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Research Article

Examining the Long-Term Effect of Undermining Upward Communication and the Ramifications it has on Organisational Dynamics

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Abstract

This study examines the long term effects of undermining upward communication and the resulting implications for organisational dynamics within Namibia's hospitality industry, focusing specifically on private establishments in Windhoek. Although upward communication is widely recognised as a critical component of effective organisational functioning, it remains one of the most overlooked and least prioritised aspects of internal communication. Using a qualitative research approach, the study explores employees lived experiences, the structural and cultural barriers that inhibit free expression, and the organisational consequences that emerge when employee voices are silenced over time. The findings reveal that the absence of safe, structured, and intimidation free communication channels leads to diminished trust, reduced engagement, and heightened frustration among employees. These communication gaps gradually weaken organisational cohesion, strain workplace relationships, and contribute to long term challenges such as high staff turnover, reduced productivity, and compromised service delivery, factors that directly threaten the sustainability and competitiveness of hospitality establishments. The study further demonstrates that upward communication is deeply intertwined with leadership style, organisational culture, and the perceived psychological safety of employees. When employees feel empowered to express concerns, share feedback, and contribute ideas, organisations benefit from improved problem solving capacity, stronger teamwork, and enhanced service quality. On the contrary, when upward communication is neglected, organisations risk

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stagnation, unresolved conflict, and a decline in overall performance. By addressing a gap in existing literature, particularly the limited research on upward communication within Namibia's hospitality sector, this study contributes new insights into how communication structures shape organisational outcomes in service driven environments. The research concludes with practical recommendations for establishing transparent, inclusive, and reliable communication systems that support employee voice and strengthen long term organisational effectiveness.

Keywords: Role of communication, crisis management, crisis communication, communication strategies

1. Introduction

Effective communication is a central element of organisational success, and within this framework, upward communication plays a particularly critical role. Upward communication refers to the flow of feedback, concerns, ideas, and reports from employees to higher level management, serving as a modern mechanism that enhances employee participation, reinforces their sense of value, and contributes to improved organisational performance. When employees are provided with safe and reliable channels to express their views, organisations benefit from stronger decision making, increased trust, healthier workplace relationships, and greater overall productivity (Folake & Abisola, 2022). This chapter examines the importance of upward communication in shaping organisational effectiveness within Namibia's hospitality industry. The background of this study, the objectives guiding the study, and the hypothesis that effective upward communication strengthens organisational trust and performance is all carefully outlined in this chapter. It further highlights the significance of the research, the rationale for focusing on the hospitality sector, the methodological limitations of the qualitative approach, and the need to define key concepts to ensure clarity throughout the study.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the research project entitled "Examining the Long-Term Effect of Undermining Upward Communication and the Ramifications it has on Organisational Dynamics" on the importance and necessity of effective and safe upward communication submitted to the Namibia University of Science and Technology, is a record of an original work done by me under the supervision of Dr. Elijah Mukubonda a lecturer at Namibia University of Science and Technology. This project is submitted in the partial fulfilment of the

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Bachelor of Communications (Honour's) degree. The work embodied in this thesis has not been submitted to any university or institute of any degree or diploma. The collaborative contributions have been indicated clearly and acknowledged.

1.1 Background of study

Namibia has a diverse workforce, and its systems are regulated and governed by labour laws designed to protect both employees and employers, though primarily employees. However, this protection is not always effectively enforced. Different establishments have their structures and channels of communication, yet one fundamental truth remains the same across all organizations: for mutual understanding, peace, and a healthy working environment, effective communication is essential. Open communication between employees and their superiors encourages empowerment and a sense of belonging (Sampa & Hossain , 2024). There is a significant gap in many company communication systems that is often overlooked. When ignored, this gap poses a serious risk to the organization, particularly when employees lack a safe, intimidation-free channel where they can express their opinions freely and without fear of consequences.

The hospitality industry in Windhoek provides a particularly relevant case study for examining the challenges of upward communication. As a service-driven sector, hospitality depends not only on the quality of customer service but also on the efficiency of internal collaboration among employees and management. Hotels and restaurants thrive on teamwork, adaptability, and responsiveness to client needs, all of which are directly influenced by how well employees can communicate within the organization. When employees are denied safe and intimidation-free channels to voice concerns, share feedback, or propose innovative ideas, the result is often disengagement, frustration, and a breakdown in trust between staff and management. This lack of upward communication does not merely affect individual morale; it undermines organizational cohesion, weakens problem-solving capacity, and ultimately compromises service delivery, which is the lifeblood of the hospitality sector.

The consequences of neglecting upward communication extend beyond immediate workplace dissatisfaction. Over time, silenced employee voices can lead to systemic issues such as high staff turnover, reduced productivity, and stagnation in innovation. In industries like hospitality, where customer satisfaction and adaptability are critical, these long-term effects can erode competitiveness and sustainability. Therefore, it becomes imperative to investigate the barriers that prevent employees from speaking freely, whether these are rooted in

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hierarchical structures, fear of retaliation, or cultural norms. By exploring these barriers and their ramifications, this research seeks to provide actionable strategies for establishing safe, inclusive, and effective communication systems. These strategies will not only enhance employee engagement and organizational dynamics but also contribute to the broader discourse on how upward communication can serve as a cornerstone for sustainable growth in service-oriented industries.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Upward communication, where information flows from subordinates to superiors, is a vital component of organizational success but remains undervalued and underexplored in many workplaces. In Namibia's hospitality industry, particularly within private establishments in Windhoek, employees often lack safe and structured channels to voice concerns, share feedback, or present innovative ideas. This neglect creates a communication gap that undermines trust, reduces employee engagement, and weakens organizational cohesion, ultimately threatening the stability of workplace relationships and overall performance.

Most existing studies on internal communication emphasize downward communication or general corporate practices, with limited attention to the long-term consequences of ignoring upward communication in hospitality settings. As a result, organizations risk silencing employee voices, which leads to dissatisfaction, reduced productivity, and strained workplace dynamics. This research therefore seeks to address the critical problem of undermined upward communication by investigating the barriers that prevent employees from freely expressing themselves, examining the ramifications of neglecting upward communication over time, and proposing strategies to establish safe, inclusive, and effective communication systems within the hospitality industry.

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to highlight the gap in organizational communication, specifically the importance of upward communication. It seeks to investigate the consequences of failing to practice upward communication, explore what happens when employees' voices are not heard, and determine whether neglecting upward communication impacts the company.

The study looked at the following sub-objectives:

- Analysing the existing communication system in the hospitality industry.
- Identifying the gaps within communication systems in the hospitality sector.

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- Exploring ways in which ineffective upward communication affects the company dynamics.
- Strategizing ways to ensure employees have free and open communication, and have their opinions and feedback received by management in a way that is safe and comfortable for them.

1.4 Hypothesis

The study examined the long-term effects of undermining upward communication and the ramifications it has on organizational dynamics. Communication flow within the company, specifically how employees interacted with their superiors, was treated as the independent variable. The dependent variable was determined by the extent to which communication between employees and employers was effective, particularly whether employees could express themselves in a manner that was comfortable and free of barriers. Findings confirmed that when employees can provide feedback and have their opinions heard by their superiors, the organization fostered a healthier working environment characterized by reduced tension and greater satisfaction. Conversely, when upward communication is neglected, employees reported feelings of exclusion, frustration, and disengagement, which negatively impacted organizational cohesion and performance. These results validated the hypothesis that effective upward communication is a critical driver of trust, empowerment, and long-term organizational success.

1.5 Significance of the research

The study revealed that most existing literature had focused primarily on the broader concept of communication or offered limited insights into how upward communication affects employees in different contexts. By scrutinizing what happens when upward communication falters or is not prioritized, the research highlighted the long-term consequences of neglecting employee voices and the organizational risks that arise from such gaps. It further demonstrated the importance of establishing communication channels that employees find safe, comfortable, and free from intimidation, thereby ensuring that feedback and concerns are effectively received by management. The findings improved the understanding of upward communication not only within the hospitality industry but also within the broader framework of corporate communication.

The study further emphasized the significance of setting up positive operational communication systems that foster inclusivity, trust, and engagement. Importantly, the results

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contributed to the recognition of upward communication as a driving force in building successful organizations. While the research was conducted in the hospitality sector in Windhoek, its implications extend beyond this industry, as the challenges and benefits of upward communication are universal across diverse organizational settings.

This research is necessary because upward communication remains one of the least prioritized aspects of organizational communication, despite its proven influence on employee engagement, trust, and overall performance. In Namibia's hospitality industry, where service quality and teamwork are critical to success, the absence of safe and effective communication channels between employees and management creates long-term risks such as high staff turnover, reduced productivity, and weakened organizational cohesion. Existing studies have largely overlooked the hospitality sector, leaving a gap in understanding how silencing voices of employees in that industry affect organizational dynamics in service-driven environments. By addressing this gap, the study not only contributes to academic knowledge but also provides practical strategies for managers and policymakers to strengthen communication systems, ensuring sustainable growth and competitiveness in the hospitality industry and beyond. As explained by a few scholars, including the likes of (Adu & Badaru, 2022) It is imperative to lay out the importance of the study and all its potential benefits.

1.6 Delimitation of the research

This research explored and investigated how neglected upward communication affects organizational dynamics within the hospitality industry in Windhoek. The scope was intentionally limited to this sector and geographic location, excluding communication processes and styles in other industries or broader corporate settings. By narrowing the focus, the study was able to generate findings that were context-specific, reliable, and reflective of the realities faced by employees and management in the hospitality sector. The decision to concentrate on hospitality was based on its role as a primary service industry, where feedback and communication are critical drivers of business success. Employees in this sector operate within similar frameworks, face comparable working conditions, and rely on communication systems that directly influence customer satisfaction and organizational performance. This uniformity provided a consistent basis for analysis and ensured that the findings were grounded in shared experiences. While the study did not extend to other industries, the insights gained offer valuable implications for service-driven organizations more broadly,

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highlighting the importance of upward communication in fostering trust, engagement, and sustainable success.

1.6 Limitations of the proposed research

There is no study out there without identifiable and unidentifiable weaknesses that are commonly out of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Similarly, this study was limited by several factors that were beyond the researcher's control. One of the most significant limitations was the sample size, which was restricted to employees within the hospitality industry in Windhoek. While this focus provided depth and contextual relevance, it also meant that the findings could not be generalized to other industries or broader corporate environments. Additionally, not all participants were forthcoming with information, which affected the richness of the data collected and highlighted the challenge of relying on voluntary responses in qualitative research.

The research design itself also influenced the type and scope of data obtained. By adopting a qualitative approach, the study was able to capture subjective experiences, perceptions, and insights into upward communication. However, this method limited the ability to generate statistical data that could have strengthened the findings with quantitative evidence. As a result, while the study provided valuable thematic insights into communication dynamics, it lacked the numerical precision that might have allowed for broader comparisons across industries or demographic groups.

Future studies can overcome these limitations by adopting a mixed-methods approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Expanding the sample size to include employees from multiple hospitality establishments, as well as other industries, would allow for greater generalizability and comparative analysis. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track changes in communication practices over time, offering insights into how upward communication evolves with organizational growth, leadership transitions, or policy shifts. By broadening the scope and methodological tools, future research can build on these findings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of upward communication and its long-term impact on organizational dynamics.

1.7 Definition of keys

The definition of keys is done after a proper analysis of keywords that are to be used in the research of the proposed study (Molenaar, Steenvoorden, Van Den Berg, & Dalpiaz, 2022). After completing the study, it became clear that defining key concepts was essential to ensure

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consistency and accurate interpretation of the findings. Terms such as upward communication, open door policy, and social media were central to the research, shaping both the analysis and the outcomes. Providing clear definitions established a common language for participants and readers, allowing the study's results to be understood in relation to organizational dynamics within the hospitality industry in Windhoek.

Upward communication

According to (Folake & Abisola, 2022) Upward communication is considered a channel through which information flows up the chain of command from the lower and upper levels of the organizational chart. The flow of communication moves up the hierarchy from subordinates to their superiors. The information can be feedback, concerns, suggestions, reports, concerns, and contributions to the company.

Open-door policy

The open-door policy is a method of communication where employees are encouraged to openly communicate with their superior without reservation. The open-door policy ensures that anyone who wishes to speak to their superior is abet pp do so easily and freely. This policy allows employees to take the initiative and approach those in higher positions at all levels in the organization (Schodield, 2021).

Social media

Social media refers to online platforms or web-based applications that allow users to connect and engage through user-generated content. It is a set of interactive web applications used as platforms for communicating, public relations, marketing, and networking. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok are some of the most popular social media platforms (Asha, 2024).

Psychological safety

Collectively shared beliefs and standards held by members of a team, those beliefs includes the fact that it is okay to take risks, to express their ideas and concerns and speak up freely without fear of intimidations or negative consequences (Gallo, 2023).

Downward communication

Downward communication encompasses the official channels used by upper management to communicate with employees about company related matters. This ensures that information

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flows properly and that all employees remain aligned and working together toward shared organisational goals (Mkhize & Mutambara, 2025).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature review

This section provided a breakdown of studies by various scholars on the importance of upward communication and internal communication, as well as the implications faced when upward communication was not implemented in organizations or was ignored. The literature review presented a critical analysis of previous studies and investigations, with a particular focus on the effect of internal communication on organizational dynamics. The researcher examined different studies and critically analysed their correlation with the topic of interest. In addition, the review highlighted the gaps in earlier research and demonstrated how this study addressed those gaps by focusing specifically on upward communication within the hospitality industry.

(Zubair & Siddiqui, 2021) Investigate how internal communication functions, particularly concerning the open-door policy and its impact on employees' performance. The study aims to determine the mediatory role of positive emotional culture and employees' advocacy, complemented by ethical leadership. The primary finding of this study are as follows; employees feel satisfied when they are valued, included, and listened to, a corporate symmetrical environment is essential, as it supports feedback, and a positive emotional culture where employees can freely interact with their managers and supervisors, the daily engagement between superiors and subordinates fosters a positive emotional culture within the organization. The study further finds that if leadership is responsive and communication is employee-centered, it has a positive impact on employees, and they are motivated to do their jobs diligently and promptly. However, this study mainly focuses on making comparisons between emotional cultures, internal communication, and how internal communication affects ethical leadership. There is little to no emphasis on how poor internal communication negatively affects employees, nor is there enough discussion on the importance of upward communication and its contribution to the company dynamics. Additionally, the study relied on a quantitative method to investigate human behaviour, which limits the. chances of making a critical analysis and subjectivity. Study B by (Satterson, Vogus, Jung, & Kerrissey, 2024) explores the multilevel model of how frontline voice can reach implementation, this study also aims to raise awareness that frontline staff are just as important to the health care

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environment as their subordinates and should be heard and their ideas put into practice. The research found that more than 200 ideas voiced by frontline staff and patients have been rejected. Only 49 ideas were acted upon and reached the implementation stage, a process that took between 41 and 47 weeks after the ideas were proposed. Superiors struggle to believe the ideas raised by the subordinates are feasible or align with the organizational priorities. Additionally, those receiving the message are not always aware of what frontline staff can execute. The study also finds that the employees generally lack a common or shared language, making it difficult to take them seriously. The researcher determined that this study is closely related to the student's research topic and covers multiple aspects of upward communication. However, it is important to note that the study focuses solely on the healthcare sector, rather than upward communication in a broader organisational context. The study fails to examine the long-term effects of continuously ignoring frontline workers' voices. Instead, it highlights the benefits of including frontline workers but does not discuss the consequences of their voices being unheard or the negative implications for the healthcare facility over time. The failure to explore the implications of ignoring upward communication, particularly frontline workers' ideas and grievances, underscores the need for this current study 0 to address gaps left by existing research. Study C by (Pralea & Ryabicheva, 2020) investigates critical upward communication in higher education institutions. This qualitative study explores student feedback, the constraints affecting student communication, and the potential solutions to improve the process. The study finds that when provided an open channel for students to communicate freely with their supervisors, it results in what is known as feedback abuse; students often fail to be mindful of expressing themselves constructively and meaningfully. While the study focuses on the education system, rather than a corporate setting, the effects of upward communication remain relevant regardless of industry or context. Since communication is an essential part of daily operations, there is a need to specifically investigate how communication channels function within the hospitality industry rather than in an academic setting. Study D by (Elegbe, 2021) examines the influence of internal corporate communication on employees' job performance improvement. This study evaluates how effective communication contributes to organizational success and employees' productivity. The research finds that companies that invest in and actively engage in internal communication experience higher employee performance levels. However, the study also reveals that not all companies practice effective internal communication. Many employees at

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the lower level of the organizational chart reported that management does not inform or seek their opinion on relevant business matters. Additionally, the study finds that management consultation with the employees regarding company-related decisions led to 94.2% productivity output, freedom to discuss ideas and innovation within the company, including the staff producing 86.1% output, and management seeking the opinion and ideas of the employees produced 44.9% output. While the study clearly outlines its findings regarding employee communication and performance, it fails to address direct issues such as the specific communication channels used and whether safe practices are in place to create an intimidation-free environment for employees to voice their concerns. Furthermore, it does not mention what practices, if any, are implemented to facilitate employee communication with management. The decision to select only people who have worked at the company for four years or longer places importance on obtaining reliable statistics, but it excludes the observations and opinions of employees who have worked for less than four years. This limitation potentially overlooks key insights from new employees, whose experiences could provide a more comprehensive understanding of internal communications practices. Study E by (Ghani, 2023) explores the impact of social media on employee voice and emphasizes its importance in enhancing performance, creativity, and organizational culture. The study investigates how the emergence of social media affects internal communication and examines the extent to which employees use social media as a safe platform to express their frustration about work. The study reveals that employees prefer social media as a platform where their employee voice can be heard over traditional voice channels because it is real-time and more engaging. Social media allows employees to actively participate in organizational conversations and give their constructive opinions, disagreements, agreements, and suggestions. However, the study further elaborates that uncontrolled use of social media as an employee voice is disastrous, potentially posing a threat to the organization's reputation, employee privacy, customer privacy, and overall confidentiality. The study not only highlights the issues caused by a lack of clear channels but also launches an investigation into possible solutions, and how those solutions can be good or catastrophic. The focus remains largely on the role of social media in employee communication, with insufficient discussion on the need for reliable and structured communication channels within the organization.

Scholars (Sampa & Hossain , 2024) Investigates the effect of upward communication in conflict resolution: A case study of employers and employees in an organization, with the

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primary purpose of determining how upward communication aids in disputing resolution. The paper examined the typical barriers that keep employees from speaking freely with their superiors, barriers such as hierarchical structures, fear of retaliation, and just lack of confidence in management. The study found that upward communication plays an important role in fostering psychological safety, building trust in the organisation, and in resolving conflict early in the company before things escalate. Their finding implies that when employees feel safe to voice their concerns and ideas to their superiors, it creates a more transparent and collaborative environment. Based on the results of their finding, when employees feel safe to speak freely about their concerns and ideas to their superiors, this creates a more transparent and collaborative environment. And lastly, the effectiveness of upward communication is closely tied to the leadership style in the company, and additionally, organizational culture plays a very significant role in role in influencing communication flow. However, the study has a limited scope of organizational types, this is because the study focuses on a narrow range of industries, limiting the generalizability of its findings across diverse workplace settings that exist in this world. The study also lacks sufficient quantitative data to measure the actual impact of upward communication on conflict resolution outcomes, because it places more emphasis on psychological safety and trust. The study fails to explore how cultural norms or regional differences influence upward communication practices, which is a major loss because cultural norms vary significantly across countries or even multicultural organizations. Lastly, the study failed to track changes over time. Organizational frameworks and leadership styles typically change over time; failure to track those possible changes means the researchers miss out on seeing how upward communication evolves within organizational growth, or policy shifts (Larsson, 2020). These findings are a clear indication that there is a need to investigate the subjects surrounding upward communication and its effectiveness, until there are no more grey areas left.

The research paper by (Labrador , 2025) titled “The Upward and Downward Communication: Its Impact on the Flow of Communication in the Workplace” evaluates and examines the effectiveness of a school’s upward and downward communication, as well as its effect on organizational alignment, decision-making, and employee engagement. The study finds that upward and downward communication are not separate concepts; as much as they need to exist simultaneously to create an environment where the communication system works, both concepts significantly influence organizational alignment, decision making, and employee

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engagement. According to the paper, downward communication is found to be more structured and frequent, which is important in clarifying goals and expectations. Upward communication, on the other hand, is less consistent and is often hindered by unclear channels or fear. Like many other research papers, the study failed to incorporate longitudinal data to really indicate how communication patterns evolve, mainly during leadership transitions or policy shifts. The study is also limited to a single institution, and this limits the validity of the research findings. The researcher did not do enough to explore the influence of digital communication, especially considering the reality that the study was published recently in the age of digital communication. The study completely ignored how demographics such as age, gender, and many others affect communication preferences and effectiveness. As (Manoj, 2025) said, there is a need to ensure that upward communication strategies are tailored to accommodate diverse demographics to ensure inclusivity and engagement across the workforce. Factors like age seem small, but they have a very big impact on how communication flows in the organization. The gaps identified is a clear indication that there is still a lot to investigate in terms of workforce communication and the effectiveness of existing systems.

The research paper by (Ogundipe & Adelugba, 2022) dives into upward communication as a modern technique for employee participation and performance improvement in a hotel in Ekiti, Nigeria. The study investigates how information flows from employees to management, best known as upward communication, and how it affects employee performance in the hospitality sector. The study finds that there is a positive correlation between upward communication and employee performance. It finds that employees tend to be more productive when they feel heard. It further suggests that there exists an element of trust between employees and management, as well as boosted morale when they feel heard and can easily engage their superiors. Besides productivity and boosted morale, the good and clear communication channels in the hotel also reduce tension in the workplace. The study additionally identified barriers such as poor communication structures, hierarchical rigidity, fear of reprisal, as well as lack of feedback. However, the solid understanding of positive effects of upward communication in the hospitality industry provided by the research paper does not fully capture the complexity and broader implications of upward communication across different sectors, cultures and organizational structures, it especially does not give a world-wide representation of the communication structures in hospitality worldwide, which is

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why there is need to investigate upward communication in other places, not just Nigeria, especially because cultures differ.

Study F by (Gbarale & Lebura, 2020) investigates the whole concept of vertical communication and employee performance in emerging economy public organizations. The main goal of the paper is to highlight the importance of organizational culture. The study finds that there is a vital relationship between vertical communication and employee performance; effective organizational performance depends highly on how open the organization's communication environment is. It is further established that both upward and downward communication should be practiced in the company to achieve success in the organization. The findings of this study conclude that all the studies come to the same conclusion: internal communication is imperative to the success of the organization.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study used organizational communication as a theoretical framework. According to (Winarso, 2018) organizational communication provides a set of concepts and theories that show how communication functions within an organization, and the influence it has on company operations and effectiveness. (Winarso, 2018) further explains that organizational communication is a vital aspect of the company's operations, especially interactions between subordinates and their superiors within the company. The theoretical framework was suitable for the study because it investigated the importance of upward communication, which is a form of internal communication within a hotel. Organizational communication was understood as a broader process that encompasses various perspectives, theories, and approaches to communication within an organization. The study focused on employees from the Roof of Africa Hotel in Windhoek, who had been employed in the company for at least a year. These participants provided valuable insights, as they had firsthand experience interacting with colleagues, clients, and management. Their lived experiences offered a reliable basis for analysing how upward communication influenced organizational dynamics and highlighted the practical relevance of the theoretical framework adopted. The study specifically targets hospitality employees because, as (Teskera, 2023) states in her proceedings, hospitality is a show business where customer care is a primary goal. the study confirmed that effective communication was essential to ensuring good customer service. It is not enough to simply follow the client's instructions; Since clear and effective communication proved to be crucial for client interactions, the research investigated whether the same level of

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courtesy and respect was extended to employees by their superiors. The findings revealed that when managers communicated with employees in a manner that mirrored the courtesy shown to clients, workplace relationships improved, trust was strengthened, and organizational performance benefited. Conversely, when such courtesy was absent, employees reported dissatisfaction and disengagement, which negatively affected service delivery.

Communication theories such as cybernetic theory, leader-member exchange theory, spiral of silence theory, organizational communication theory, open systems theory, bureaucratic theory, and participation decision-making theory highlight how communication flows within an organization, theories that highlights the crucial role of establishing consistent and dependable communication channels within an organization (Tripathi, 2024).

Spiral of Silence Theory

This study is guided by Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory. The theory highlights the importance of inclusion within the organization, by stating that many people do not speak out when they recognize that they do not stand with the popular voice on issues affecting them, for fear of being isolated (Ramazan , Rauf , & Hassan, 2023). Upward communication proved to be essential for organizational success, as it fostered key elements such as engagement, innovation, and transparency. The significance of the spiral of silence theory was evident in the study, as it helped explain why employees often hesitated to voice their opinions and ideas in the workplace. Poor upward communication was found to occur for several reasons: employees feared holding a different opinion from the majority, felt intimidated by hierarchical structures, or experienced pressure to conform to prevailing views. The research examined the suppression of subordinate opinions within the hotel and explored the factors contributing to the lack of upward communication. Findings revealed that employees' willingness to speak freely was limited by both organizational culture and perceived risks of challenging authority. Assessing the extent of free speech within the organization provided valuable insights into employees' perspectives on the status quo, highlighting the need for safe and inclusive communication channels to strengthen trust and organizational cohesion.

The Spiral of Silence Theory proved highly useful in this study as it provided a theoretical lens through which employee silence and hesitation could be understood. The theory explains that individuals often suppress their opinions when they perceive themselves to be in the minority or fear negative consequences for speaking out. Within the hospitality industry in

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Windhoek, this framework was necessary to interpret why employees refrained from voicing concerns, offering feedback, or challenging management decisions, even when such input could improve organizational performance. By applying the Spiral of Silence Theory, the research was able to connect psychological and social dynamics, such as fear of isolation, intimidation, and conformity pressures, with organizational communication practices.

The necessity of this theory lay in its ability to bridge the gap between abstract communication concepts and the lived realities of employees. Without it, the study would have lacked a structured explanation for the suppression of subordinate voices and the persistence of poor upward communication. The theory provided a foundation for analysing how organizational culture and hierarchical structures amplify silence, thereby weakening engagement and innovation. The Spiral of Silence Theory aligned directly with the study's objectives of assessing the extent of free speech within the organization and understanding employees' perspectives on communication dynamics. It allowed the research to link individual employee behaviour to broader organizational outcomes, demonstrating that silence is not merely a personal choice, but a systemic issue shaped by workplace conditions. Ultimately, the theory enriched the study by offering both explanatory power and practical relevance, showing that breaking the spiral of silence is essential for fostering transparency, trust, and long-term organizational success.

2.3 Research Gap

While the existing literatures offer considerable insights into company communication and upward communication in general, the findings of this study confirm that there remains a lack of focused research on the significance of upward communication within the hospitality sector. To date, numerous studies have investigated the effects of upward communication in different organizations; however, only a few have thoroughly examined hotel communication systems, particularly the barriers that hinder effective communication from subordinates to their superiors. And the relevance of adhering to traditional corporate communication structures. The data collected from the Roof of Africa hotel in Windhoek reveals that internal communication in the hospitality industry mirrors the civil and corporate settings in many operational aspects; however, the management style diverges significantly from conventional corporate models. This divergence introduces unique challenges in communication flow and employee engagement. In the context of the Namibian workforce, the research highlights a pronounced gap in communication systems and employee relations. By addressing these

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efficiencies, the study contributes to a clearer understanding of internal communication dynamics, ultimately supporting efforts to enhance transparency, inclusivity, and organizational cohesion within the hospitality industry.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

After gathering the data, this chapter explains the methods and procedures that guided the study and ensured the credibility of its findings. It outlines the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative approach that shaped the investigation into upward communication within the hospitality industry in Windhoek. The section also describes the research design, setting, participants, sampling techniques, and tools used to collect and analyze information. Presenting these details after the data is collected shows how the chosen methods successfully captured employees' experiences and perspectives, offering meaningful insights into organizational communication and workplace culture.

3.1 Research Paradigm

This study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm, recognizing that upward communication is a multifaceted topic, one that encompasses various issues and objectives within organizational communication. Interpretivism, a well-established philosophical approach, argues that truth and knowledge are subjective and shaped by historical and lived experiences (Blackwell, 2018). The paradigm proved suitable for this research, as it enabled participants to express their perceptions freely and additionally allowed the researcher to explore workplace culture and individual viewpoints in depth. Through qualitative methods, including interviews, case studies, and observations within the hotel setting. The data revealed how upward communication is practiced, the extent to which it is valued, and the emotional and organizational implications of employees feeling unheard.

3.2 Research Approach

The study adopts a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach focuses on exploring the essence and characteristics of phenomena. It examines their qualities, the various ways they appear, the settings in which they occur, and the viewpoints through which they can be understood. It does not address aspects such as how often they occur, how widely they are distributed, or where they fit within a measurable cause and effect sequence. In simpler terms, qualitative research usually relies on information expressed in language rather than numerical data (Ugwu & Eze, 2023). Given the nature of the topic, this approach is suitable and guarantees subjective results regarding upward communication within the organization's

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hierarchy. The researcher will use an exploratory research design; there will be semi-structured interviews conducted on employees at different levels of the hierarchy to get everyone's insight to identify similarities and differences within the company. The researcher will make use of the thematic analysis to analyse and interpret patterns within the data collected.

3.3 Research Design

As mentioned in the research approach, the researcher adopts an exploratory research design to compile and present information. The aim is to use this structured data to explain concepts. The exploratory method fits this study because it provides grounds to learn the subject in depth.

3.4 Research Setting/Location

The study targets employees in hospitality, specifically Roof of Africa employees. The hotel is in Windhoek, Namibia, situated between Eros and Klein Windhoek along Nelson Mandela Avenue.

3.5 Study Population

The study will be conducted on employees who have worked at the hotel for longer than 1 year at the Roof of Africa Hotel and Conference Centre, because they have more lived experience in the hotel, to explore the importance of upward communication and the implications of ignoring upward communication. The target population is not limited to the forefront workers only, but rather different employees from all departments in the hotel. Respondents will be selected by approaching a senior member of the organization.

3.6 Sampling procedures and sample size

The researcher employs probability sampling; this way, there is a chance of getting accurate information that is not rehearsed or biased. This method gives every member of the population a predetermined chance of getting selected and included in the sample (Makwana, Chudasama, & Engineer , 2023). In the end the sample size was a total of 10 participants from different departments in the hotel, it became impossible to interview more than 10 people at the time of data collection. The company has an estimate of 60 employees; therefore, interviewing 10 employees is a good representation of the employees' general opinion on upward communication, considering that the data collection is done using a qualitative method which is doing an in-depth exploration of the research topic.

3.7 Research Instruments/Data Collection Tools

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The data will be collected through open-ended discussions with employees and some of the management by gathering information on their lived experiences with the upward communication in the hotel.

3.8 Data Analysis

The researcher conducted interviews with the employees. Once the interviews were completed, the data collected is thematically analysed, and the researcher highlights the patterns in communication channels, barriers, and the effects of failed communication within the organization. The data is presented using narratives from the qualitative interviews and observations.

3.9 Pilot Study

The pilot study assess how effective the data collection tools are and give a clear image of the methodology for evaluating the study, It investigates whether the study is feasible and test the research instruments (Ismail, Kinchin, & Edwards, 2018).

3.10 Ethical considerations

According to (Erazo, 2021)the researcher is expected to disclose the methods used during the study, and in using these models, the researcher is expected to be impartial and honest. Firstly, the researcher obtained permission from management and thereafter provided a clear overview of the aims and objectives of the proposed study to the participants. The study adheres to all ethical research principles; therefore, the researcher ensures voluntary consent and anonymity of all participants. Necessary measures are taken to avoid and minimize any risks involved; this includes ensuring confidentiality and protection of all data collected from participants. Participants' integrity is the most important factor in this regard, and for this reason, transparency, integrity, ethics, and personal choices is respected throughout the process of this study. Lastly, transparency is be ensured, assuring participants that data obtained from research is not manipulated; thus, research results should be shared honestly.

3.11 Validity and Reliability

Validity in this context refers to the extent to which a test measures the results presented by the researcher, basically identifying if a measure does or does not produce the correct, accurate results (Olmested, 2024). The validity of the study is determined by how reliable the facts gathered from the interviews are in comparison to the tests done and the tools used. A well-defined methodology is be used to present valid data; this is done with the use of random sampling to avoid controlled data that can lead to misleading conclusions. Internal validity is

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proven by examining the relationship between upward communication and organizational effectiveness.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Major Findings

The study employed thematic analysis as the primary method for analysing the qualitative data collected from employee responses. Thematic analysis is an approach used to examine data specifically to discover, characterise, provide evidence, explain and establish a connection between different topics (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The analysis identified several themes, and the dominant themes are communication anxiety and fear of repercussions experienced by employees, the negative emotional and organisational outcomes resulting from ineffective upward communication, desire for structured, safe, and transparent upward communication.

4.1.1 The gap in organizational communication and the importance of upward communication.

A major theme across the responses was the communication anxiety and fear of repercussions experienced by employees, from a sample size of 10 employees, 60% of participants expressing discomfort when attempting to communicate with management. Many frontline employees reported fear of being judged, misunderstood, or labelled negatively, reflecting a lack of psychological safety and uncertainty about appropriate communication procedures. 20% of the sample size described being afraid to speak up due to concerns about being perceived as “difficult,” while 10% of the employees identified language barriers as a major contributor to communication anxiety. 10% of the samples size reported feeling only “average” or hesitant when engaging in upward communication. In contrast, 40% of the sample size, primarily those in roles closer to management, expressed confidence in communicating with top management. Overall, this pattern highlights a workplace culture in which open communication is unevenly accessible, with lower level and operational staff experiencing reduced psychological safety, ultimately limiting their ability to participate in upward communication.

The research findings reveal there is an uneven psychological safety across organisational roles, which directly exposes a significant gap in upward communication within the hotel. Employees in lower level positions consistently reported discomfort, fear, or hesitation when attempting to share ideas or concerns with management. These barriers create an environment

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where frontline staff feel vulnerable and unsupported when engaging in upward communication.

However, employees who work in closer proximity to management, such as receptionists, supervisors, and administrative staff, expressed greater confidence and ease in communicating upward. Their comfort appears to be shaped by increased exposure to management, clearer role expectations, and a stronger sense of inclusion in organisational processes. This disparity directly relates to the research objective by demonstrating how limited psychological safety among lower level employees restricts the flow of upward communication. When employees fear negative consequences, lack clarity about reporting procedures, or feel linguistically disadvantaged, they are less likely to voice concerns, propose ideas, or report issues. As a result, management loses access to valuable frontline insights, and organisational problems remain unaddressed until they escalate. The data therefore underscores the importance of strengthening upward communication systems that protect, empower, and include employees at all levels. Without such systems, communication gaps persist, organisational learning is hindered, and employee well being is compromised.

4.1.2 Consequences of failing to practice upward communication.

This theme highlights the negative emotional and organisational outcomes resulting from ineffective upward communication, with 8 out of 10 employees (80%) reporting at least one unfortunate consequence. Employees described experiencing demotivation and frustration (30%), low morale (20%), and broken trust between staff and management (20%). More severe emotional strain was also reported, including mental breakdowns and outbursts, as noted by management (10%). Additionally, resignations and turnover were mentioned by 20% of employees, specifically waitress and driver, who linked poor communication directly to job dissatisfaction and eventual departure. Several employees also observed that unresolved issues tend to escalate into major conflicts (20%), further destabilising the work environment. Overall, these findings demonstrate that ineffective upward communication has long term implications for employee well being, organisational climate, and staff retention, contributing to emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and operational instability.

The findings reveal a clear pattern of inconsistent managerial responsiveness, which directly contributes to the negative consequences associated with ineffective upward communication. Many employees reported that their concerns were often overlooked, creating a perception that management selectively listens depending on the employee's rank, department, or

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personal relationship with supervisors. This inconsistency undermines trust and signals to employees that their voices do not carry equal weight within the organisation. When a couple of the employees repeatedly experience being ignored, it reinforces a belief that raising concerns is pointless, ultimately discouraging future attempts at upward communication. Even though some employees in administrative department, did not personally experience being overlooked, their experiences appear to be exceptions rather than the norm, highlighting a systemic issue rather than isolated incidents.

This perceived selective listening has significant implications for the research objective, as it demonstrates how the failure to practice upward communication effectively leads to emotional strain and organisational instability. Employees described a range of negative emotional outcomes, including demotivation, low morale, and heightened stress. In more severe cases, unresolved concerns contributed to mental breakdowns and emotional outbursts, as reported by one manger. These emotional consequences are deepened by operational challenges: job dissatisfaction, resignations, and the escalation of minor issues into major conflicts. When employees feel unheard, they disengage from their roles, and the organisation loses valuable insights that could prevent operational disruptions.

Generally, the data illustrates that ineffective upward communication does not merely hinder information flow, it produces evident emotional, behavioural, and organisational consequences. High turnover, declining morale, and unresolved conflicts weaken organisational stability and performance. These findings underscore the critical importance of establishing reliable, responsive, and equitable upward communication systems to ensure that employee concerns are acknowledged, addressed, and integrated into organisational decision making.

4.1.3 Ensuring employees have efficient communication channels

This theme pinpointed the desire for structured, safe, and transparent upward communication, with 90% of participants proposing at least one improvement to strengthen communication between subordinates and management. A significant proportion (40%) emphasised the need for regular and direct staff meetings to create predictable spaces for dialogue, while 30% highlighted the importance of timely and consistent feedback from management to ensure that concerns are acknowledged and followed up. Additionally, 20% of employees called for safe and anonymous communication platforms, reflecting ongoing fears of judgement or retaliation. Another 30% stressed the need for clearer communication procedures and

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channels, noting that uncertainty about who to approach or how to escalate issues limits effective upward communication. And lastly, 20% of participants expressed the need for a supportive environment where employees can speak without fear, underscoring the role of psychological safety in enabling open dialogue. Collectively, these insights demonstrate a strong employee-driven demand for an upward communication system that is open, predictable, inclusive, and responsive, ensuring that employees' voices are not only heard but meaningfully acted upon.

The findings reveal a strong and consistent desire among employees for greater transparency, psychological safety, and structured communication processes, all of which directly inform strategies for improving upward communication within the organisation. Employees repeatedly emphasised the need for more regular staff meetings, timely feedback from management, and clearer communication channels. These suggestions indicate that current systems do not adequately support open dialogue, nor do they provide employees with confidence that their concerns will be acknowledged or acted upon. The call for safe and anonymous platforms, highlighted by two employees, further demonstrates that many staff members do not feel secure expressing themselves openly, particularly when raising sensitive issues.

This desire for safety and structure reflects a deeper organisational need for consistency and visibility of follow up. Employees want assurance that when they speak, management listens, responds, and acts. The emphasis on timely feedback, raised by participants from the restaurant as well as reception, highlights the importance of closing the communication loop. Without visible follow up, employees perceive communication as one sided, which discourages future participation and weakens trust in leadership. The findings therefore highlight the need for communication strategies that prioritise responsiveness, accountability, and transparency.

In summary, the data indicates that employees are not resistant to communication; rather, they are eager for a more participatory communication culture where their voices are valued, their concerns are taken seriously, and management provides timely and meaningful feedback. These insights directly support the research objective by identifying practical and culturally informed strategies to strengthen upward communication and enhance organisational transparency.

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4.2 Discussions

The study examined the long-term effects of undermining upward communication and the ramifications it has on company dynamics at Roof of Africa Hotel. As much as private entities operate under state laws first, they run their internal procedures including communication systems how they see fit and in ways that benefit the business as long as they are within the country's labour law, so it is necessary to investigates just how effective the communication process is and how free the employees are to come forward with their ideas and grievances. Hospitality industry is service driven, and the organizations performance typically depend on the mental and emotional wellbeing of the employees. The study finds that the hotel operates with its established system that follows the chain of command, and this system is not effective for some employees, they feel overlooked, not free to speak up and this often ends in a series of events that are not favourable to both the company and the employees. This is supported by previous studies which finds that upward communication has significant positive effect of company performance, however they went on to say the effect of downward communication is stronger and more impactful on company performance than upward company (Benharzallah, 2021).

The findings indicates that upward communication in the hotel is weakened by low psychological safety, inconsistent responses from management, and a lack of clear communication structures. Many employees, particularly those in junior positions, feel uneasy, fearful of judgement, and unsure about how to communicate concerns, revealing a significant gap in support and openness within the organisation. These barriers lead to notable emotional and organisational problems, including reduced morale, loss of trust, rising conflict, and staff resignations when issues go unaddressed. Despite these challenges, employees strongly expressed the need for improvement, suggesting more frequent meetings, timely managerial feedback, anonymous reporting mechanisms, and clearer communication procedures. Overall, the findings show that poor upward communication harms both employees and the organisation, while staff clearly favour a shift toward a more transparent, responsive, and psychologically safe communication environment.

The findings further indicate that employees often feel uneasy or unsafe when communicating with management, largely due to power imbalances, fear of negative judgement, and uncertainty about the correct communication procedures. These challenges are most evident among junior and frontline staff, who feel less confident and more exposed when raising

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concerns. At the same time, employees perceive managerial responses as inconsistent and influenced by hierarchy or personal relationships, creating a sense that concerns are not handled fairly or uniformly. This unpredictability wear down trust and makes upward communication feel selective and unreliable. This is equivalent to the finding of the study on the role of psychological Safety In enhancing radical Candor and effective team dynamics that states psychological safety is essential for building a workplace where open, honest feedback can thrive, they tend to see stronger employee engagement, reduced turnover, and more effective collaboration. These benefits are especially valuable in diverse and multicultural teams, where supportive communication practices help foster inclusion and clarity. To strengthen these dynamics, organisations can focus on training leaders to model psychological safety, establishing clear and empathetic feedback channels, and investing in employee development programmes that build emotional intelligence and communication skills. By adopting these approaches, organisations can cultivate a culture that encourages open dialogue, supports healthy team interactions, and contributes to long term organisational success (Williams, 2024).

The thematic analysis shows that employees often feel fearful and uncomfortable communicating with management due to power imbalances, limited psychological safety, and uncertainty about proper communication procedures. These findings align with (Williams, 2024), who emphasises that psychological safety is essential for open, honest feedback and stronger team dynamics. Employees also reported inconsistent managerial responsiveness and perceived bias, noting that concerns were taken more seriously depending on who raised them, echoing broader research on selective listening in hierarchical organisations. While (Benharzallah, 2021) argues that downward communication has a stronger impact on performance than upward communication, the present study suggests that in service driven environments like hospitality, weak upward communication leads to emotional strain, reduced morale, and disengagement. Overall, the findings reinforce existing literature showing that transparent communication structures, consistent managerial responses, and psychologically safe environments are crucial for effective upward communication and organisational well being.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the key insights drawn from the study and presents a conclusion informed by the research objectives and findings. It also outlines practical recommendations

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aimed at addressing the communication challenges identified within the hospitality sector. By linking the study's findings to its objectives, this chapter provides a clear summary of how undermined upward communication affects organisational dynamics and offers evidence based recommendations aimed at strengthening communication systems, enhancing employee well being, and improving overall organisational performance.

5.1 Conclusions

This study examined the long term effects of weak upward communication within the hospitality sector, focusing on Roof of Africa Hotel. The study found that although formal communication structures are in place, they do not function effectively for many employees, especially those in junior or frontline roles. Participants reported fear, discomfort, and uncertainty when communicating with management, driven by power imbalances, limited psychological safety, and unclear procedures. These findings mirror previous research emphasising the importance of psychological safety and the role of upward communication in building trust and preventing conflict. This study also revealed that inconsistent managerial responsiveness and perceived bias further undermine communication, with concerns often addressed selectively based on an employee's position. This pattern aligns with literature showing that hierarchical filtering weakens employee voice and organisational cohesion, leading to emotional strain, low morale, conflict escalation, and resignations.

Despite these challenges, employees expressed a strong desire for improved communication systems that are transparent, structured, and psychologically safe. They emphasised the need for channels that allow them to raise concerns without fear of judgement or retaliation. The study concludes that effective upward communication is not simply an administrative process but a critical foundation for organisational stability, trust, and long term success. Strengthening upward communication in the hospitality industry is therefore essential for enhancing employee engagement, reducing turnover, especially in service driven environments where employee well being directly influences performance.

5.2 Recommendations

Drawing from the findings and supported by existing literature, the following recommendations are put forward to enhance upward communication and strengthen organisational dynamics within the hospitality industry.

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Create strong psychological safety

Managers should be trained to communicate in ways that reduce fear, while leadership practices should emphasise openness, empathy, and non judgmental listening. At the same time, organisations should foster a culture where employees can discuss mistakes and concerns without fear of punishment or fear of becoming targets.

Establish clear, psychologically safe, and accessible communication channels

Structured procedures, consistent channels, and private reporting options help employees raise concerns more clearly and safely.

Introduce safe and anonymous feedback systems

Anonymous feedback can be improved by using digital platforms or suggestion systems that allow employees to share concerns without being monitored, and by ensuring management reviews and responds to these submissions regularly to build trust.

Effective and prompt managerial responsiveness and follow up

Managers should acknowledge employee concerns promptly, ensure issues are properly resolved in timeous manner rather than repeatedly overlooked, and be held accountable for escalating matters through the correct channels.

Increase the frequency and quality of staff meetings

Regular staff meetings should give employees a structured space to share concerns, ensure junior staff can participate equally, and provide updates on decisions or changes related to their feedback.

Promote a transparent and inclusive organisational culture

Transparency in decision making reduces perceptions of bias, collaborative problem solving strengthens trust, and recognising constructive employee input reinforces the value of upward communication.

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