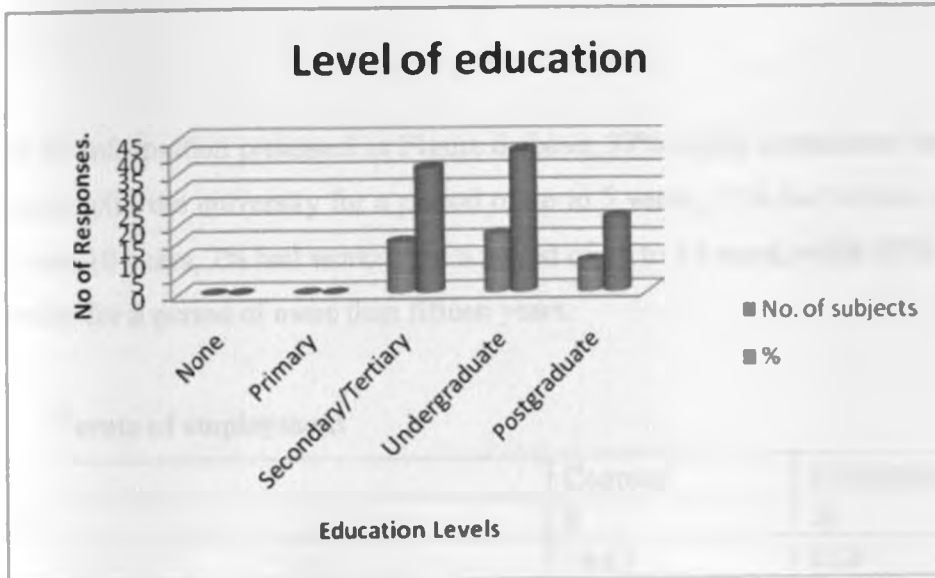
Level of education

In terms of education as per the information presented in the Figure 5 above, 37% of the respondents had secondary/tertiary level of education, 41% had undergraduate level of education while 22% had postgraduate level of education.

Figure 6:   Years of service

	0-5yrs	6-10yrs	11-15yrs	over 15yrs
No. of subjects	16	5	3	17
%	39.02	12.2	7.31	41.46

Years of Service
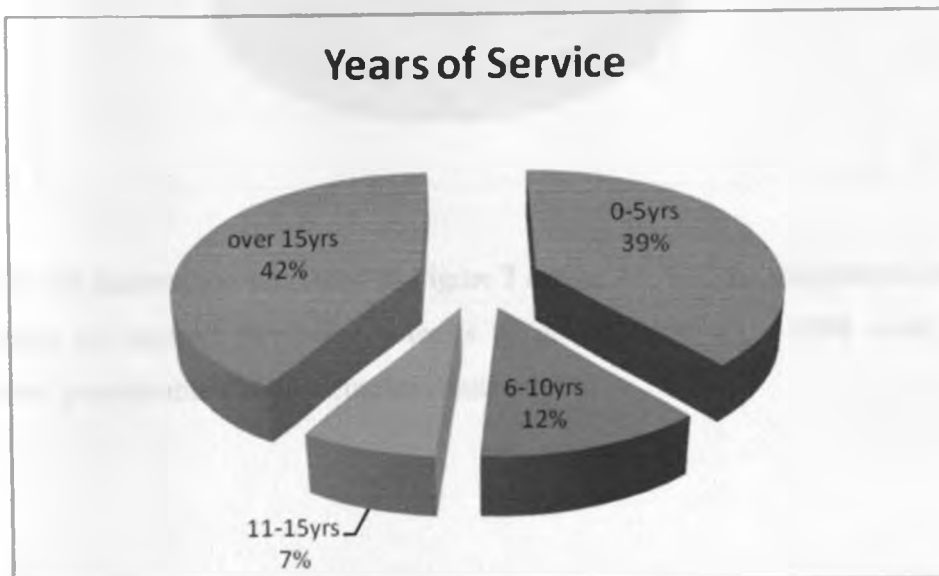
According to the information presented in Figure 6 above, 39% of the respondents indicated that they had worked with the university for a period of up to 5 years, 12% had worked for a period of between 6 and 10 years, 7% had worked for a period of 11 to 15 years, while 42% had worked for the university for a period of more than fifteen years.

Figure 7:   Terms of employment

	Contract	Permanent
No. of subjects	6	35
%	14.63	85.37

According to the information presented in Figure 7 above, 15% of the respondents were serving the University on contract (temporary) terms of employment while 85% were serving on permanent and pensionable terms of employment.

4.3   Approaches to Employee Communications

Figure 8:   Flow of information at the Faculty

	Top to bottom	Bottom to top	Informal/Lateral/ horizontal
No. of subjects	39	1	1
%	95.12	2.44	2.44
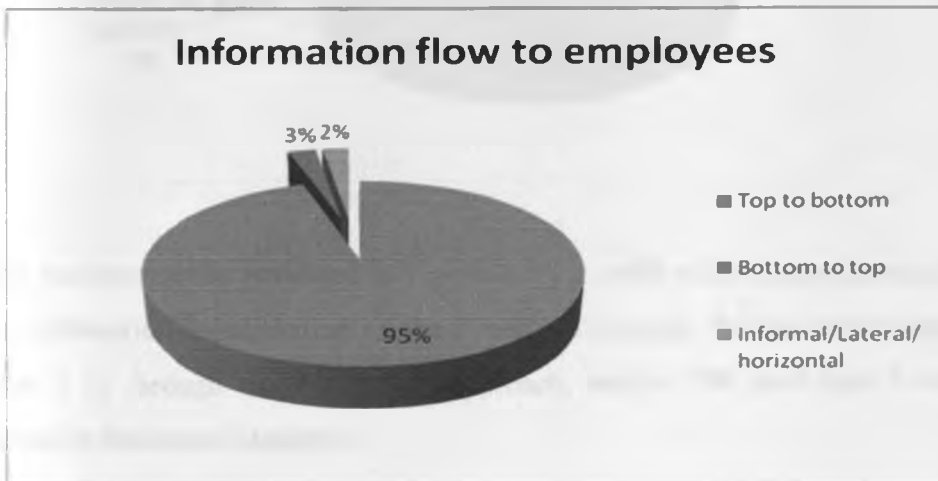
According to the information presented in Figure 8 above, 95% of the respondents indicated that information flow in the faculty is from top to the bottom of the organization structure, 3% of the respondents felt that the information flows from the bottom to the top of the organization structure, while 2% of the respondents indicated that the information flows through informal/lateral or horizontal channels.

Figure 9:   Dominant approach to employee communications

	Top bottom approach	Bottom up approach	Informal channels
No. of subjects	28	2	11
%	68.29	4.88	26.83

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Dominant Approach to employee communications

Informal channels 27%

Bottom-up approch 5%

Top-bottom approach 68%
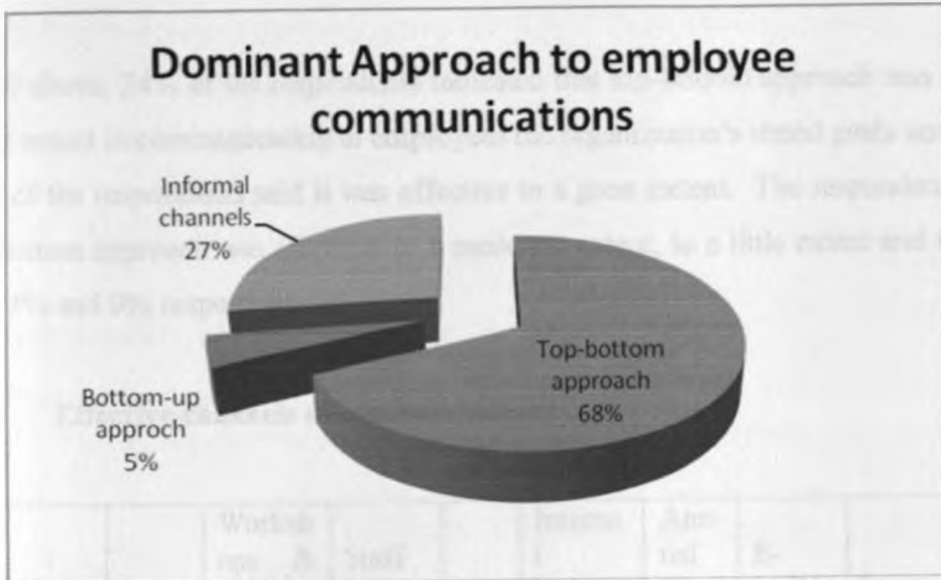
According to the information presented in Figure 9 above, 68% of the respondents indicated that the bulk of information to employees at the Faculty is through the top-bottom approach, 5% indicted that it is through the bottom–up approach, while 27% said that it was through informal/lateral or horizontal channels.

Figure 10: **Effectiveness of top-bottom approach**

	A very great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Little extent	No Extent
No.	10	18	12	1	0
%	24.39	43.9	29.27	2.44	0

Effectiveness of Top-bottom approach

Little extent 3%

Moderate extent 29%

No Extent 0%

A very great extent 24%
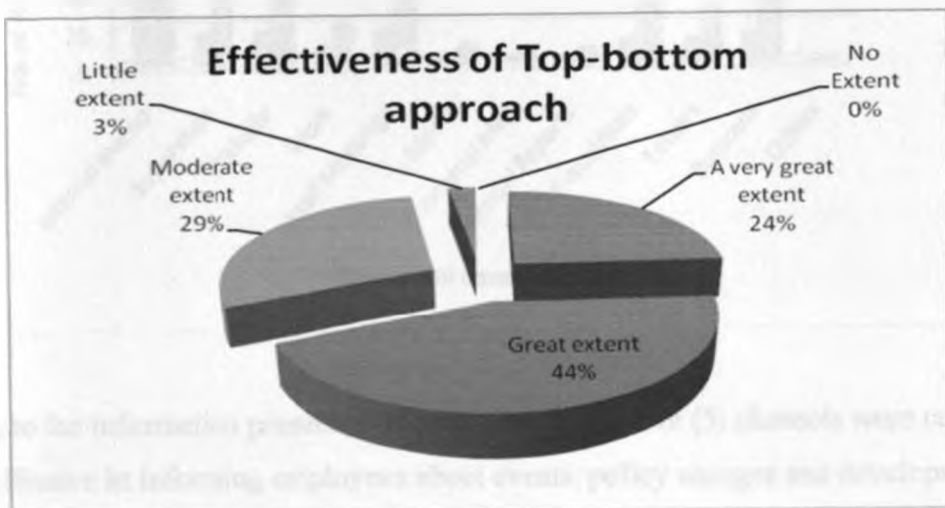
Great extent 44%

In Figure 10 above, 24% of the respondents indicated that top-bottom approach was effective to a very great extent in communicating to employees the organization's stated goals and objectives while 44% of the respondents said it was effective to a great extent. The respondents who said that a top-bottom approach was effective to a moderate extent, to a little extent and to no extent were 29%, 3% and 0% respectively.

Figure 11:   Effective channels of communications

	Internal memo	Supervisor	Website	Workshops & seminars	Staff Meetings	Media	Internal Magazines	Annual Reports	E-mail/sms	Letters	Grapevine	Others
No.	40	16	17	8	18	4	2	3	13	12	15	0
%	97.56	39.03	41.46	19.51	43.9	9.76	4.88	7.32	31.71	29.27	36.59	0
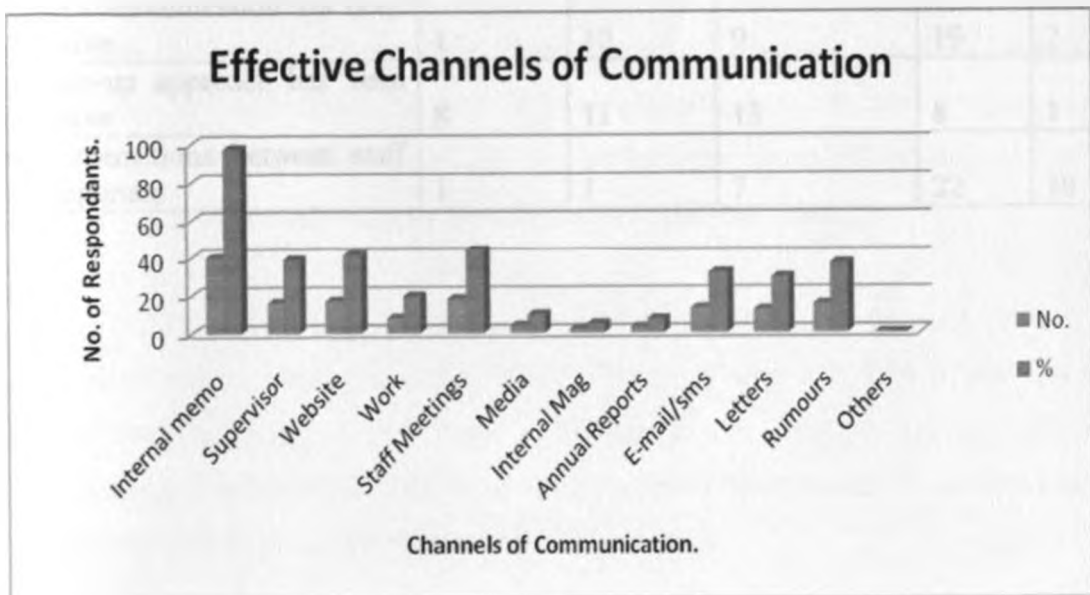
According to the information presented in Figure 11 above, five (5) channels were considered as the most effective in informing employees about events, policy changes and developments in the

Faculty. These channels were internal memos, (cited by 96% of the respondents), staff meetings (44%), website (41%), supervisor (39%) and grapevine (37%). Other significant channels of communication at the Faculty cited by respondents included emails/short text messages (32%) and letters (29%).

4.4 Staff Perceptions of Employee Communications

Figure 12: Perception on effectiveness of employee communications

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The Uni has changed a lot in the last 5yrs	0	2	13	20	6
The Uni has changed for the better in the last 5yrs	2	4	15	14	6
Improved performance is due to quality system management	2	4	9	24	2
ISO has led to improved employee communications	1	5	10	22	3
Since ISO employees complaints have reduced	4	9	20	6	2
Top-down communication has been very effective	1	10	9	19	2
The bottom-up approach has been very effective	8	11	13	8	1
Informal interactions between staff are also important	1	1	7	22	10

Perceptions on effectiveness of employee communications

Various Perceptions.
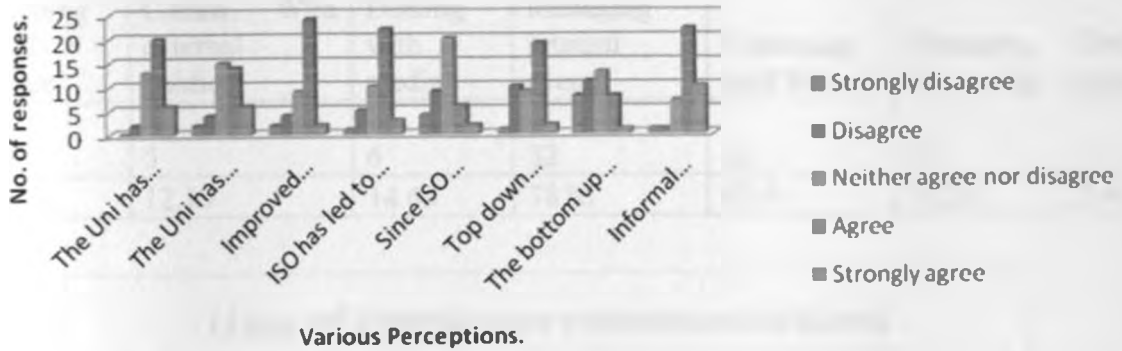
According to the information presented in Figure 12 above, over 63% of the respondents agreed that a lot at the University had changed in the last five years while 32% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Only 5% of the respondents said that the University had not changed in the last five years. Similarly, 49% of the respondents said that the University had changed for the better in the last five years. 63% of the respondents said that improved performance can be attributed to improvements in the University's quality management system. Further analysis of data showed that 61% of the respondents believed that the introduction of ISO procedures at the University had led to improvements in the internal/employee communications. However, when asked whether the introduction of ISO procedures had led to reduction in employee complaints, only 20% agreed with this statement.

Only about 50% of the respondents agreed that the top-bottom approach to employee communications had been effective at the Faculty. On the reverse side, 78% of the respondents felt that a bottom-up approach had been ineffective in the Faculty. Lastly, 78% of the respondents said that informal interactions between staff are important and also lead to sharing of useful information amongst staff for the benefit of the Faculty.

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Figure 13:   **Uses of employee communications**

	Keeping staff aware	Comm. With external publics	Dealing with media	Managing internal events	Enhancing staff Morale	Managing Uni. image	Don't know
No.	39	5	6	32	26	21	1
%	95.12	12.19	14.63	78.05	63.41	51.22	2.44
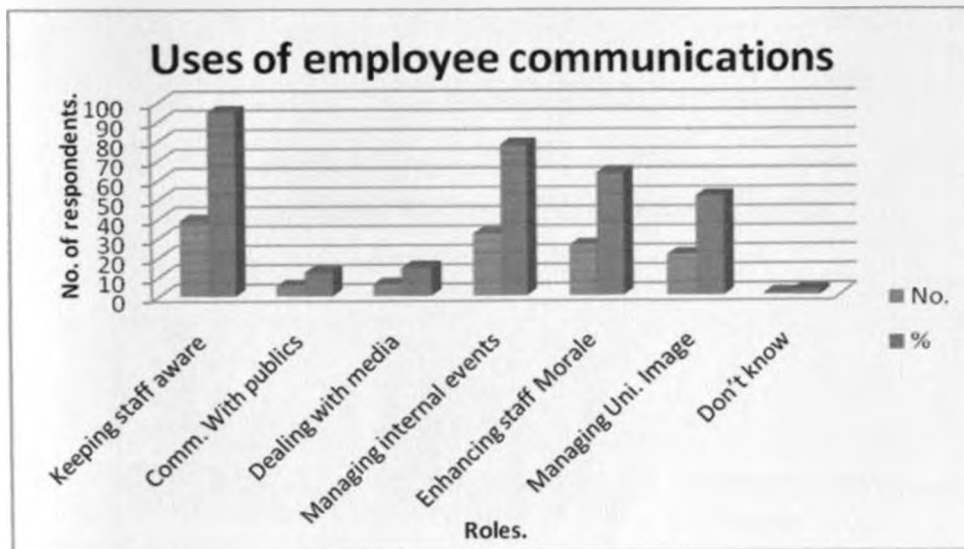
The respondents were also asked what roles employee communications had played in managing changes at the Faculty. According to the information presented in Figure 13 above, 95% of the respondents stated that employee communications helped to keep staff aware of the happenings in the organization, 78% of the respondents said it helped in organizing and managing internal events while 68% of the respondents felt that employee communications was an important factor in enhancing staff morale. Similarly 51% of the respondents said that employee communications helped in managing or the image of the University.

Figure 14: **Perceptions on staff performance appraisal**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Employees sceptical	5	5	4	18	9
Targets Imposed	8	7	6	13	7
Targets clearly communicated	10	8	7	13	3
Employees take SPA positively	12	6	9	13	1
Improvement on SPA	6	12	10	12	1
Improvement on employee comm.	5	6	14	15	1
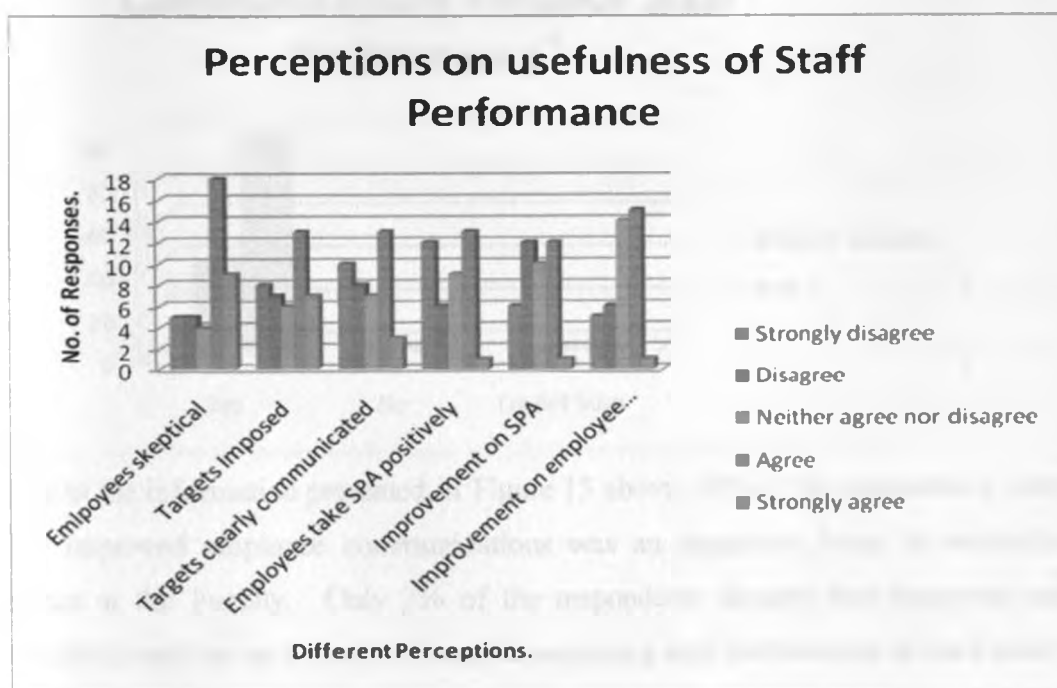
According to the information presented in Figure 14 above, more than half of the respondents (66%) agree that employees at the Faculty are skeptical about the staff performance appraisal (SPA) process. About half of the respondents (49%) felt that performance targets were imposed on staff while 39% said that targets were clearly communicated to staff. When asked their take on the SPA, only 34% indicated that they took the SPA results and feedback positively. Further analysis indicated that only 32 % of the respondents felt that there had been improvements in communication about the SPA process in the last five years. Similarly, 39% of the respondents

were of the view that improvements in employee communications had led to improved staff performance results in the last five years.

Figure 15: **Does improved employee communications enhance staff performance?**

	Yes	No	I'm not Sure
No. of Subjects	40	1	0
%	97.56	2.44	0

According to the information presented in Figure 15 above, 98% of the respondents were of the view that improved employee communications was an important factor in enhancing staff performance at the Faculty. Only 2% of the respondents thought that improved employee communications was not an important factor in enhancing staff performance at the Faculty.

Figure 16: **Extent to which employee communications can spur staff performance**

	A Very Great extent	A Great extent	A Moderate extent	A Little extent	No extent
No. of subjects	23	14	3	1	0
%	56.09	34.15	7.32	2.44	0

Extent to which effective communications can spur staff performance

Degree of extent.

According to the information presented in Figure 16 above, 90% of the respondents thought that effective employee communications could to a great extent spur performance at the Faculty while only 10% thought that effective employee communications could only to a moderate extent spur staff performance.

Figure 17:   Perceptions on usefulness of performance contracting

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Enhanced career growth	8	4	16	11	2
Students and staff queries handled faster	7	9	14	10	1
Productive and less productive staff identified	14	9	10	7	1
Greater job satisfaction	8	12	12	8	1
Staff more secure and confident at work	10	10	12	8	1

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Perception on usefulness of Performance contract
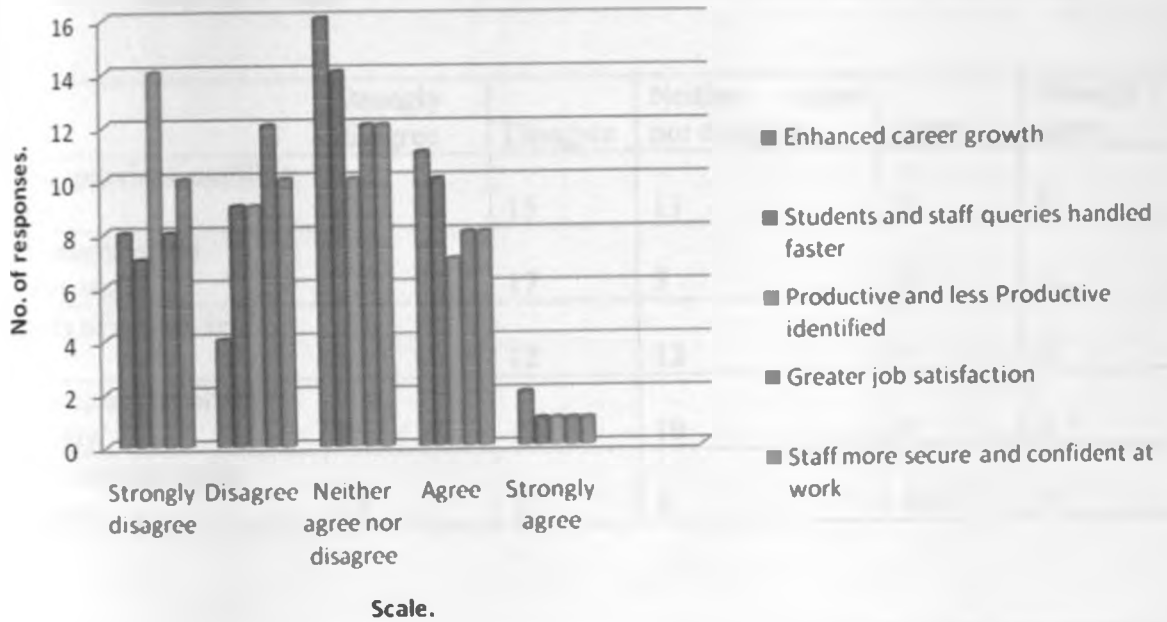
According to the information presented in Figure 17 above, 32% of the respondents agreed that performance contracting had enhanced career growth and development of staff. Only 27% of the respondents felt that since the introduction of performance contracting, students queries were handled faster. Similarly, only about 20% of the respondents said that since the introduction of performance contracting, productive and less productive staff were easily identified and rewarded or punished than ever before. Asked whether performance contracting had led to greater job satisfaction, only 22% of the respondents replied either agree or strongly agree. On the same breadth, only 22% of the respondents said that with the introduction of performance contracts, staff were more secure and confident in their jobs.

Factors influencing Management Perception of Employee Communications

Figure 18:   **Employer support to the accomplishment of Performance Contracting**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The Uni. provides enabling environ.	4	15	13	9	0
Mgmt monitors and evaluates staff	13	17	5	5	1
Channels of comm. are open	5	12	12	6	6
Employees are involved extensively	8	13	10	9	1
Metrics used are easily understood	12	11	8	10	0
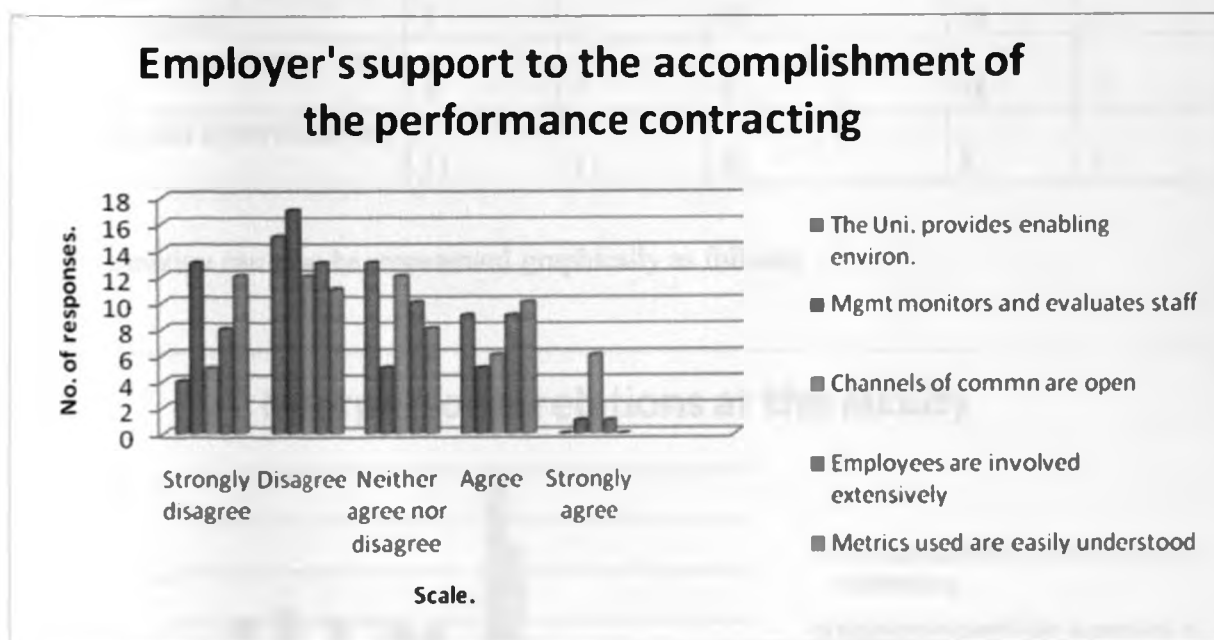
According to the information presented in Figure 18 above, 22% of the respondents said that the University provided an enabling environment for employees to accomplish targets. Only 15% of the respondents said that top management in the University continuously monitored and evaluated staff performance and rewarded good performers. Similarly, 29% of the respondents

said that the channels of communication were open, accessible and effective for purposes of inquiry and reporting while 24% indicated that employees are involved extensively and exhaustively in setting targets. Lastly, in this aspect of management perceptions, 24% of the respondents stated that the metrics used to gauge performance were easily understood and were not too subjective.

The respondents were then asked for their views on the interpersonal relations at the Faculty whereby they responded as follows:

Figure 19:   Interpersonal relations at the Faculty

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Managing change in the dept. not challenging	7	12	8	8	6
Relationship with the supervisor is good	1	1	10	24	5
There's openness and teamwork	4	5	9	18	5
Colleagues and supervisors use targets	11	11	10	8	1

This information can also be represented graphically as follows:

Interpersonal relations at the faculty

■ Managing change in the dept. not challenging

■ Relationship with the supervisor is good

■ There's openness and teamwork

■ Colleagues and supervisors use targets
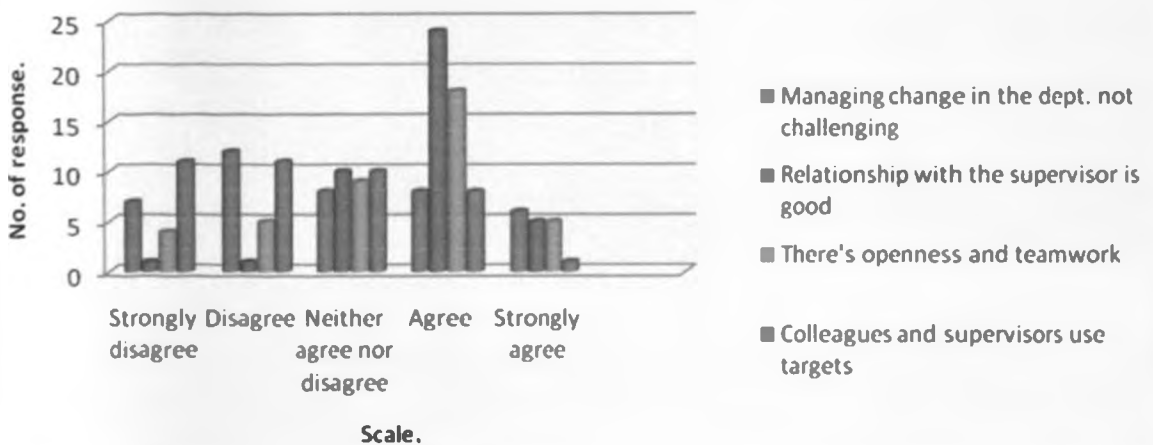
According to the information presented in Figure 19 above, about two-thirds of the respondents (66%) did not agree that managing change in their respective departments was not challenging. In terms of employer-supervisor relations, majority of the respondents (76%) indicated that the relationship with their supervisors was good and amicable. More than half of the respondents (56%) said that there was an atmosphere of openness and teamwork among colleagues and supervisors at the Faculty. However, only 22% of the respondents stated that colleagues and supervisors often used the performance targets and performance appraisal results as a point of reference when handling issues in the Faculty.

Lastly, the respondents were asked to make suggestions on how to improve employee communications in order to positively influence the performance of staff at the Faculty. Though the data provided in this section was more or less qualitative, the main aspects/suggestions provided by the respondents were represented graphically as shown below.

Figure 20:   Suggestions to improve employee communications

	Open Channels of Communication	E-communications	Remuneration	Mutual Respect	Regular Meetings	Transparency
No. of subjects.	17	5	8	2	16	2
%	37.78	11.11	17.78	4.44	35.56	4.44

Suggestions to improve employee communications
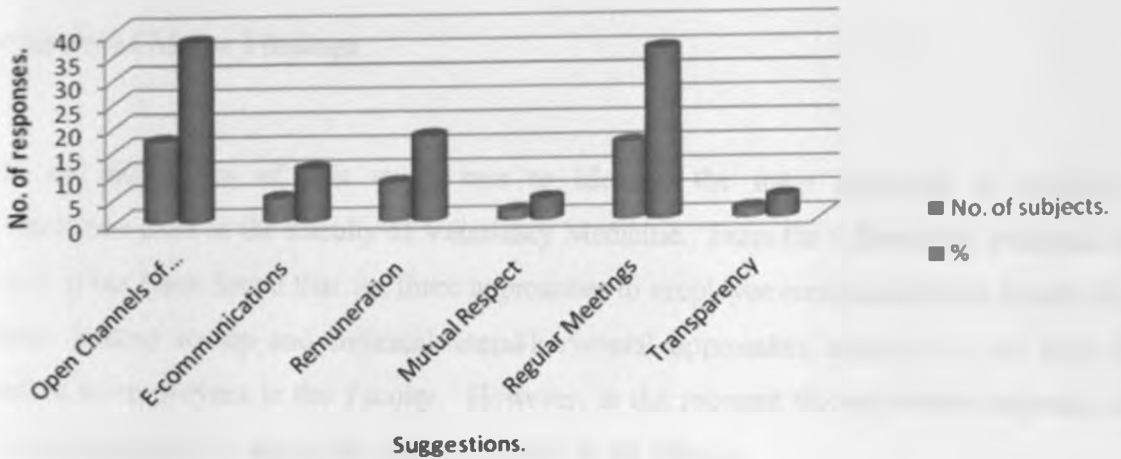
According to the information presented in Figure 20 above, 37% of the respondents said that employee communications at the Faculty level could be improved by adopting open channels of communication while another 36% cited use of regular consultative meetings with staff/employees. Additionally, 18% of the respondents indicated that attention should be paid to the remuneration of staff in the Faculty. On this last aspect, it would seem that the employees were demoralized or dissatisfied with the current terms of employment which should perhaps be reviewed to cater for the escalating costs of living in the entire nation. 11% of the respondents cited provision of computers and internet connectivity (e-communication) as an important factor in improving employee communications.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

One of the objectives of this study was to identify the main approach to employee communications used at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. From the information presented in Chapter 4, it has been found that the three approaches to employee communications namely top to bottom, bottom to top and informal/lateral/horizontal approaches account for the flow of information to employees in the Faculty. However, at the moment the top-bottom approach is the dominant approach to employee communication at the Faculty.

When questioned on the effectiveness of the top-bottom approach, about one-thirds (32%) of the respondents indicated that this approach may not be very effective in communicating to the employees the organization's stated goals and objectives. It has also been found that the main channels of communication in use at the Faculty include internal memos, staff meetings, the website, interactions with the supervisor and the grapevine. Email/short text messages and letters have also been used to some extent.

In terms of staff perceptions of employee communications, it has been found that majority of the respondents agreed that the University had changed a lot in the last five years and that the University had changed for the better. Majority of the respondents said that the improved performance of the University can be attributed to improvements in the University's quality management system and that the introduction of ISO procedures had led to improvements in the internal/employee communications. However, majority of the respondents did not consider the ISO procedures as effective in reducing employee complaints. Though the top-bottom approach was dominant in the Faculty, the use of the other approaches to employee communications should not be ignored. For example, it was found that majority of the respondents considered informal interactions between staff as important since they also lead to sharing of useful information amongst staff for the benefit of the entire Faculty.

Another objective of this study was to identify the uses of employee communications at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. It has been found that employee/internal communications at the Faculty has been mainly instrumental in keeping staff aware of what was happening in the organization, organizing and managing internal events; enhancing staff morale and managing the image of the University.

On staff performance appraisal, it was found that more than half of the respondents were skeptical about the staff performance appraisal (SPA) process and that about half of the respondents felt that targets were imposed on staff at the Faculty. Majority of the respondents felt that there have not been improvements in communication about the staff performance appraisal process. However, there were improvements in employee communications which had led to improved staff performance results in the last five years.

It was also found that majority of the respondents viewed employee communications as an important factor in enhancing staff performance. As a matter of fact, 90% of the respondents indicated effective employee communications can to a great extent spur staff performance at the Faculty.

In terms of perceptions on usefulness of performance contracting, it was found that majority of the respondents were indifferent on the main aspects sought in the questionnaire. Minority (27%) agreed that performance contracting had enhanced staff career growth and development. Majority did not think that students and staff queries were handled faster. Minority said that performance contracting had led to productive and less productive staff being easily identified and rewarded or punished. Few of the respondents said that performance contracting had enhanced job security and confidence to staff at the Faculty.

It was also found that majority of the respondents said that the University did not provide an adequate/enabling environment for employees to accomplish their targets and that the top management did not monitor and evaluate staff performance and reward good performers. Channels of communications were found to be fairly open, accessible and effective for purposes of inquiry and reporting. It would seem that employees were not involved extensively and constructively in setting of targets according to most respondents. Majority of the respondents also felt that the metrics used to gauge staff performance were not easily understood and were subjective.

On the aspect of interpersonal relations at the Faculty, it was found that majority of the respondents indicated that change management in the Faculty was quite challenging. It was also found that more than 75% of the respondents said that the employees-supervisor relations were good and amicable and that there was an atmosphere of openness and teamwork in the Faculty. It was, however, found that performance targets and performance appraisal results were not used as a point of reference when handling employee issues in the Faculty.

This study also sought to make suggestions on how to improve employee communications at the Faculty. From the study it was found that employee communications could be enhanced by adopting and enhancing openness and open and interactive channels of communication, holding regular consultative meetings, paying attention to remuneration of staff and provision of computers and internet connectivity (e-communications).

5.2   Conclusions

From the major findings of the study, it can be concluded that the top-bottom approach is the dominant employee communication approach used at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. However, it seems that this approach should be backed up by other approaches especially the informal/lateral/horizontal approach in order to effectively communicate to the employees at the Faculty.

The study sought to bring out the perceptions of staff on the approaches to employee communications used at the Faculty. It can be concluded from the findings of the study that the University had changed for the better in the last five years which could be attributed to the introduction of ISO procedures thereby leading to improvements in employee communications.

It can also be concluded that the employee communications in the Faculty had been used to keep staff aware of what was happening in the organization, organizing and managing internal events enhancing staff morale and enhancing the image of the University.

Another conclusion is that though the employees were skeptical about staff performance appraisal (SPA) process, majority agree that effective employee communications can to a great extent enhance staff performance. From the study, it can also be concluded that the employees in the Faculty do not fully understand the concept performance contracting and that management to a great extent did not either monitor and evaluate staff performance nor reward good performance.

However, the channels of communications were found to be fairly open and accessible. Interpersonal relations at the Faculty were good and amicable and that there was an atmosphere of openness and teamwork.

It can also be concluded that the employee communications in the Faculty could be improved further by enhancing open and interactive channels of communication, holding regular consultative meetings with staff and provision of computers and internet connectivity.

5.3   Recommendations

The following are some of the recommendations of the study:

1. Though the dominant approach to employee communications at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine seems to be the top-bottom approach, attention should also be paid to other approaches to further improve communication among the Faculty's staff. For example, the informal/lateral/horizontal approach to employee communications could be used as they were found to be very effective in the sharing of information amongst staff for the benefit of the entire Faculty.

2. The Faculty should uphold the spirit of openness and teamwork in managing the affairs of staff as this enhanced the morale of staff thereby leading to even better performance. This way the employees will be constantly kept informed of the happenings in the organization and therefore enhance their participation in the quest for the Faculty and indeed the entire University to attain word-class status.

3. The Faculty should consider holding sessions with its staff to demystify and explain the concept of performance contracting which at the moment seems not well understood by most employees of the Faculty.

4. To further improve employee communications, the Faculty should consider further opening up the channels of communication to encourage interactions among staff; encourage holding of regular interactive and consultative meetings between employees and their supervisors; and also provide the necessary tools of communication like computers and internet connectivity.

5. Another recommendation would be for the Faculty to consider setting aside some resources to reward the top performers. This will not only motivate employees to work harder but also raise their morale which cumulatively will improve the Faculty's position in the University.

6. Lastly, it is recommended that a study covering the entire University could be carried out to assess whether improvements in employee communications could lead to better staff performance as well as assess the understanding of staff on the concept of performance contracting.

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Appendix 1:

Introduction Letter

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
School of Journalism & Mass Communication

Telegram: "Varsity" Nairobi
Telephone: 254-02-2229168, 318262 Ext 28080 or 28061
Telex 22095 Fax: 254-02-229168
E-mail: director-soj@uonbi.ac.ke

P.O. Box 30197
Nairobi,
Kenya.

Date 21ˢᵗ September 2011

THE DEAN
FACULTY OF VETERINARY MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: DANIEL K.MACHARIA – REG. NO. K50/78381/2009

This is to confirm that the above named is a bona fide student at the University of Nairobi's School of
Journalism and Mass Communication, pursuing the Master of Arts degree
In Communication Studies.

Mr Macharia is carrying out a research on **The Role of Employee Communication as a tool for
enhancing Staff Performance at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,University of Nairobi**

Kindly accord him the necessary assistance

Paul N. King'oo
Administrative Assistant,

PNK/jm

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QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Daniel K. Macharia. I am an MA student at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Nairobi. As part of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Communication Studies, I'm required to undertake a research project. I am researching on **"The Role of Employee Communications as a Tool for Enhancing Staff Performance at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Nairobi".**

I would like to kindly request you to fill this questionnaire. All information provided in this questionnaire will be confidential and will only be used for purposes of this study. The questionnaire has two sections, **I and II**. The filled questionnaire may be returned personally to me or through the organization's internal mail delivery system. I look forward to your cooperation. Your input to this study is highly appreciated.

SECTION I: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (TICK [√] AS APPLICABLE)

1. Gender

(a) Male		(b) Female	

2. Age (years)

(a) 21-30	(b) 31-40	(c) 41-50	(d) 51-60	(e) 61-70	(f) Above 70

3. Marital status

(a) Single		(b) Married		c) Widowed		(d) Divorced	

4. Level of education

a) None	b) Primary	c) Secondary /Tertiary	d) Undergraduate	e) Postgraduate

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5. Occupation/ professional
   qualifications..

6. Department in Faculty..

7. How many years have you worked in the University of Nairobi?

Years of Service	(a) 0-5	(b) 6-10	(c) 11-15	(d) Over 15

8. What is your current grade in the institution? *(tick [√] as applicable)*

Grade	Tick (√)
a) Professor	
b) Associate Professor	
c) Senior Lecturer	
d) Lecturer	
e) Assistant Lecturer	
f) Tutorial Fellow	
g) E to F	
h) A to D	
i) I to IV	

9. Are you currently employed on contract or a permanent basis? *(tick [√] as appropriate)*

(a) Contract		(b) Permanent	

SECTION II:

A)   APPROACHES TO EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

10. How does information flow to employees at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine? (*Please tick [√] all that are applicable*)

a) From top to the bottom of the organization structure	
b) From bottom to the top of the organization structure	
c) Informal/lateral/horizontal communication channels (among employees)	

11. Of the above three methods, which one in your opinion accounts for the bulk of the employee communications at the Faculty currently? *Please tick [√] as applicable)*

a) Top bottom approach	
b) Bottom up approach	
c) Informal/lateral communication channels	

12. To what extent do you consider a top-bottom approach effective in communicating to employees the organization's stated goals and objectives? *Please tick [√] as applicable)*

a) To a very great extent	
b) To a great extent	
c) To a moderate extent	
d) To a little extent	
e) To no extent	

13. What channels have been instrumental in informing you about events, policy changes and developments in the Faculty? *Please tick [√] all that are applicable:*

a) Internal memo	
b) Immediate supervisor	
c) Website	
d) Workshops and seminars	
e) Staff meetings	
f) Media	

g) Internal newsletter/magazine	
h) Annual Reports	
i) E-mail and short text messages	
j) Letters	
k) Grapevine (Rumours)	
l) Others *(Please specify)*	

B) STAFF PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

Please use the following Likert scale to answer the remaining part of the questionnaire. Where required. tick [√] the appropriate rating.

1 = Strongly disagree,   2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree,   5 = Strongly agree

14. Perceptions on effectiveness various approaches to employee communications at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. *(tick [√] as appropriate)*

	1	2	3	4	5
a) The University has changed a lot in the last five years					
b) The University has changed for the better in the last five years					
c) The improved performance can be attributed to improvements in the university's quality management system					
d) The introduction of ISO procedures in the University have led to improvements in internal/employee communications					
e) Since the introduction of ISO in the university, employee complaints have reduced.					
f) The top-down approach to employee communications has been very effective at the Faculty					
g) The bottom-up approach to employee communications has been very effective at the Faculty					
h) Informal interactions between staff are also important and also lead to sharing of useful information for the benefit of the Faculty					

15. What do you think are the roles employee communications has played in managing changes at the Faculty? *Please tick [√] all that are applicable:*

a) Keeping staff aware of what is happening in the organization	
b) Communicating with external publics	
c) Dealing with media	
d) Organizing and managing internal events	
e) It's an important factor in enhancing staff morale	
f) Managing the image if the University	
g) I don't know	

16. Perceptions on usefulness of staff performance appraisal to staff. *(tick [√] as applicable)*

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Employees at the Faculty are skeptical about staff performance appraisal (SPA) process					
b) I feel that targets are imposed on staff					
c) Performance targets are clearly communicated to staff					
d) Employees take the SPA results and feedback on areas of improvement positively					
e) There have been improvements in communication about the SPA process over the last five years					
f) Improvements in employee communications has led to improved staff performance results in the Faculty over the last five years					

17. Do you think improved employee communications is an important factor in enhancing staff performance at the Faculty?

a) Yes	
b) No	
c) I'm not sure	

18. To what extent do you think that effective employee communications can spur staff performance at the Faculty? *Please tick [√] as applicable)*

a) To a very great extent	
b) To a great extent	
c) To a moderate extent	
d) To a little extent	
e) To no extent	

19. Perceptions on usefulness of performance contracting to the staff. *(tick [√] as applicable)*

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Performance contracting has enhanced career growth and development of staff.					
b) Since the introduction of performance contracting, students and staff queries are handled faster.					
c) Since the introduction of performance contracting, productive and less productive staff are easily identified and rewarded or punished more than before.					
d) Performance contracting has led to greater job satisfaction.					
e) With performance contracting, staff are more secure and confident in their jobs.					

C) FACTORS INFLUENCING MANAGEMENT PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

Please use the following scale to answer this section.

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = strongly agree

20. Employer support to the accomplishment of the performance contracts. **(tick [√] as applicable)**

	1	2	3	4	5
a) The university provides an enabling environment for employees to accomplish targets.					
b) Top management continuously monitors and evaluates staff performance and rewards good performers.					
c) The channels of communication are open, accessible and effective for purposes of inquiry and reporting.					
d) The employees are involved extensively and constructively in setting targets.					
e) The metrics used to gauge performance are easily understood and not too subjective.					

21. Interpersonal relations at the Faculty **(tick [√] as applicable)**

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Managing change in my department is not challenging					
b) The relationship with my supervisor is good and amicable.					
c) There is an atmosphere of openness and teamwork among colleagues and the supervisors.					
d) Colleagues and supervisors often use the performance targets and performance appraisal results as a point of reference when handling issues.					

22. Please make some suggestions on how to improve employee communications in order to positively influence the performance of staff at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. *(Please provide a short write-up below).*

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....
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Thank you very much for your support and contribution.