



Employees' Awareness, Perception and Attitude towards Grapevine as an Organisational Communication Strategy in Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Grapevine communication plays an important role in organizational communication, particularly in tertiary institutions where employees rely on both formal and informal channels for information exchange. Despite its prevalence, limited empirical evidence exists on employees' awareness, perception, and attitude toward grapevine as an organizational communication strategy in Nigerian universities.

Objective: This study investigated employees' awareness, perception, and attitude toward grapevine as an organizational communication strategy at Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria.

Method: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A sample of 319 teaching and non-teaching staff was drawn from a population of 1,851 employees using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.824. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and mean scores, were used to analyze the research questions, while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed to test the hypotheses.

Results: The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between employees' level of awareness, perception, and attitude toward grapevine communication and its effectiveness as an organizational communication strategy.

Conclusion: Grapevine communication serves as an important complementary channel for disseminating information within universities, enhancing information flow alongside formal communication systems.

Unique Contribution: This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on employees' awareness, perception, and attitude toward grapevine communication as an organizational communication strategy within a Nigerian public university.

Key Recommendation: University management should recognize grapevine as a complementary communication channel by promoting transparent and timely formal communication while constructively monitoring informal information networks to improve organizational communication effectiveness.

Keywords: Grapevine communication; Organizational communication; Informal communication; Tertiary institutions; Word-of-mouth communication.



INTRODUCTION

Organisational communication constitutes one of the most important mechanisms through which institutions coordinate activities, build relationships, facilitate decision making and achieve organizational objectives. Organizational communication connotes the processes by which individuals and groups within an organization share information, create meaning, make decisions and build relationships that enable the organizations to function (Goldhaber, 1993). The key issue is that where there is no communication, no organization can exist. From another perspective, organizational communication is defined as the sending and receiving of messages among interrelated individuals within a particular environment or setting to achieve individual and common goals (Kreps, 1990).

Grapevine communication

Grapevine is an important aspect of organizational communication strategy Davis (1972) described grapevine as the unofficial communication network of an institution. Azunna-Dan (2023) contends that grapevine communication is an informal, multi-directional flow of information between the administration, staff and students of educational institutions. Grapevine assists workers to share information concerning an organization's procedures and experiences, especially where there is little or no formal communication strategies. Kast (2019) Grapevine, information is transmitted from person to person directly and without any intervening platform. It occurs through social interactions and relationships. This happens when individuals pass on information to close friends, who in turn share with their friends.

Universities ensure manpower development and national development of the country they operate with clearly defined organizational structures which sustain service delivery to the wider society. Educational institutions have clearly defined level of authority and administrative structures. Teaching and non-teaching staff exists in the University as key functionaries to ensure the attainment of the core mandate of teaching, research and community service . To meet the goals and the mandate, formal and informal communication are sustained. This ensures that management, staff and students meet their personal and organizational goals.

Grapevine communication is significant in Universities due to its decentralized organizational structures. Unlike the centralized structure which encourage formal communication the decentralized structure facilitates ease of flow of information and quick transmission of information. Universities are also associated with various faculties, departments and units. The multiple administrative units create gaps in information flows which sustain grapevine usage . It is also significant to note that Universities are run on the committee system. This creates room for the sustenance of grapevine.

Grapevine in tertiary institutions have been examined by Azunna-Dan (2023), Wangari(2016) Adeyemi (2020) . The results of these investigations did not address the critical issue of employee awareness, perception and attitude on grapevine as an organizational communication strategy. The purpose of this study is thus an investigation of employee awareness, perception and attitude towards grapevine as an organizational communication strategy in Imo State University, Owerri.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. Determine the employees' level of awareness of grapevine as organisational communication strategy.
2. Ascertain the employees' perception of grapevine as an organizational communication strategy.
3. Examine the employees' attitude on grapevine as an organizational communication strategy

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- RQ1 What is the level of awareness of employees on grapevine as organisational communication strategy?
- RQ2 What are the employees' perception of grapevine as organisational communication strategy?
- RQ3 What is the attitude of employees on grapevine as organisational communication strategy?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- Ho₁** There is no correlation between the level of awareness of employees on grapevine and organizational communication strategy
- Ho₂** There is no correlation between employees' perception of grapevine and organizational communication strategy.
- Ho₃** There is no correlation between employees' attitude on grapevine and organizational communication strategy.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Organizational Communication

Organizational communication connotes the sending and receiving of messages among inter related individuals within a particular environment, to achieve individual and common goals. Kreps (1990). Organizational communication assists organizations to convey their corporate mission, vision and values to meet the goals specified and the expectations of the stakeholders.

Organizational communication plays various roles in an institution such as coordination function which aligns the department/units to group goals, control function which ensures that policies guides behaviour, feedback, goal attainment and information sharing for decision making, and motivation of employees in addition to culture building.

Organizational communication could be formal and informal in nature. Formal communication is the official channel which follows the organizational chat, is documented, authorized and served



legal and accountability purposes. while informal communication is a spontaneous, interpersonal peer-to-peer communication based on social relations and interaction. The major strength of formal communication is the capability of showing clarity, and traceability, while exhibiting authority. The formal channel is however slow in nature and very bureaucratic. The informal channels spread very fast and ensures employees build social relationships.

Grapevine Communication

Grapevine is an informal communication strategy in organizations. According to Patil (2017) grapevine is an informal work place dialogue, in its purest form. It is a form of conversation between employees and supervisors that do not follow a prescribed structure or ruled-based system. Here grapevine involves conversation between two people with no defined structure or system of communication. Azunna-Dan (2024) agreed with the views above and contends that grapevine is a process of passing information, from one person to another in an informal manner. Grapevine occurs when information relating to an organizations procedures and rules are transmitted in an informal manner. Individuals in the organization could easily spread rumors or gossips to their close friends using a combination of facts and perception. Most times, the information could be misleading. Managers can also seed grapevine information which is correct and factual to assist in managing rumors, especially during periods of crisis. Miharaini et al (2015) contends that 80-90 percent of information gotten from grapevine are usually correct and factual.

When grapevine information swings out of control, management seeks to manage to ensure goal attainment and restoration of staff morale. Communication barriers arising from management style, creates grounds for grapevine since most staff are fenced off in decision making processes.

According to Davis (1969) grapevine moves upwards, downwards and diagonally, within and without the chains of command and between workers and managers. Davis extensively studied grapevine in organizations and identified four possible types. In the single chain, A passes information to person B who passed it on to person C and so on down the line. According to Davis , this chain is least accurate at passing information and is followed by the gossip chain where one person obtains an information , usually a rumor and informs everyone else about this. Conversely in the probability chain, individuals are indifferent about who they relay the information to since this is passed at random down the line. In the cluster chain, information is passed to a few selected individuals, who pass on the same information to a few selected persons. Davis (1969) contends that this is the dominant grapevine pattern in various organizations. This chain assists in evaluating the pattern of dissemination of information through grapevine.

The advantages of grapevine include its ability to build relationships, provide emotional support to employees and a healthy work environment. It has the ability to spread information faster than formal channels and serves as a multi-directional communication process. Grapevine improves team work, enhances social bonds, group identity and social relationships. It distributes information by administrators through judiciously placing information through discrete remarks and filling information gaps, especially when management is slow in releasing information or when the information released is vague. The disadvantages include negative image or reputation



of the institution, provokes conflicts and abuse of power, affects the employment process through negative rumors and misleading information. It also sustains distortion of information and interpretation. Grapevine undermines trust and sustains hostility in the organization.

Grapevine in Tertiary Institutions

Grapevine is found at various levels of the University system. However, it does not follow the same pattern as the formal communication. It is sustained by the decentralized structure which sustain quick transmission of information. From this evaluation, the decentralized structure, the committee system, the presence of multiple faculties and departments, the administrative bureaucracy and the presence of academic freedom, sustains grapevine in Universities.

Azunna-Dan (2023) examined the effectiveness and proliferation of grapevine as an organizational communication strategy. The study found that grapevine occurs because of the high level of ambiguity in the communication process. The conclusions agreed with the observation above. For example, multiple faculties and departments and units creates delay in information flow and sustain ambiguity which encourages grapevine. Saeed, Sohail, Ali & Mahmood (2024) in their study found that grapevine communication is a pervasive phenomenon in organizations. Faculty loyalty and commitment is significantly influenced by academic communication routes particularly grapevine, which is moderated by individual personality. The conclusions from the study point to the fact that the faculties and personality types influence grapevine communication.

Employees awareness, perception and attitude towards grapevine communication

Employees' awareness, perception and attitude towards grapevine have been central to organizational communication studies. The three concepts explain and evaluate how employees in an organization relate to grapevine. Awareness represents the extent to which employees appreciate that grapevine exists in the organization, how it works and an appreciation that grapevine spreads fast within the organization.

Davis (1972) contends that employees are highly aware of informal networks and turn to them during uncertainty. Here, there is an appreciation that grapevine provides an alternative platform for meeting their information needs. This explains why employees create awareness in reducing uncertainty.

Perception explains how employees interpret and make sense out of grapevine. It answers the critical question: Is the grapevine reliable, fast, harmful or necessary? Employees perception of grapevine evaluates how they judge the grapevine. Crampton, Huge and Mishra (1998) found that employee's perception of grapevine credibility directly influence their attitude and willingness to share information.

Olayeye and Adeyemi (2020) contend that most public sector employees perceive the grapevine as faster but less accurate than formal channels, yet they maintain a positive attitude towards it since grapevine provides social support. The implication of this is that perception changes attitude, which leads to behavior change. Attitudes represent the employees positive or negative



evaluation and behavioral intentions towards using/spreading grapevine information. Attitude towards grapevine from this perspective could be positive or negative.

Kurland and Pelled (2000) argue that negative attitudes towards formal communication often push employees to rely on grapevine as an alternative source of information. However, negative attitude on grapevine results in the employees avoiding its use, especially because of the possibility of misinformation. Positive attitudes entail an acceptance of this communication mode and sharing this with colleagues. When employees distrust formal channels of communication, they rely more on grapevine. Thus, there is a link between employees perception and attitude towards grapevine.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Wangari (2016) demonstrated that grapevine exists within University libraries and contributes to decision making. Although this study provides useful evidence regarding the prevalence of informal communication in Universities, it's focus on libraries limits the generalizability of its findings to the broader University environment. The study did not examine employees awareness, perception or attitude towards grapevine as an organizational communication strategy, which constitute the focus of the present study.

Fransisco (2023) evaluated how private secondary school managers integrated social networks as a tool for information dissemination and the effects of this integration on decision making at the work place. The study revealed that the dominant types of information flows, technology integrated information dissemination and traditional information dissemination are important in evaluating social networks as a tool for communication and decision making within the context of grapevine. This study relates to non-tertiary institutions and did not evaluate the awareness, perception or attitude of employees towards grapevine communication.

Noreen and Tatenda (2021) evaluated the effectiveness of grapevine as a communication strategy in tertiary institutions. The study concluded that grapevine in tertiary institutions is largely ineffective although the evaluation was done in terms of its ability to be accessed, the clarity level of distortion and the rate of transmission from sender to receiver. The method of analysis adopted exposed obvious gaps which affected the applicability of the results.

Azunna-Dan (2023) demonstrated that grapevine communication has effects on the attainment of institutional goals and objectives. The study provides useful evidence for evaluating the proliferation of grapevine communication in some tertiary institutions in the South East of Nigeria.

Saeed, Sohail, Ali & Mahmood (2024) established a relationship between instructor personality, grapevine communication and organizational commitment in the public and private sectors of Pakistan. The study demonstrated that faculty loyalty and commitment influence informal communication (grapevine) and organizational commitment. The study provides useful evidence on the influence of grapevine communication, the focus of the public and private sectors is too broad in scope.



All the studies above failed to examine employees' awareness, perception and attitude towards grapevine communication. This gap was addressed in the present study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the word -of-mouth (WOM) communication theory. The theory emerged gradually through the works of various authors. Paul Larkfield & Elihu Katz evolved the foundation of word-of-mouth through the two-step flow theory in the 1940s and 1950s. Ernest Dichter, however is credited with popularizing word of mouth in his research studies. Richins (1983) made significant contributions to understanding negative word-of-mouth communication. Bone (1992) extended knowledge on WOM and recognizes that WOM is an interpersonal interaction.

The quality of word-of- mouth message sustains positive and effective grapevine spread. The theory also explains how information, attitudes and behaviours spread between people through informal and person-to-person means rather than formal mechanisms.

The relevance of word-of-mouth (WOM) theory to this study is that the theory forms the fundamental mechanism that activates the grapevine in an organization. WOM driven grapevine serves as a fast, credible and lowcost communication strategy which complements formal channels, enhances feedback and shapes the organizational culture. Grapevine is essentially an organizational manifestation of word-of mouth communication. The link between WOM and grapevine is that both relate with interpersonal interactions rather than formal communication channels. grapevine facilitates rapid dissemination of information vertically and horizontally. This is because employees naturally exchange information with trusted colleagues. From this perspective, trust and social relationships determine the speed of information spread. Finally, WOM is relevant in gossips into a tool for information flow and employee engagement .WOM is an effective form of interpersonal mechanism, high credibility, zero cost and strong persuasive power and when combined with digital platforms turns grapevine messages into viable communication messages.

The WOM is related to the study variables. This study examined the level of awareness, perception and attitudes of employees on grapevine as organisational communication strategy. There is a close association between the three variables studied and behaviour patterns and social interactions which form the bedrock of WOM.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive research method, and offered an opportunity to obtain quantitative data for the study. The population for this study consists of teaching and non-teaching staff of IMSU. The total population of IMSU staff was 1,851 according to the IMSU statistical bulletin. The sample size of the study is 319 ascertained through the Australian online calculator, with a confidence level of 95 percent and margin of error of 5 percent.

The multi stage sampling technique was adopted in this study involving step-by-step processes to obtain the sample size. The first stage is to purposively select IMSU from all the Universities in Nigeria. The next step is the proportional distribution of the sample size of 319 across the



teaching and nonteaching cadres of Imo State University. The samples of the respondents were then selected randomly to obtain the sample size. A structured questionnaire designed along a four-point Likert scale was used for data collection.

A reliability test of the instrument was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha model. The result yielded 0.824 percent showing a high degree of reliability of the instrument. Data obtained were processed with percentages, frequencies and mean scores. The Pearson correlation statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS

The efficient strategies adopted in the administration of the questionnaires at IMSU ensured a 100 percent response rate.

Demographic Statistics

Table 1 show a preponderance of females (57 percent), over males (43 percent). The dominant age bracket of the respondents was 26 – 45 years (33.2 percent) followed by 36 – 45 years {29.8 percent). The responses also show that female respondents are predominant. The age pattern above reflects the emerging trends of younger employees dominating the staff profile in the University. Fifteen percent of the employees fall between 46 – 55 years, 13.2 percent fall at the age bracket 18 to 25, while 8.8 percent are over 56 years. Majority of the respondents (63.7 percent) hold first degrees, while 15.0 percent hold post graduate degrees. 21.3 percent on the other hand, hold school certificates. 44 percent are of the teaching cadre, while 56 percent are non-teaching staff. From the responses females are more prone to informal communication compared to the males. Also, the teaching staff rely heavily on inter personal information exchange

Table 1 Demographic Statistics

	Variables	Frequencies (n=319)	Percentages
•	Gender		
	Male	137	43
	Female	182	57
•	Age Group		
	18 - 25 years	42	13.2
	26 – 35 years	106	33.2
	36 – 45 years	95	29.8
	46 – 55 years	48	15.0
	56 years and above	28	8.8
•	Educational Attainment		
	School Certificates	68	21.3
	Degree	203	63.7
	Post graduate degrees	48	15.0
•	Class of Respondents		
	Teaching	140	44
	Non-Teaching	179	56



Awareness of grapevine as an organizational communication strategy. (RQ1)

Table 2: Level of awareness of grapevine as organizational communication strategy

S/N	Item statement	Mean	Level of awareness
1	Received information about deadline for submission of results from grapevine sources	3.40	Very high
2	Received information about academic board meetings through grapevine	3.34	Very high
3	Staff meetings are spread through grapevine sources	3.40	Very high
4	Departmental meetings are received through grapevine	3.37	Very high
5	Received Examination dates through grapevine	3.45	Very high
6	Allocation of courses are received from the grapevine	3.07	High
7	Information about student seminars and project defense are received through grapevine	3.44	Very high
8	Removal and appointment of new head of units are received from grapevine	3.26	Very high
9	Disciplinary measures taken against staff are released through grapevine sources	3.04	High
	Average	3.30	

Decision Rule:

Mean scores of: 3.26-4.00 Very high

Mean score of: 2.51-3.25 High

Perceptions of employees on grapevine as organizational communication strategy (RQ2)

Table 3: Respondents perception of grapevine in organizational communication strategy

S/N	Item statement	Mean	Decision
1	Make employees aware of organization's culture and help them to decide how to behave	3.44	Agreed
2	Build sense of belongingness among employees and help them work like a team	2.97	Agreed
3	Offer employees' opportunity to lay bare their emotions	3.10	Agreed
4	Create an atmosphere of fear as employees always feel like someone is talking behind their back leading to toxic culture	3.15	Agreed
5	Lead to more positive work environment	3.06	Agreed
	Average	3.14	

The responses above suggest that grapevine has both beneficial and harmful effects and conform with existing knowledge on grapevine



Attitude of employees on grapevine as organizational communication strategy (RQ3)

Table 4: Respondents attitude on grapevine as organisational communication strategy

S/N	Item statement	Mean	Decision
1	Ensure staff commitment to duties	3.38	Agreed
2	Inculcate the spirit of team work	3.45	Agreed
3	Encouraged friendly relationships between employees and management	3.40	Agreed
4	Bring about loyalty and respect to the university	2.88	Agreed
5	Leads to prompt response about employee information needs	3.36	Agreed
	Average	3.29	

The responses on item 4 above suggest that the respondents are less convinced that grapevine promotes loyalty and respect. The rating falls below the average response of 3.29. This is an exception to the average responses from the respondents

Correlation Analysis

H01: There is no correlation between the level of awareness of employees on grapevine use and organizational communication strategy.

Table 5: Correlation between Awareness and Organizational Communication Strategy

Variables	Awareness Level	Organizational Communication Strategy
Awareness Level	1	.782
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.002
N	319	319
Organizational Communication Strategy	.782	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
N	319	319

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to determine the correlation between the level of awareness of employees on grapevine and organizational communication strategy. The findings indicated a positive correlation $r(317) = 0.782$, $p=0.002$. The relationship is statistically significant with p value of 0.002. This is less than the P value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected: The findings show that higher awareness is associated with stronger organizational communication in the university.

The correlation coefficient between the level of awareness and organizational communication strategy was determined as .752 (75.2%) with a shared variance of 61.15 percent ($r^2=.6115$,



showing a strong association between employees awareness and organizational communication strategy.

H02: There is no correlation between employee's perception of grapevine use and organizational communication strategy.

Table 6: Correlation Between Employees' Perception of Grapevine and Organizational Communication Strategy

Variables	Perception of Grapevine Use	Organizational Communication Strategy
Perception of Grapevine Use	1	.694
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.011
N	319	319
Organizational Communication Strategy	.694	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	—
N	319	319

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the correlation of employees' perception of grapevine and organizational communication strategy. The results showed a strong positive correlation $r(317) = 0.694$, $p = 0.011$. There is a strong association between perception of grapevine and effective communication in the organization. The p value (0.011) is less than the alpha level of 0.05 so the relationship is statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis (H02) which states that there is no association between grapevine use among workers and organizational communication strategy is rejected. The correlation value was found to be 0.694 while the shared variance r^2 is 48.16 percent. This shows a weak association between employees perception and organizational communication strategy.

H03: There is no correlation between the attitude of employees on grapevine and organizational communication strategy.

Table 7: Correlation Between Employees' Attitude Towards Grapevine and Organizational Communication Strategy

Variables	Attitude on Grapevine Use	Organizational Communication Strategy
Attitude on Grapevine Use	1	.815**
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.001
N	319	319
Organizational Communication Strategy	.815**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	—
N	319	319

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the correlation between the attitude of employees towards grapevine and organizational communication strategy. The study found a positive correlation. $r(317) = 0.815$, $p = 0.001$. This means that the attitude of employees toward grapevine support the effectiveness of the organizational communication strategies. The result shows that the p-value (0.001) is less than the alpha level (0.05) Thus, the null hypothesis (H03) is rejected. The findings show that attitudes of staff towards grapevine has a high association with organizational communication channels. The study shows a coefficient of correlation (r) value of 0.85 which gives a shared variance of 66.4 percent ($r^2 = .664$).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results from the responses from Table 3 show that grapevine promotes teamwork, creates a sense of belonging but creates fear and a toxic culture. The responses depicts that grapevine communication possesses both positive and negative characteristics. This conforms with the findings from the previous studies. Azunna-Dan (2023), Abebe & Assemie (2023), Effective organizational management requires harnessing the benefits of grapevine and minimizing the negative aspects, including misinformation and rumours.

The results of the hypotheses test provide a good understanding of grapevine communication dynamics as an organizational strategy in Universities. The outcome of the initial hypothesis (H01) shows a positive correlation of ($r=0.782$, $p=0.002$) between the level of awareness of grapevine and organizational communication strategy. This indicates the importance of employee's awareness of relevant information, for example, dates for academic board meetings, dates of examinations, disciplinary measures and so on, via the grapevine (mean score 3.30). In agreement with Wangari (2016) grapevine communication is used in filling communication gaps that exist between management and staff. Erden (2013) revealed that distance between workers increase the amount of grapevine through perceptions of uncertainty by workers.

The hypothesis two (Ho2) shows a high degree of association ($r=0.694$, $p=0.011$); between perception of employees and organizational communication strategy. Descriptive data showed that staff feel grapevine can create a sense of belongingness and is a chance to reveal their feelings (average mean 3.14), while H01 shows that there is a high level of awareness of these informal channels, Ho2 shows *that* active perception of the informal channels is linked to workplace culture. Noreen and Tatenda (2021) noted that grapevine communication in tertiary institutions is another important mechanism and thus, employees should not depend only on formal communication for information..

The third hypothesis (Ho3) gave an extremely high positive correlation ($r=0.815$, $p=0.001$) between the attitude of employees about grapevine and organizational communication strategy. The results showed that a significant number of respondents had positive attitude towards the University due to grapevine communication (mean 3.29). Azunna-Dan (2023) showed that grapevine benefits educational institutions, if properly harnessed, as it has the capacity to



spread faster as a multidirectional communication mechanism and can improve teamwork and social relationships.

The grapevine is a process that is not completed once, in the sense that awareness is an effective process and is followed by a perception that is favorable (H02) and favorable employee attitudes (H03). As a result, the study confirms that good and effective grapevine communication strategies can bring about positive attitudes among the staff.

The Studies done by Wangari (2023), Erden (2013), Noreen & Tarenda (2021) and Azunna-Dan (2023) although centred on grapevine within an organizational framework disagreed with the findings of the present study. The studies above did not establish employees' awareness, perception and attitude towards grapevine as a communication strategy nor the linkage between the variables. This is the major point of between the present study and the previous studies. Unlike previous studies, the present study expanded knowledge & demonstrates statistical association between employee awareness, perception, attitude on grapevine and organizational communication strategy.

This study is anchored on the word-of-mouth (WOM) communication theory. This theory explains how information, attitude and behaviours spread between people through informal (grapevine) and person-to-person means. The findings of this study supports the assumptions of WOM theory

This study demonstrates significant association between employees' awareness, perception and attitude towards grapevine and organizational communication strategy. The presence of the three variables ensures greater diffusion of information, influences employee understanding of organizational communication, ensures credibility and interpersonal trust which shapes grapevine effectiveness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Grapevine plays important roles in the dissemination of information needed for efficient sf Universities. Grapevine complements the formal channels and is beneficial for the efficient operations of the institution. Employees awareness, perception and attitude towards grapevine as an organizational communication strategy strengthens the flow of information in organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Managers are encouraged to recognize the potential benefits of grapevine communication, while strengthening the formal communication channels.
2. There is need for Universities to incorporate grapevine communication as part of corporate communications strategy through educating employees about the constructive use of grapevine communication.
3. Universities should improve formal communication systems, while recognizing grapevine as a complimentary channel for feedback and early information dissemination.



4. Universities should strengthen the attitude, perception and awareness of employees. through high transparency of formal communication and monitoring misinformation and addressing same with verified information.

Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise served only for academic purposes and that their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The research was conducted in the absence of commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors Contribution

Dr. Nwamaka Nzotta and Dr. Uchenna Orji conceived this study including the design. Nwamaka Nzotta and Uchenna Orji collated the data, and Mr Paul Njoku handled the analysis and interpretation while Nwamaka Nzotta and Uchenna Orji wrote the initial manuscript. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure.

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Claude AI tool for language editing, grammar correction, readability improvement and formatting assistance. The authors carefully reviewed and verified all outputs generated by the tool and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality and integrity of the manuscript.

Data Availabilityaa

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

Citation

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