

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AUDIT AT SAQS PHARMACY LIMITED,  
KUMASI.**

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE CHRISTIAN SERVICE  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE N PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE IN  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

**JUNE, 2020**

## **STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY**

We have read the rules and regulations governing the university relating to plagiarism and we confidently say that this report is our own work and do not contained any unacknowledged work from any other source. We also declare that for the purpose of birthing this report, we have been under strict supervision in order to produce a quality work for submission.

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## SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

The discussion on internal communication audits since the 1950s have been deepened yet there are still gaps that exist in literature and practice. This current study examined the importance of networks in ensuring smooth operations in the communication cycles of organizations. The study was a quantitative one and was guided by three objectives namely: 1) To find out the channels used at the different levels at SAQS Pharmacy Limited; 2) to find out the clarity of messages sent to the different levels at SAQS Pharmacy Limited and 3) to find out the internal communication challenges at SAQS Pharmacy Limited. The study concluded that the internal communication networks were effective because they enabled the internal publics to communicate frequently, timely, with clarity and enough information across the operational communication networks of SAQS.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Indeed, the Lord has been faithful to us in all our endeavors. We declare His glorious name now and forevermore. Our sincere thanks go to our supervisor Justice Opoku Mensah (Rev. Bofah) for his guidance, constructive advice and corrections. We couldn't have produce such a nice work without his inputs.

We are grateful to all the lecturers and our Head of Department of Communication Studies for taking us through our course of study. Without them we couldn't have gotten to where we are now. May the good Lord bless you all. We would like to thank the entire staff of SAQS Pharmacy limited for their cooperation, assistance and support to make this work come to fruition.

Finally, special thanks goes to our parents, families and siblings as well as our course mates for their supports and inspirations. We owe you our lives. Thank you for believing in us and spurring us on.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The links between good internal communication and organizational success are abundant in academic research (Welch & Jackson, 2007). In fact, studies indicate that organizations are pointing to effective internal communication as an influential factor in business success (Cees, Berens, & Dijkstra, 2005; Holtz, 2004; Quirke, 2000). The main focus of this study is primarily on the management of internal communication thus, channels used for internal communication, clarity of messages and internal communication challenges at SAQS Pharmacy Limited, Kumasi. Moreover, this study seeks to explore the importance of internal communication in the pharmacy industry with special focus on SAQS Pharmacy Limited, Kumasi.

#### **1.1 Background to the Problem**

Most pharmacy companies have considerable number of employees, and often organizational decisions and information are communicated to all employees. It is vital to have an internal communication system in place to help inform employees as often as possible. Tench and Yeomans (2006) view internal communication as organizations managed communication system where employers are regarded as public or stakeholder group. The underlining reason for this study was founded on a review of the literature which reveals a distinct absence of pharmacy-based research into internal communication. This is in stark contrast to the increasing studies that highlight the

importance of internal communication (Asif & Sargeant, 2000; Johnson, 2001; Kitchen, 1997; Quirke, 2000; Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Although few organisations in the pharmacy sector have been conducting studies into their own internal communication (Asif & Sargeant, 2000; Moorcroft, 2006; Sablosky, 2005; Wadman, 2006), there is little published scholarly research available, which emphasises the importance of this study. Leaders and managers often fall into the trap of assuming that their employees understand the vision and values of their organization, as well as staff requirements to help advance their mission. Regarding the trend of integrating social media into effective communication presents new challenges and opportunities for organizations. Even though new media is convenient and faster in sending messages within an organization, we cannot overlook the traditional ways of sending a message across the lines of communication in an organization.

In many ways, internal communication is the glue that holds organizations together. Without it, employees are just a collection of disconnected individuals each working at his or her job. With it, workers are a unit with power far beyond the sum of its parts. It is important to distinguish between communications on behalf of the organization and the day to day intercourse within work groups or between managers and subordinates.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Smith (2005) warns that some institutions underestimate the power of internal communication at their own peril. It has therefore become difficult to effectively manage internal communication. While successful communication efforts and techniques often seem like mystic art forms, it is obvious when they are not properly applied; companies fail and customers are lost when communication channels are poorly managed or not present at all. Employees below the managerial line are often

left in the dark on the activities of the management and sometimes the organization as a whole.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

This research sought to assess the management of internal communication at SAQS Pharmacy Limited, Kumasi.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

1. To find out the channels used at the different levels at SAQS Pharmacy Limited.
2. To find out the clarity of messages sent to the different levels at SAQS Pharmacy Limited.
3. To find out the internal communication challenges at SAQS Pharmacy Limited.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What communication channels exist for internal communication at SAQS Pharmacy Limited?
2. How clear are the messages sent to the different levels of SAQS Pharmacy Limited?
3. What internal communication challenges exist at the SAQS Pharmacy Limited?

#### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study centres on the management of internal communication, at SAQS Pharmacy Limited, Patasi, Kumasi.

## **1.8 Definition of Key Terms**

### ***Internal Communication***

Modaff and De Wine (2002) have defined internal organizational communication as “the process of creating, exchanging, interpreting and storing messages within a system of human interrelationships” (p 4). This definition has been used for this study.

### ***Organization***

Robbins (2001) defines an organization as a consciously co-ordinated social unit composed of two or more people that function on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals. This definition has been adopted by the study.

### ***Communication Management***

Management in this study comprises the use of internal communication channels, clarity of messages and controlling of internal communication challenges to accomplish an organizational goal.

### ***Channel of Communication***

Communication channel is the means by which a message whether formal or informal is conveyed to its anticipated audience.

### ***Participant***

A participant is a person who takes part in something or a person who joins in some activity or endeavour.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW ON INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVES**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher provides an overview of internal organizational communication. The researcher also reviews the findings of some internal communication audits by pointing out their significance to this study.

#### **2.2 Organizational Communication in View**

Organizations exist as systems of individuals coordinated through hierarchy of ranks and division of labour seeking to achieve predetermined goals (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2008). This understanding of points out that although there are different units within organizations, they are united by one purpose to work in coherent and interdependent manner. To achieve this goal, communication plays an important role in coordinating the various units together (Richmond & McCroskey, 2009).

There are different approaches to organization communication but principally an approach is determined by the nature of the core business of the organization, its design and its size respectively (Miller, 2005). Irrespective these variables, the communication approach revolves around the content of communication (what is being said?), the direction of communication flow (who is saying what to whom?), the mode or channel of communication (through what medium is the message being communicated?) (Laswell, 1948); and finally, the style of communication (either formal or informal) (Miller, 2005). These variables show that organizational communication is comprehensive as it encompasses the totality of communication in an organization.

Organizations communicate with internal and external publics. This study focused on the internal communication within SAQS as a corporate entity.

In most cases, effective internal communication is misunderstood to represent mere information dissemination (Richmond & McCroskey, 2009) but it is neither concerned with merely talking about the vision or mission of an organization nor concerned solely with internal news releases and newsletters. These practices are important yet constitute a fraction of the actual practice of effective internal communication (Miller & Dess, 1992). Internal communication answers the questions of what should be communicated to the internal publics, when it should be communicated, who should communicate and how it should be communicated. Effective internal communication is a vital means of addressing employee concerns because clear and concise internal communication helps to establish formal roles and responsibilities for employees and maintain organization and clarity within an establishment.

Communicating effectively with internal publics also improves the work environment in that it increases awareness among employees of the company's activities and plans (Modaff & DeWine, 2002).

### **2.3 Scope of Internal Communication Audits**

The term *communication audit* was first used in academic literature by Odiorne in 1954. Since then, studies that have defined the concept of communication audit have focused on broad sets of tools used to assess the quality of organizational communication (Zuijze-Konning & de Jong, 2005). Organizational communication scholars have used the tool to examine internal and external communication to understand how communication happens in organizations.



In the context of internal communication, the tool helps organizations both small and mega to identify their communication strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, a small size organization like SAQS can benefit immensely because internal communication audits evaluate the effectiveness and credibility of its current communication networks and media, including meetings, face-to-face communication and other communication media (Stacks, 2006).

Atkins (2008) argues that communication audit is an excellent diagnostic and intervention tool that help to reduce communication anxiety and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of communication flow within and outside an organization. As a diagnostic tool, it can help SAQS to deal effectively with the communication challenges and gaps that might exist in the organization. It was however important to understand the scope of internal communication audits since it impacts the approach and tools to adopt to ensure effective communication.

Miller (1981) reported that internal communication can be used to achieve five main organization functions namely:

1. Planning- primarily concerned with formulating objectives and strategic direction on the organization;
2. Organizing - has to do with giving instructions of how each of these objectives can be achieved;
3. Leading;
4. Delegation which has to do with assigning responsibilities to lower level staff to ensure facilitation and efficiency in the organization; and
5. Controlling - process whereby the progress of work is assessed and improved upon communication is critical in all these points.

Mounter (2003) also reported on the scope of internal communication and noted that it covers “rationale goals (employees understand their business and what they have to do), emotional goals (employees are involved); and desired actions (employees understand how their behaviour impacts on their business)” (p. 45). These findings point out that organizations like SAQS can use effective internal communication to address the individual goals of their employees to ensure balanced communication. Stuart (2002) earlier reported that the more employees identify with their organization, the more likely they were to show supportive attitude towards it, accept its premises and make decisions that are consistent with its objectives. After all, communication exists for organizations to function effectively (Hargie & Tourish, 2000).

One way of ensuring effective internal communication is through building good interpersonal relationships. Hanson (1986) reported that the presence of good interpersonal relationships between managers and other internal publics was three times more powerful in predicting profitability in 40 major companies over a five-year period than these four most powerful variables combined: market share, capital intensity, firm size and sales growth rate. This finding provides an insight into how SAQS can use its internal communication to build profitable interpersonal relationships that impact the overall goals of the organization.

## **2.4 Formal Communication Networks**

Richmond and McCroskey (2009) has defined formal communication network as “The communication that follows the hierarchical structure of the organization or the chain of command” (p. 27). This definition shows that all communication that adheres to strictly laid down rules, governing who talks to whom, are formal. Skinner, et al. (2001) reported that formal networks serve two main functions in organizations. The first is

what they termed “management to worker communication” (downward flow) which includes briefing groups, written circulars, notices, induction, disciplinary procedures, training, and public address systems. The second form is “worker to management communication” (upward flows) includes works/liaison committees, consultative committees, and grievance procedures. The formal communication network is also described as upward flow, downward flow and horizontal flow (Hamilton & Parker, 1990). In this study, the researcher will be exploring how the downward, upward and horizontal networks work in SAQS.

#### **2.4.1 Top down communication**

According to Mounter (2003), downward communication is created by directors and managers and passed down through the hierarchy of workers in the organization. In most organizations, downward communication is the preferred method of communication; i.e. managers decide what the systems, rules and procedures will be and then pass these down to employees they manage and supervise (Richmond & McCroskey, 2009).

Feedback is critical in effective communication. Therefore, SAQS can use its internal top down communication to receive feedback on personal and corporate issues (Belasen, 2008). It must be pointed out that what applies and what do not depends on the communication philosophy of SAQS. Notwithstanding the size of SAQS, each of these components of downward flow can be significant to its internal communication because it will help the organization to understand and operationalize the scope of downward communication.

### **2.4.2 Bottom up Communication Approach**

This is communication that originates at the lower level of the employment hierarchy and is then communicated up through the chain of command (Hamilton & Parker, 1990; Mounter, 2003). Richmond and McCroskey (2009) reported four types of upward communication including suggestions schemes, feedback forums/surveys, grievances and employee-manager discussions. SAQS can benefit from ensuring that its upward communication works because it increases motivation and make employees feel valued and respected. It also enables managers to understand how employees are feeling. Furthermore, when problems occur, the management of SAQS will be more likely to identify earlier by those working in the area that they occur.

### **2.4.3 Horizontal Communication**

This is also known as *lateral* communication and it happens between people of the same level in a business line (Mounter, 2003). It occurs usually in the same department, but sometimes it accounts for communication between departments. Richmond and McCroskey (2009) refer to the horizontal communication as “peer to peer” communication and further note that it can serve the internal publics of organizations for three main purposes: 1) they aim to increase knowledge about the organization; 2) to communicate to the appropriate sections, and 3) to improve socialization skills. In this regard, SAQS can use its horizontal communication flow to coordinate, solve problems, share information and resolve conflict among its internal publics (Gray & Smeltzer, 1989). Such a situation can be healthy for open systems that significantly depend on each unit’s input to create *harmony*.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY SECTION**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research method, the target and accessible population, the instruments that were used for data collection, data analysis plan, and issues of ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Method**

Tull and Hawkins (1984) explain that a research method offers a guideline or specification of procedures for collecting and analysing the data necessary to help identify a problem or to help solve the problem at hand. In this study the researcher used the descriptive survey method. This method was adopted because it is considered as one of the effective ways to conduct communication audits in organizations (Hargie & Tourish, 2000). The researcher carried out a survey on all the employees of SAQS to find out the effectiveness of the internal communication networks and channels. The survey method was used because it allowed the researcher to effectively describe the communication characteristics of the internal publics of SAQS.

#### **3.3 Population for the Study**

The target population was the same as the accessible population for the study and included all the senior level and lower level employees of SAQS who are at the time of the study, 55 in number.

### **3.4 Sample and Sampling**

Since the population of SAQS was small and easily accessible to the researcher, all the 55 employees at the three employment levels namely, senior level and lower level were included in the study.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

The main instrument that was used for the study was self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to contain information on the study objectives and administered to the respondents.

### **3.6 Data Collection Process**

Before the questionnaires were administered, the research team organized a briefing session for the employees of SAQS. During that meeting, the purpose of the study and the scope of the study were communicated to the employees.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Process**

Data analysis in research process is crucial because “it brings logical and observational aspects together in the search for patterns in what is observed” (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 9). The units of analysis for this study were the senior level and the lower level employees of SAQS. The questionnaires were coded numerically using specially designed codes. The individual questions were then analysed using the Predictive Analytic Software (PASW), after which the researcher generated the findings and created charts, graphs and frequency tables using the PASW for presentation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

A total of 55 questionnaires were administered to the lower level employees and the managers/supervisors of SAQS and 41 were returned and have been analysed for this study. This implies that 79% of the total target population participated in the study. Courage and Baxter (2005) argue that response rate that range between 20 and 60% is valid for analysis. However, Courage and Baxter explain that the total population must be taken into consideration in determining an appropriate response rate for a study. Given that the response rate was high and that majority (79%) of the employees participated in the study, the researcher decided to continue with the data analysis.

#### 4.2 Demographic Data

##### Gender of Respondents

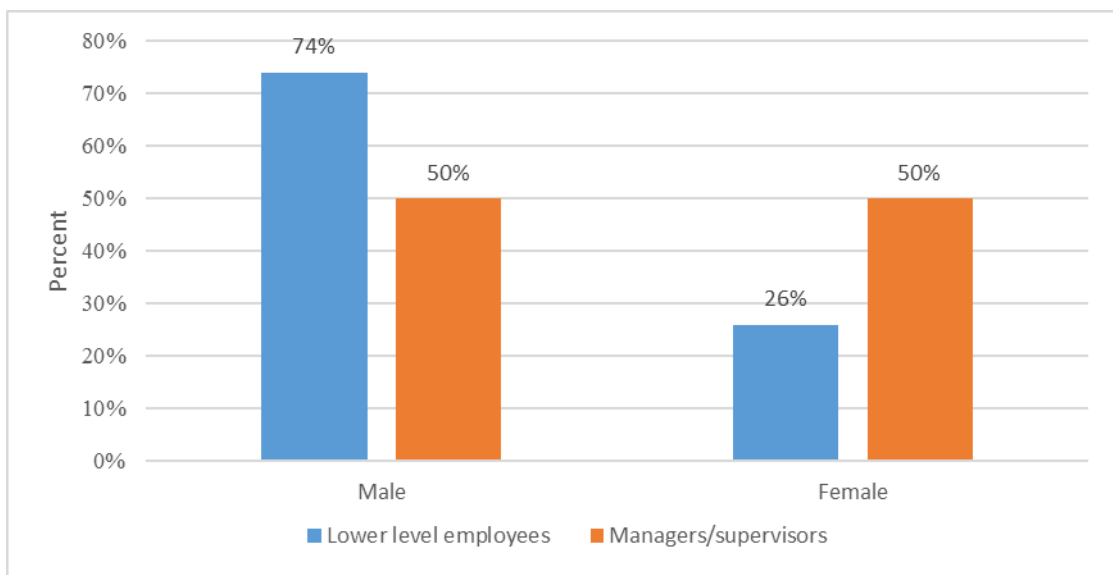
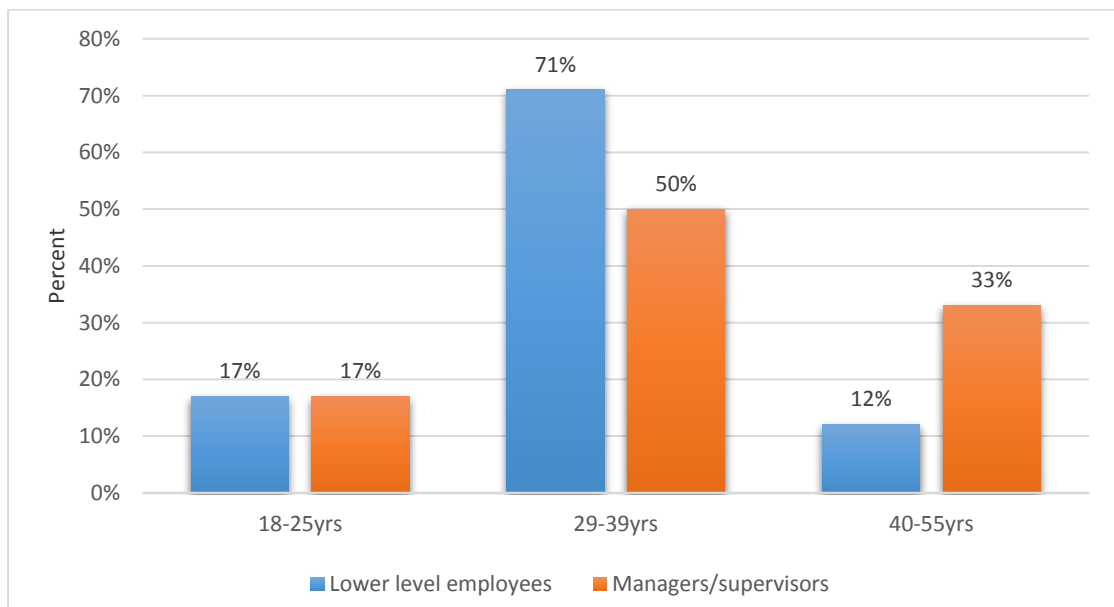


Figure 4.5: *The gender of respondents*

Figure 4.1 above shows the gender of the respondents. Among the lower level respondents, 74% were male and 26% were female whereas for the managers/supervisors, 50% were male and 50% were female. These findings indicate that the number of male lower level employees in SAQS was higher than the female which seems to be directly opposite to what exist in many organizations. For most organizations, one would expect that the higher one reaches the highest echelon of leadership, the more likely it is to find less female. However, the male and female population for the managers/supervisors are at par. The other possible reason could be as a result of the technical nature of the work that possibly influences the employment decisions.

#### Age of Respondents



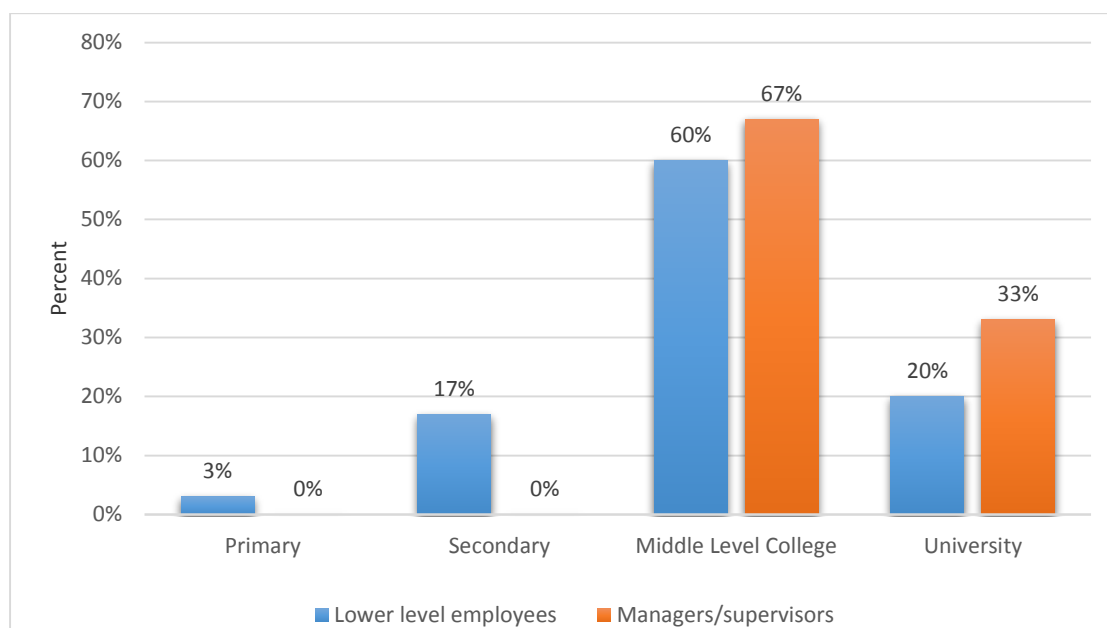
**Figure 4.6: *The age of respondents***

Regarding the age bracket of respondents, 17% of the lower level employees were between the ages of 18 and 25, 71% were between 26 and 39 and 12% were between 40 and 55 years. On the age bracket of the managers/supervisors, 17% were between



18 and 25, 50% were between 26 and 39, and 33% were between 40 and 55. These findings indicate that majority of the respondents were young between 26 and 39 years hence SAQS had youthful workforce.

### Level of Education of Respondents



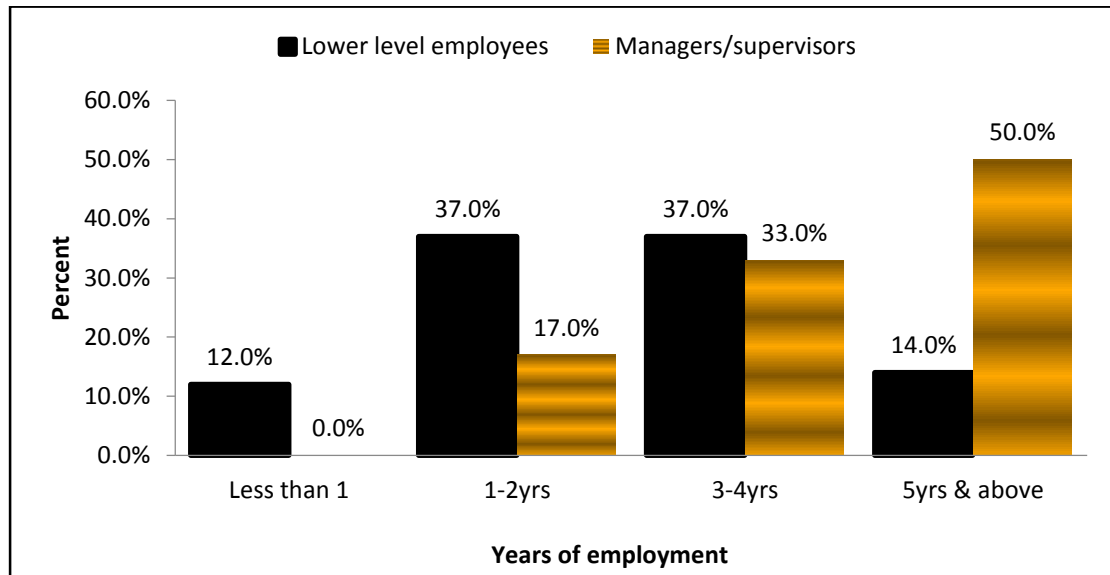
**Figure 4.7: *The education level of respondents***

Figure 4.3 above indicates that 3% of the lower level respondents had primary education, 17% had secondary education, 60% had middle level college education and 20% had university education.

Concerning the education of the managers/supervisor, 67% had middle level college and 33% had university level qualification. This shows that the educational level of the managers/supervisors were higher than the primary and the secondary. These findings show that majority of the respondents had come as far as the middle college level and most likely they are holders of diplomas. In the context of this study, the findings show

that there is considerable number of employees who are educated at the university level both among the lower level, middle level and the management.

#### Length of Employment in SAQS



**Figure 4.8: The years of employment of respondents**

Figure 4.4 above indicates that 12% of the lower level employees had work with SAQS for less than a year, 37% had worked between 1 and 2 years, 37% had worked between 3 and 4 years, and 14% had worked for 5 years and above. On the length of employment of the managers/supervisors, 17% had worked between 1 and 2 years, 33% had worked between 3 and 4 years and 50% had worked for 5 years and above.

These findings show that 74% of the lower level respondents had worked between 1 and 4 years and majority of the managers/supervisors (83%) had work between 3 and 5 years. The implication of this finding is that the employees of SAQS have some understanding of the communication that happen in the organization because of the length of time they had worked in the organization.

#### 4.4 Communication Networks in SAQS

**Table 4.8: Approach to supervisor-lower level employee communication according to managers/supervisors**

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Formal	0	0
Informal	0	0
Both formal and informal	6	100
Total	6	100

The study sought to find out the communication networks that exist in SAQS. It was necessary to understand the approach that was used by SAQS to communicate since it is a key determinant of the networks that exist in organizations. Table 4.3 above shows that all the respondents, (100%) agreed that SAQS used both formal and informal communication approaches.

**Table 9.4: Sources for task oriented and non-task-oriented information for lower level employees**

<i>Source</i>	<i>Responses</i>	
	<i>Task oriented information</i>	<i>Non task-oriented information</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Executive office	9	3
Immediate supervisor	88	11
HRM	3	11
Grapevine (rumours)	0	61
Not sure	0	14
Total (%)	100	100

The source for task oriented and non-task-oriented information provides an indication of the communication networks that exist in organizations. Table 4.4 above indicates that 9% of the lower level employees receive task related information from the executive office, 88% receive such information from their immediate supervisors and 3% receive from the HR manager. Concerning the source for non-task oriented information for the lower level employees, 3% indicated they receive such information from the executive office, 11% receive from their immediate supervisors, 11% receive from the HRM, 61% receive from the grapevine (rumours), and 14% were not sure. These findings were not unusual considering the fact that the flow of information in most organizations is structured according to the lines of authority is downward in orientation; thus follows the hierarchical structure of organization. These findings agree with earlier studies such as Skinner et al (2001) who reported that downward networks were used for supervisor to worker communication. The findings also show that the source of non-task oriented information to the lower level employees is also fragmented with the grapevine as the major source. However, the fact that the grapevine serves as the major source of non-task related information is significant in that it shows the power, and perhaps, the importance of the grapevine in organizations so far as internal communication is concerned.

**Table 4.10: Sources for task-oriented and non task oriented information for managers/supervisors**

<i>Source</i>	<i>Responses</i>	
	<i>Task oriented</i>	<i>Non-task</i>
	<i>information</i>	<i>oriented</i>
		<i>information</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Executive office	25	41
HRM	8	17
Co-managers	50	25
Grapevine (rumours)	17	17
Total (%)	100	100

Like the lower level employees, the managers/supervisors also reported four main sources for task oriented and non-task oriented information. As indicated in table 4.5 above on the source for task oriented information, 25% of the managers/supervisors receive task oriented information from the executive office, 8% receive such information the HRM, 50% receive from their co-managers, and 17% receive from the grapevine. On the sources for non-task oriented information, 41% receive from the executive office, 17% receive from the HR manager, 25% receive from their co-managers and 17% receive from the grapevine. The above findings suggest that the managers/supervisors receive task oriented information from different sources with the major source being their co-managers although the percentage of respondents who reported the executive office as the source for task oriented information was relatively high (25%). The findings on the sources for non-task oriented information seem to be

directly opposite the findings on the sources for task oriented information for the managers/supervisors. This is because the major sources for non-task oriented information for the managers/supervisors were the executive office and the managers/supervisors from the other departments. This shows that the managers and supervisors receive non-task oriented information from the executive office than task oriented information.

**Table 4.11: Network of communication relationships on task orientated information for lower level employees**

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Responses</i>			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not</i>	<i>Total</i>
			<i>sure</i>	
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
I am required to report all task oriented information to my immediate supervisor	77	14	9	100
I am required to report all task oriented information with the executive office	74	12	14	100
I am required to report all task oriented information with my co-workers	80	11	9	100

Table 4.4 above shows that 77% of the respondents indicated “yes” that they were required to report all task oriented information to their immediate supervisors, 14% indicated “no” and 9% were not sure. When asked if they were allowed to share task oriented information with the executive office, 74% of the respondents indicated “yes” while 12% indicated “no” and 14% were not sure. Whether respondents were allowed

to freely share all task-oriented information with their co-workers, 80% indicated “yes”, 11% indicated “no” and 9% were not sure. These findings suggest that the internal publics of SAQS share task oriented information freely across the networks that exist in the organization. Such an environment is positive for SAQS because Hamilton and Parker (1990) reported that the free sharing of task-oriented information across the existing communications networks was crucial for the integration and effective interdependence of open system organizations. On the importance of employee to supervisor and employee to employee communication for organizational integration, Richmond and McCroskey (2009) reported that the bottom up and the horizontal communications were used to coordinate tasks and feedback that help to facilitate integration.

**Table 4.12: Network of communication relationships on non-task-oriented information for lower level employees**

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Responses</i>			
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
I am required to report non-task oriented information strictly to my immediate supervisor	17	60	23	100
I am required to report non-task oriented information with the executive office	30	29	40	100
I am required to report non-task oriented information with my co-workers	51	23	26	100

As presented in table 4.5 above, 17% of the respondents indicated “yes” to the statement that they were required to report all non-task oriented information to their immediate supervisors, 60% reported “no” and 23% were not sure.

In responding to the statement, “I am allowed to share all non-task oriented information with the executive office”, 31% of the respondents indicated “yes”, 29% indicated “no” and 40% were not sure.

Showing whether the lower level employees were allowed to share non-task oriented information with their co-workers, 51% indicated “yes”, 23% indicated “no” and 26% were not sure. The findings show that the lower level employees do not report non-task oriented information with the executive office. However, the lower level employees, based on the findings, could share non-task oriented information with their co-workers.

#### Communication channels in SAQS

**Table 4.13: Communication channels used by lower level employees for receiving and sending information**

	<i>Executive</i>		<i>Immediate</i>			
<i>Channel</i>	<i>office</i>		<i>supervisor</i>		<i>Co-workers</i>	
	<i>Receive</i>	<i>Send</i>	<i>Receive</i>	<i>Send</i>	<i>Receive</i>	<i>Send</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Face to face	18	25	30	31	80	80
Telephone calls	15	20	25	28	6	3
Memos	28	8	8	5	6	0
Group meetings	14	11	9	4	2	6
Email	25	36	28	32	6	11
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100



Table 4.6 above shows the channels that are used by lower level employees to send and receive information from the executive office, the immediate supervisors and the co-workers. Regarding the channels that were used by the lower level employees to receive information from the executive office, 18% used the face to face, 15% used telephone calls, 28% used memos, 14% used group meetings and 25% used the email. On the channels the lower level employee used to send information to the executive office, 25% used face to face, 20% used the telephone calls, 8% used the memos, 11% used the group meetings and 36% use the email.

In responding to the channels that were used by the lower level employees to receive information from their immediate supervisors, 30% used face to face, 25% used the telephone calls, 8% used memos, 9% used the group meetings and 28% used the email. On the channels for sending information to the immediate supervisors, 31% of the lower level employees used face to face, 28% used the telephone calls, 5% use the memos, 4% used the group meetings and 32% used the email. Table 4.10 above shows that 80% of the lower level employees used face to face to receive information from their co-workers, 6% used telephone calls, 6% used memos, 2% used group meetings and 6% used the email. On the channels lower level employees used to send information to their co-workers, 80% indicated they use face to face, 3% use telephone calls, 6% use the group meetings and 11% use the email. These findings show that different channels are used to receive and send information to different offices. Miller (2006) argues that the choice of channel is determined by many factors such as the design, nature and culture of the organization. This finding is significance in that the preference of a channel is determined by the receiver of the communication in terms of the authority commanded by the receiver.

**Table 4.14: Communication challenges for managers/supervisors**

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Responses</i>			
	<i>Strongly agree</i>		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	
	<i>Undecided</i>		<i>disagree</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
The communication procedures in SAQS are easy to follow	68	16	16	100
SAQS needs to improve its communication policies to enable me make effective decisions about my job	68	16	16	100
There is too much bureaucracy in SAQS	16	16	68	100

Table 4.7 above shows 68% of the respondents strongly agree that communication procedures in SAQS was easy to follow, 16% reported they strongly disagree and 16% were undecided. The finding also shows 68% of the managers/supervisors strongly agree that SAQS needs to improve its communication policies to enable them make effective decisions about their jobs, 16% strongly disagreed and 16% were undecided. On the question of bureaucracy, 16% said they strongly agree there was too much bureaucracy in SAQS, 68% strongly disagreed, and 16% were undecided.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to carry out a communication audit so as to establish the effectiveness of the internal communication networks and channels of SAQS. To achieve this purpose, four objectives were conceptualized namely 1) to find out the operational communication networks for the exchange of task oriented and non-task oriented information in SAQS; 2) to determine the communication channels used across the operational communication networks; 3) to find out whether the internal communication of SAQS addressed the communication needs, concerns and interests of the internal publics, and 4) to establish the effectiveness of the operational communication networks and channels of SAQS.

#### **5.2 Discussions**

##### **5.2.1 Operational Communication Networks**

The first objective of the study was to find out the operational communication networks that exist in SAQS for task oriented and non-task oriented information. The study found that SAQS used both formal and informal communication approaches that allow for information to be exchanged from the top to the bottom and vice-versa and across the departments in the organization. This finding is significant in that effective internal communication covers both the formal and the informal communication needs of an organization (Miller, 2006). In most cases, organizations focus their energies on the formal communication needs, thereby neglecting the informal communication that naturally occurs as a result of interactions between employees. Informal communication enables employees to express themselves in a manner that enhance

proper coordination and integration. In addition, effective informal communication is one way of ensuring that the top management draws closer to the lower level employees. This form of interaction, to a large extent, creates trust and confidence between the supervisors and those supervised.

However, Richmond and McCroskey (2009) cautions that organizations must carefully manage the informal communication approach otherwise it could degenerate into further internal problems. Himstreet and Baty (2000) had earlier argued that organizations must maintain the balance between formal and informal communication approaches. These observations warrant the need for the structuring of both informal and formal communication approaches of organizations.

The study found that majority of the lower level employees (88%) received most of the task oriented information from their supervisors. This shows that the network for task oriented information is top-down. This finding is not surprising considering that internal organization communication is structured around supervisor-subordinate, and in some cases, group or team work. This is supported by another finding that showed that the lower level employees (77%) were required to strictly report all task oriented information to their supervisors. Effective internal communication, according to Miller (1981) is used for task coordination hence the finding is in line with what typically exist in most organizations. However, one significant finding of the study is the fact that the lower level employees were allowed to share task oriented information with the executive office. According to the findings, 74% of the lower level employees indicated that they were allowed to share all task oriented information with the executive office. In most organizations, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for lower level employees to get their messages across to the CEO or the top executives. Due processes must be followed and strict bureaucratic processes must be adhered to before the lower level

employee could get to the top. This finding was affirmed by some of the management members of SAQS that were interviewed. For instance, the CEO explained that the lower level employees were allowed to channel their messages to the top executives sometimes via their supervisors and other times, without their supervisors. Such flexibility for the lower level employees to gain accessibility to the top, in the researcher's opinion is healthy for effective internal communication. This is because such accessibility diffuses the tensions that perceptually exist in organizations so far as lower level employees and the top management relations are concerned. Direct accessibility to the management without undue bureaucratic processes can positively boost employee morale and create employee engagement. Lumsden and Lumsden (1993) explain that such an interaction enables management to get to hear suggestions from the employee that can change the fortunes of the organization.

However, it must be pointed out that the size of an organization can determine the usefulness and effectiveness of a direct accessibility of lower level employees to management on information sharing. Considering an organization of say 2000 employees, it may be practically impossible for the management to receive job related information from the lower level employees thereby bypassing the middle level managers and supervisors. Perhaps, for organizations like SAQS, with employee population of 55, such an approach may work well. Therefore smaller or medium size organizations like SAQS can encourage the accessibility of lower level employees to the management without undue bureaucratic hindrances to enhance integration and employee motivation.

Contrary to the findings discussed above, the study also found that the lower level employees were not sure whether they were allowed to report non-task oriented information with the executive office or not. This finding point to a gap that may exists

in many organizations. Effective internal communication aims at creating understanding among the internal publics of an organization. Therefore if such a high percentage of internal publics (69%) were not sure that they could report non task oriented information with the executive office, then the possible reasons could be that either there is no documented policy or there is a break in the flow of such information. Either of these two possibilities warrants that the office responsible for internal communication must take practical steps to provide information on internal processes and procedures to the internal publics.

The study also found that the major source for non-task oriented information for the lower level employees was their co-workers and for the managers/supervisors, it was the executive office. However, 80% of the lower level employees indicated that they share non-task oriented information with their colleagues and another 80% reported they share task oriented information with their colleagues. Horizontal communication happens among people of the same level of the corporate structure (Mounter, 2003). Therefore the findings point to a fact that lower level employees were able to share information with their co-workers. This finding is important in that Mounter (2003) explains that “the lateral [horizontal] flow occurs across functions and welds the organization as a system into one team. Organizations that want to improve and strengthen their internal communication could encourage employee to employee communication. Besides, the systems perspective urges that open system organizations must ensure free exchange of information across the networks or hierarchies that exist in an organization for the sake of organizational integration (Baskin et. al., 1997). By encouraging employee to employee communication, the organization will be able to integrate its members to build effective interdependence.

According to the findings of the study, the sources for information on task oriented and non-task oriented information for the internal publics were fragmented. Such a situation is not healthy for employee integration particularly on task oriented information. This is because it can result in communication confusion unless the sources are structured in a way that is clearly understood by employees. One way of circumventing this problem is that organizations must ensure they work with a communication policy. Communication policies guide organizational communication in that it sets out formal and informal ways in which information can be shared among the employees of an organization. In the absence of clearly defined communication rules and procedures, organizations are bound to suffer from communication confusion caused by misinterpretation of messages received from different sources. The findings of the study have showed that SAQS does not have a communication policy and that can possibly account for this gap.

Another gap that was identified in the study was the major source for task oriented information for managers/supervisors. A total of 17% of the managers/supervisors indicated they receive task oriented information from the grapevine (rumours). In the context of internal communication, this is seen as problematic in that the grapevine typically carries information that are non-task oriented (Hamilton & Parker, 1990). Unfortunately, the study could not further explore the type of task oriented information that is received by the managers/supervisors through the grapevine. This could have provided an indication to the possible uses of the grapevine in internal communication. Notwithstanding the possibility that the grapevine could be used for communicating task oriented information, it appears that in SAQS, such a situation exist because of lack of clearly defined communication procedures and policies. Because, the question is, how can employees rely on “rumours” to carry out their tasks? Such a situation could

evidently lead to chaos and confusion when it is not properly addressed. Ideally, information to carry out tasks must come from the appropriate sources for the sake of responsibility and orderliness.

### **5.2.2 Communications channels in SAQS**

The second objective was to determine the communication channels used across the operational communication networks in SAQS. The channels for communication (sending and receiving information) in SAQS included the face to face, telephone calls, memos, group meetings, and emails. Communication channels provide avenues for feedback which is critical for effective internal communication. For instance Bivins (1992) reported that continuous feedback loops allow organization systems to coordinate and adjust activities to maintain balance and promote survival. In this regard, the finding shows that varieties of communication channels are used to communicate in SAQS. The variety of channels is somehow not unexpected for an organization that has office and field staff because it allows for flexibility of communication. The purpose, the source, the time and the recipient of the message, among other variables will determine which channel to use. Organizations can encourage the use of multiple channels for their internal communications.

However, one significant finding on the channels was the face to face that was used among the employees. According to the finding, 80% of the lower level employees indicated that they use the face to face to send information to their colleagues and another 80% indicated they use the same channel to receive information from their colleagues. This finding shows that the face to face channel is popular among employees. Organizations can encourage the face to face channel of communication



because it ensures relatively effective two-way communication as compared to the other channels and probably remain a useful channel in organization communication.

### **5.2.3 Effectiveness of communication networks and channels in SAQS**

The fourth objective was to establish the effectiveness of the operational communication networks and channels of SAQS.

To determine the effectiveness of the operational communication networks, the researcher used the variables of frequency, timeliness, quantity and clarity of information across the operational communication networks. The study found that the internal publics had been oriented into the business of SAQS which is a key function of internal communication. All the lower level employees (100%) strongly agreed that the vision of SAQS had been communicated to them but 97% reported they strongly agree that they aligned their job to the vision of the organization.

More so, the study found that 97% strongly agreed that the mission of SAQS had been communicated to them and 97% reported that they aligned their job to the mission of the organization. In addition, the study found that found that 97% of the lower level employees strongly agree that the core objectives of SAQS had been communicated to them but 94% reported they strongly agree that they aligned their job to the achievement of the objectives of the organization.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The study established that organizations like SAQS use both formal and informal communication approaches that allow for information to be exchanged from the top to the bottom and vice-versa and across the departments in the organization. However, the operational communication networks had not been structured therefore affecting the

flow of information from both top down and bottom up. This had led to the internal publics receiving task oriented information from different sources thereby creating confusion. Moreover, the study found that although the management seemed to believe that the environment had been created for the lower level employees to channel their non task oriented information, the latter disagreed. This suggests that there is an internal communication gap that needed to be addressed.

The study identified that several channels were used for communication (sending and receiving information) in SAQS and they included the face to face, telephone calls, memos, group meetings, and emails. Each of these channels according the study had peculiar characteristics that make it useful in the organization. This study has showed that the face to face channel remains an effective channel for communication in organizations, compared to the other channels.

However, some of the channels were underused particularly the email. This was because the messages that were sent via the email had to be followed by memos or verbal messages to serve as reminders. This in itself is not problematic because effective internal communication can be enhanced when one channel compliments the other. However, it becomes problematic when the internal publics themselves admitted that it was the useful tool for communicating with certain offices and office holders yet do not take full advantage of it.

Moreover, the study showed that the grapevine could be used to receive and send both task oriented and non-task oriented information. This finding raised an interest because of how organizations use the grapevine as the source for only informal communication. These point to an emerging dynamics in the range of channels that could be used for multiple purposes to communication internally in organizations. However, the

practicality and the effectiveness of the grapevine as a channel for receiving and sending task oriented information is yet to be fully explored.

The study concluded that the internal communication networks were effective because they enabled the internal publics to communicate frequently, timely, with clarity and enough information across the operational communication networks of SAQS.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

1. The study found that most of the communication challenges of SAQS were as a result of the fact that the organization had not communication policy. Communication policies are tools that effectively guide internal communication of organizations by providing the operational guidelines on how access information, the protocols to observe, the communication dos and don'ts and other communication related issues. In view of this, the study recommends that the management of SAQS should, in consultation with all stakeholders including the lower level employees, design a communication policy that would meet its internal communication needs so as to avoid and manage simple communication problems and challenges.
2. The study recommends a direct accessibility of the lower level employees to the management without undue bureaucratic processes to positively boost employee morale and create employee engagement. This is because the study found that although the management were of the opinion that they had created the environment for the lower level employees to freely and openly communicate with them, the latter was not fully aware and had not utilized such opportunities. The direct accessibility could be achieved through employee education and practical visitations of the management to the lower level

employees to their job sites and homes to build trust. SAQS can encourage the accessibility of lower level employees to the management without undue bureaucratic hindrances to enhance integration and employee motivation.

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