

Work-oriented communication and organizational commitment among employees of line agencies in Sulu

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between work-oriented communication and organizational commitment among employees of line agencies in Sulu, a geographically and administratively complex province in the southern Philippines. Recognizing communication as a pivotal driver of public sector performance, particularly in decentralized contexts, the research investigates how task-focused communication—centered on strategic information, vertical interactions, and responsiveness—affects employees’ affective, continuance, and normative commitment to their organizations. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the study surveyed 200 purposively selected employees across ten government agencies in Sulu through a validated questionnaire adapted from Wang (2011). Statistical analyses, including mean comparisons, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation, were employed to assess variations and relationships across demographic variables. Findings revealed that work-oriented communication was generally perceived as "relatively enough" in quality and responsiveness, while organizational commitment was rated between “undecided” and “agree,” with normative commitment showing the highest level. Age and length of service significantly influenced both communication perceptions and commitment levels, whereas gender, educational attainment, and status of appointment did not. Importantly, a moderate positive correlation was found between work-oriented communication dimensions and organizational commitment components. The study concludes that effective, hierarchical, and responsive communication structures enhance employees' psychological attachment and sense of obligation to their organizations. Recommendations include strengthening communication practices and fostering ethically grounded engagement strategies to elevate public sector performance in underserved regions. The findings contribute to localized public administration discourse and highlight the strategic value of communication in nurturing commitment within culturally distinct and operationally challenged contexts like Sulu.

Keywords: Work-oriented communication, organization commitment, line agencies in Sulu

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is universally recognized as the lifeblood of any organization. It facilitates coordination, decision-making, relationship-building, and the overall achievement of institutional objectives. Within the public sector, especially in line agencies tasked with implementing government functions at the local level, communication plays a crucial role in

Work-oriented communication and organizational commitment among employees of line agencies in Sulu by Grace A. Akalal

determining organizational effectiveness. In settings such as Sulu, a geographically isolated and administratively complex province, the role of communication becomes even more vital, particularly in ensuring that mandates are translated into action and services are effectively delivered (Mutonyi, 2022).

Work-oriented communication refers to the exchange of information that is directly related to job tasks, policies, operations, and innovations that enhance productivity and institutional performance. Unlike social or emotionally driven conversations, work-oriented communication is characterized by its focus on organizational objectives and efficiency. It occurs within the framework of formal structures and is often guided by established hierarchies and protocols. This type of communication is essential in public administration, where coordinated action, clarity of roles, and effective dissemination of policy directives are foundational to good governance (Ali et al., 2021).

Scholars such as Schwartzman and Cooren (in Pongton and Suntrayuth, 2019) have emphasized that communication in organizations does not simply serve the function of information dissemination; rather, it constitutes the process through which relationships are built, organizational culture is shaped, and leadership is expressed. WododoWinarso (2018) distinguishes between two fundamental types of communication in organizations: communication related to tasks and operations, and communication related to social and emotional interaction. The former, often categorized as vertical communication, has been found to be more directly associated with increased organizational commitment, as it reinforces professional clarity, task ownership, and role integration. While horizontal communication or socially driven exchanges may enhance camaraderie, its influence on commitment tends to be more indirect.

In contrast to Western contexts where a considerable body of research has explored the relationship between organizational communication and employee commitment, there remains a significant gap in literature within the Asian context, particularly in decentralized and underserved regions such as Sulu. The few studies available tend to generalize communication practices across the Philippine bureaucracy without accounting for the localized, cultural, and often nuanced realities of public sector work in Mindanao. This presents an opportunity to examine how communication practices in frontline government agencies in Sulu influence employee engagement and organizational cohesion.

Organizational commitment, which refers to the psychological attachment of an employee to their organization, has been identified as a key determinant of employee performance, retention, and institutional loyalty. The Three-Component Model developed by Meyer and Allen conceptualizes commitment as comprising affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Affective commitment reflects the emotional attachment and identification of employees with their organization. Continuance commitment pertains to the recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organization, while normative commitment involves a perceived obligation to remain. These components reflect different motivational bases that can influence how employees relate to their organizational environment and how invested they are in its success (Afzal et al., 2025).

Prior research has established a strong connection between effective organizational communication and higher levels of commitment. Employees who perceive communication within their institutions as clear, responsive, and supportive are more likely to exhibit strong affective ties, stay motivated, and contribute to institutional development. In the public sector, especially in regions characterized by structural constraints and development gaps, fostering

organizational commitment through improved communication becomes not just a managerial tool but a strategic necessity.

This study sought to explore the extent to which work-oriented communication contributes to the organizational commitment of employees working in line agencies in the province of Sulu. It aims to investigate how communication practices related to task coordination, feedback, decision-making, and performance monitoring affect employees' emotional, calculative, and moral attachment to their organization. By examining this dynamic in the specific context of Sulu, the study hopes to provide grounded insights that can inform more culturally attuned and strategically effective communication frameworks in Philippine public administration.

Statement of the problem

This study determined the extent of work-oriented communication and organizational commitment of employees of line agencies in Sulu. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the extent of work-oriented communication of employees of line agencies in Sulu in terms of the quality of strategic information, the quality of vertical interaction, and satisfaction with management responsiveness?
2. What is the extent of organizational commitment of employees of line agencies in Sulu in terms of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment?
3. Is there a significant difference in the extent of work-oriented communication of employees of line agencies in Sulu in terms of quality of strategic information, quality of vertical interaction, and satisfaction with management responsiveness when data are categorized by gender, age, length of service, status of appointment, and educational attainment?
4. Is there a significant difference in the extent of organizational commitment of employees of line agencies in Sulu in terms of affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment when data are categorized by gender, age, length of service, status of appointment, and educational attainment?
5. Is there a significant correlation among the sub-categories subsumed under social-emotional communication, work-related communication, and organizational commitment of employees of line agencies in Sulu?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive-correlational design to examine the relationships among social-emotional communication, work-oriented communication, and organizational commitment among employees of various line agencies in Sulu during Fiscal Year 2022. A descriptive-correlational approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to systematically gather, analyze, and interpret data in order to determine the extent and interrelationships of the constructs under investigation (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995; Babbie & Mouton, 2001). By using this framework, the research could produce valid and reliable findings while remaining feasible given time, resource, and contextual constraints (Justice, 2008).

Data were collected from employees of ten provincial field offices—under the supervision of BARMM, Region IX, and the national government—located throughout Sulu. From a total population of approximately 200 employees distributed evenly across agencies such

Work-oriented communication and organizational commitment among employees of line agencies in Sulu by Grace A. Akalal

as the Philippine Statistics Authority, the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrarian Reform, and others, a purposive sampling method was employed to ensure representation across gender, age, length of service, appointment status, and educational attainment. This non-probability approach was deemed appropriate for targeting those individuals most directly involved in organizational communication processes and for achieving the study's demographic balance.

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and from the heads or directors of each line agency. The researcher personally administered and retrieved the self-administered questionnaires, ensuring clarity of instructions and maximizing response rates. The primary instrument consisted of a survey questionnaire adapted with slight modifications from Wang's (2011) standardized measures of social-emotional and work-oriented communication and organizational commitment. To enhance contextual applicability, two faculty experts from the School of Graduate Studies at Sulu State College reviewed the instrument for content validity and cultural relevance, thereby preserving its established reliability while confirming its appropriateness for the local setting.

Responses were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Weighted means and standard deviations were calculated to determine the extent of work-oriented communication in terms of strategic information quality, vertical interaction quality, and satisfaction with management responsiveness, as well as the extent of organizational commitment across affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Independent-samples t-tests examined gender-based differences, while one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) assessed differences across age groups, length of service, appointment status, and educational attainment. Finally, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to explore the strength and direction of associations among social-emotional communication, work-oriented communication, and organizational commitment. This combination of methods ensured a comprehensive and rigorous examination of the constructs within the specific research locale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study, which sought to determine the extent of social-emotional communication, work-oriented communication, and organizational commitment among employees of line agencies in Sulu during Fiscal Year 2022. The analyses address three dimensions of work-oriented communication—quality of strategic information, quality of vertical interaction, and satisfaction with management responsiveness—before examining organizational commitment in terms of affective, continuance, and normative components. Thereafter, significant differences by demographic factors and interrelationships among all sub-categories are discussed.

Extent of Work-Oriented Communication

In assessing the quality of strategic information, respondents indicated a relatively high tendency toward receiving sufficient policy and development updates. With a mean score of 3.66, employees generally felt well informed about organizational changes, personnel management, overall performance, strategic direction, and the functioning of other departments. Similarly, evaluations of vertical interaction yielded a mean of 3.54, reflecting that both downward and upward exchanges occur with reasonable frequency; management initiates discussion of

organizational issues, employees engage in dialogue with superiors, participate in decision-making, and receive feedback on their work. Satisfaction with management's responsiveness scored highest of the three dimensions (mean = 3.83), suggesting that employees believe there are adequate opportunities to critique policies, that management attends to suggestions, and that channels exist to communicate strategy criticisms.

Extent of Organizational Commitment

When examining affective commitment, the average score of 3.33 placed respondents in an "undecided" stance, indicating ambivalence about emotional attachment and belongingness. While many agreed that they would gladly spend their careers with the organization and that it held personal meaning, they simultaneously hesitated about feelings of family-like affiliation or emotional attachment. In contrast, continuance commitment (mean = 3.54) reflected a stronger agreement that staying is a matter of necessity, given the perceived costs of leaving, although respondents remained neutral on several items regarding life disruption and alternative options. Normative commitment emerged most positively (mean = 3.80), indicating that employees feel a moral obligation to remain, would feel guilty leaving, and believe they owe loyalty to the organization, though some remained undecided about their sense of obligation.

Differences by Demographic Profile

Analyses of variance and t-tests revealed that gender generally did not influence perceptions of work-oriented communication or organizational commitment; male and female employees held similar views across all sub-dimensions. However, age and length of service significantly affected work-oriented communication: employees aged 51 and above reported higher perceptions of strategic information quality, and those aged 41–50 scored higher on vertical interaction. Similarly, those with sixteen or more years of service perceived both strategic information and vertical interaction more positively. Status of appointment and educational attainment had minimal effects, with only minor differences in strategic information by appointment status and in satisfaction with management responsiveness by educational level. In organizational commitment, age and length of service again produced significant differences: respondents aged 51 and above demonstrated stronger affective and normative commitment, and those with longer service exhibited higher affective and normative commitment. Appointment status influenced only normative commitment, while education had no significant effect.

Correlation Among Sub-Categories

Pearson correlation analyses indicated moderate to strong positive relationships across all sub-categories of work-oriented communication and organizational commitment. Quality of strategic information correlated highly with vertical interaction and satisfaction with management responsiveness, and moderately with all three commitment dimensions. Vertical interaction and management responsiveness were likewise positively related to affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Within commitment dimensions, continuance and normative commitment exhibited a particularly strong association, while affective commitment correlated moderately with the other two. These findings suggest that employees who perceive

Work-oriented communication and organizational commitment among employees of line agencies in Sulu by Grace A. Akalal

robust work-oriented communication processes are also more likely to report greater organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that, on average, employees of line agencies in Sulu perceive work-oriented communication as effective and demonstrate a meaningful level of organizational commitment. While demographic factors such as age and length of service significantly influence these perceptions, other variables—including gender, appointment status, and educational attainment—do not appear to affect how employees evaluate either their work-oriented communication or their commitment to the organization. Furthermore, the moderate positive correlation observed between work-oriented communication and organizational commitment provides empirical support for the model proposed by Wang and Yan (2011), which argues that social and emotional exchanges in the workplace satisfy fundamental human needs for support and interaction; when management meets these needs, employees reciprocate with higher levels of commitment and, consequently, greater contributions to organizational goals.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that line-agency administrators in Sulu continue to cultivate and refine their social-emotional communication practices by providing ongoing support and encouragement that enhance employees' communicative competencies and information-processing skills, thereby promoting productivity and performance. Agency leaders should also augment the ethical dimensions of work-oriented communication by establishing clear, transparent channels for policy discussion, feedback, and collaborative problem-solving. To further strengthen organizational commitment, managers are encouraged to design and implement targeted programs and activities that foster dedication, trustworthiness, integrity, and reliability among staff. Finally, future research in the field of public administration might replicate this study in different contexts and expand its scope by including additional profile variables—such as civil status and organizational rank—to deepen our understanding of how personal and positional characteristics shape communication and commitment dynamics.

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