



Communicating with Employees During Remote Working

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Abstract. This research objective is to identify the relationship between communicating with employees, upward and downward communication, communication problems and remote working. This study applied the Neo-institutional Theory as the main theory to be applied in this study in order to strengthen the relationships between each variable. The method of this research is quantitative and the data that are found in this study was the response from respondents from Finance Division and Infrastructure Management Division at Prasarana Malaysia Berhad. The findings shown that there is a relationship between communicating with employees, upward and downward communication, communication problems and remote working. To conclude, this study contributes to the field of communication through the establishment of a more comprehensive variables related to participation in training and adoption of innovation and help to develop and strengthen the Neo-institutional Theory.

Keywords: Remote Working · Communicating with Employees · Upward and Downward communication · Communication Problems · Remote Working

1 Introduction

Communicating with employees may be an easy task to do on a daily basis, but to properly communicate to deliver key messages during this era, with most of the organization that is going through remote working, it may be hard for some employers [1]. According to the author [1], a good communication that is being practiced in an organization can be an essential apparatus to achieve quality performances and it could be one of an effort to maintain good relationship among employers and employees. Communication has become an important part of every individual as communication is being used by everyone due to its beneficial process, such as sharing ideas, information and messages with other individual or party [2]. Agreeing to the author [2], an employer that is in charge of executing functions of the organization's management will always choose to communicate with their employees in order to make tasks possible while coordinating organization's business activities. In addition, effective communication may absolutely improve employees' productivity and it builds teamwork that will then aligned with

how it will affect each employee's performances in the organization [1]. According to [3], effective communication is the important part that a company has to hold on to in order to produce successful outcomes and it involves the process to be well coordinated through using accurate information during all tasks. Next, in most organizations practices upward and downward communication in their daily communication tool in an organization [1]. According to [4], upward communications is a communication process that moves vertically, from bottom to the top, such as from an employee to an employer. Downward communication flows downwards, from employers to employees and downward communication commonly used for instructions that are job related [5].

2 Problem Statement

Remote working has quite been an issue since boundaries have become blurry, there may be less social interaction which means it will be more misunderstandings due to communication barrier when an employer and employees are isolated and detached from the workplace [6]. According to [7], employees that does remote working experienced the problems of misunderstandings due to working virtually, such as intonation that is being used can be interpreted in many ways that will contribute to misunderstandings and the purpose of communication will not be accurate.

Through remote working, it also affects employees' work-life balance due to unclear roles between work and home commitments, flexibility between being at home and work [8]. Agreeing to the same author [8], these main roots of remote working distresses difficulty in decision making, planning and delivering tasks before deadline. To add, during remote working, the main root of lessening the employee's productivity while working from home such as employee may be distracted by the presence of young children or other family members [9].

The shift to remote work has been a result to deterioration of employees' mental health as it can affect the levels of employees' self-discipline, stress, eager to initiate procrastination, the cause on resilience and job satisfaction [8]. Conferring to the same author [8], remote working has also brought more stress and result in unnecessarily burn out by the employees. Remote working surges stress as it blurs the boundaries between home and workplace as well as it can have resulted to anxiety as employees have to juggle their work and family activities [10].

3 Research Question

RQ1. What is the relationship between communicating with employees and remote working?

RQ2. What is the relationship between upward and downward communication and remote working?

RQ3. What is the relationship between communication problem and remote working?

4 Research Objective

RO1. To determine the relationship between communicating with employees and remote working.

RO2. To examine the relationship between upward and downward communication and remote working.

RO3. To analyze the relationship between communication problems and remote working.

5 Literature Review

5.1 Remote Working

According to [11], remote work is a situation where employees are physically separated from the employer and this includes for employees that has physical decentralization of work such as off-shores. Remote working also happens when an employee is travelling, they still need to keep in touch with the office that made remote working such as in hotel rooms and airplanes in order to get tasks delivered [11]. This is because during that time, remote work only happens for people who were travelling for their job but at the same time, employees that does remote work have to ensure that the communication between them and the workplace stays in order to update for work. Remote working has resulted in making opportunities to workers on practicing more of self-motivation and self-driven specifically of communication on the fast pace and decision making [12]. According to [13], remote working has enlarged the potential of interruptions from their non-work-related requirements and it has effects on the employee's self-efficacy, such as a situation where a remote working employee is more tempted in doing house chores than to get their work delivered. According to [14], remote working has improved remote workers over time in terms of communicating away from the workplace, they have the chance to get more attrition and better practice of productivity during remote working. According to [15], remote working has been observed that it has negative effects such as some remote working employees may have lack in social interaction within the organization and it has caused the employers to give information that is not going to be understood and the employees will just be presence through e-mailing activities. This is because remote workers will only communicate virtually in times of meetings and discussions, other than that would only be e-mails to the employees and they will feel much neglected due to lack of interaction among them and their employer. According to [16], employees in organizations that does remote working but refuses to stream external networks in order to make daily tasks easier, experienced sense of isolation and lack of supervision by their employer as remote working decreases the interaction between employer and employees. When organizations refuse to stream external network, employees will have limited access in reaching out to their employer about their work enquiries and by this difficulty, they will experience lack of supervision by their employer.

According to [17], as years pass by, communication has become a seamless process and remote working has benefited organizations as it were found to contribute more outputs and it has helped organizations by cutting down continuous continent costs. This is because the organization will no longer be spending on the work place's rental and also their employees' commuting allowances. According to [18], remote working may

enable employees to improve their work life balance then correlate with employee's job satisfactory. This is because an employee's behaviour affects their job satisfaction. According to the same author [18], with the sufficient amount of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) that has been provided by the organization during remote working, employees could access work and colleagues are easily accessible at times of remote working.

According to [19], remote working due to the pandemic Covid-19 has brought stress to both employer and employees as they were uncertain about work, health and economy. Due to that, remote working due to lockdown circumstances has perceived stress in a different kind of perception such as employees were scared that they could be retrenched from the organization as the economy went down and employees that has family needed to coordinate their daily routine while at the same time, they have to be reachable for work [19]. This is due to employees experienced stress by having to manage between work and home commitments. According to [20], remote working provides more flexibility to employees as the logic were "moving work to the worker not moving worker to the work" and still, work could be done and achieved anywhere regardless of time and place as long as the employees are given enough technology that supports in the implementation of flexible working procedure. Remote working has benefited organizations over the years on cutting down costs, flexibility and helps with work life balance. Nevertheless, there are also negative impacts on remote working but it is endurable with the right practice and implementation such as the using of new technology and with sufficient supervision.

5.2 Communicating with Employees

Communication within the employers and employees should be the important element in shaping workers' behaviors [21]. According to [22], employers that emphasizes on communicating with employees will resulted in employee's sense of security. This means that it is proven employers that always communicate with their employees will make their employees not to feel left out, and having assurance that they are doing well in their job. In order to reach objectives and achieve goals, communicating with employees or internal communication is much needed in an organization so that their objectives and goals can be met [23]. According to [24], communicating with employees has associated to efforts, commitment, meaningful work and it has resulted in communication satisfaction that then correlates to employee engagement. It is because communication process is used to keep employees and employers updated in order to achieve their work targets.

According to [25] communication in the workplace has many types, such as vertical and horizontal in terms of face-to-face communication, while instant messaging has also grown in every organization in order to communicate efficiently but then employees still prefer to have face to face communication. This is due to blurry messages and events like misunderstandings and misinterpreted messages usually happens by using virtual communication. According to [26], employees' perceptions on communication relationship between employer and employee are strongly linked to organizational commitment and employees that has less chance in freedom of speech are much less of work-satisfied. According to [27], two-way communication contributes to contented employees, and that will bring more successful aspects on tasks and life. According to [28], nonverbal communication with employees has been working effectively than verbal communication

and nonverbal communication has brought positive outcome on employees' motivation due to employees experienced more sense of comfort in their current environment and they could have understood the information better. When employees are provided with sufficient amount of communication, it will bring no harm towards the company and also towards the employee's job satisfaction.

According to [2], the process of communication makes possible progress in terms of interaction between employer and employees in a working team and an employer should be the responsible person to carry established bonds between the employees of the organization by practicing an effective communication. According to [29], the negative effect of communication while doing remote working is remote workers has higher chance in having less informal communication with colleagues and employer, that then will relate how remote workers have distant connection between each other and they will feel isolated. Employers and employees should have provided sufficient element of effective communication to make sure the organization will run smoothly during remote working [30]. Communication is one of the important elements an organization should be practicing to make ends meet and employer plays a vital role in order to make sure employees will get the accurate information no matter whether it is just about work-related tasks or at the times of crisis regardless of the place they were at.

5.3 Upward and Downward Communication

According to [31], employees are more comfortable with downward communication rather than upward communication. According to [32], upward and downward communication or also known as vertical communication, were defined as two types of interpersonal communication in the workplace and it has become an important thing in their job. Even when employees are discouraged in making interpersonal communication, they have to go through it on daily basis and employers had to be straight forward and determined in their communication as well [32]. Based on this research, employer have to communicate with their employee as active as it encourages them to communicate. Communication is an important part where it concludes the process of creating personal relationships with their employees that could help in making tight bonds. According to [33], remote workers prefer face to face communication that concludes upward and downward communication as some tasks requires formal work procedures such as negotiating and convincing element would be uncertain to be done by telecommunications.

Agreeing to the author [33], employer that does remote work is more reliable with downward communication than upward communication as they feel a bit awkward talking to their employer as they could not experience face to face communication with their employer as often. This is because virtual communication could not help as much as face-to-face communication could and some work-related processes are easily done by using face to face communication medium. According to [34], internal communication among employer and employees is one of the most important key elements in an organization that purposes to sustain a viable reputation. This is because when their internal communication is strong, it will bring many successful outcomes for the organization. According to [35], upward and downward communication that are commonly being used during face-to-face communication have lost during remote working and the informal

communication that toughen teamwork and relationship between employer and employees is lacking. According to [36], it has negatively impacted employer and employees in terms of job satisfaction due to reduced frequency of upward and downward communication amongst them during remote working. This is because communication makes work and tasks to be possible with enough information and help, which in order to get these, internal communication must be being practiced. Downward communication, that flows from an employer to an employee plays an important role in making sure that any information given is precise and it is guaranteed that the motivation in the workplace is ongoing by sustaining the effective communication channel [37]. This is because with the amount of downward communication by the employer, employees are found to be more motivated as they receive enough information for their tasks. According to [38], an effective organizational communication whether it is upward or downward greatly impacts the success of management and organizational roles and positive outcome of it has become a continuous substantial connection between employee's satisfaction and organizational communication. According to [39], remote worker experiences the need of upward and downward communication on a higher frequency by the medium of face to face so that they could maintain effective communication while they successfully cooperate with colleagues and employer.

5.4 Communication Problem

According to [40], remote workers are the those who does their work detached from the workplace and does technology-based communication, nonetheless with the technology given, it is understood that various communication problems have occurred ever since such as the key messages that is being sent by a sender to a receiver will most likely to be blurry due to high traffic of voice and data telecommunications. According to [41], communication problem that has occurred between employees and employer during remote working was at stake until remote workers usually filed suit against the organization charging under misrepresentation due to misinterpretation from both sides. This happened due to when remote work activity has just started in early years, employees were not provided with high information technology (IT) and it has caused noise and misinterpretation between employers and employees a lot. The decrease level of face-to-face communication within an organization could damage employees and employers interpersonal and intrapersonal communication due to the quality of communication process among them [42]. Communication problems could also include noise in communication, such as interference of other voices or the disruption of internet connection. According to [43], many organizations have chosen to use e-mail, text messaging, video conferencing in nowadays work habits as they chose effectiveness over efficiency, but all these mediums are the ones that has been contributing to misinterpretations of messages unlike face-to-face communication where the communication would be fast, accurate and reliable. Based on this journal, efficiency has taken place in most organizations and communication effectiveness such as accurate communication has been neglected. According to [44], one of the communication problems that always occur is low motivation and productivity due to employees experienced the feeling of not being appreciated, not being kept informed then will have resulted on they won't go for any extra effort for their job and it will influence the organization's poor performance as a whole. According

to [45], due to the shrinking level of face-to-face communication during remote working, it correlates with the decreasing of employees' and employer's body language and facial expression that would make every remote worker have to spend a longer time in comprehending messages that is being sent over the internet in order to interpret every information accurately. According [46], some organizations that are unwilling to facilitate better IT technology in order to conserve their data confidentiality and information control will most likely to experience more communication problems because of employees had to go through minimal mediums of communication that are ineffective during remote working. If employees are given more choice of communication medium over the internet, it will be easier for employees and employer to communicate when they're work place detached.

6 Research Method

This research applied quantitative design. According to [47], quantitative research is about an activity going through collection process of numerical data and execution of statistical, mathematical or computational technique. The data is also being collected through mediums such as questionnaires or surveys with provided answers. Quantitative method makes research measurable and cannot be separated from variables so that at the end of the study, the research has higher value of validation. Quantitative research method linked with every variable that is in line with the research for the researcher to get accurate results and the questionnaire involves of specific techniques to answer such as who, what, how, how satisfy and how agreeable the respondent is towards the questions that are being asked [48]. Quantitative research method also helps to find results on what is the researcher's variables that he is handling, such as how the researcher will be dealing with explaining the issue.

Population of this study are Prasarana Malaysia Berhad, Kuala Lumpur. Prasarana Malaysia Berhad, is a fully government owned company which was set up by Ministry of Finance in Malaysia as a corporate body that owns the asset of multi-modal public transport operator in Malaysia. Prasarana owns and operates the country urban rail services which is Light Rail Transit (LRT), KL Monorail and Mass Rapid Transit (MRT). Other than that, Prasarana also operates stage bus which is Rapid Bus, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and also ferries which is Rapid Ferry. For this population, there are a total 158 employees that are from 2 divisions in Prasarana Malaysia Berhad Kuala Lumpur, which is 109 from Infrastructure Management division and 49 from Finance division. Based on the table of small sample techniques, out of 158 population in both divisions at Prasarana Malaysia. Berhad Kuala Lumpur, the sampling size for research activities will be 113, which is the sampling that will be taken from Prasarana Malaysia Berhad Kuala Lumpur.

In this study, researcher use simple random sampling It is a type of probability sampling in which the researcher randomly selects a subset of participants from a population. Each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. Data is then collected from as large a percentage as possible of this random subset.

Table 1. Cronbach Alpha

Variable	Items	n
1. Communicating with employees	12	.85
2. Upward and downward communication	18	.91
3. Communication problems	17	.96
4. Remote working	10	.89

7 Data Analysis and Findings

7.1 Reliability Analysis

To examine the reliability of the instrument, this study used Cronbach's Alpha values that can measure the internal consistency of the instruments used for the purpose of this study. Table 1 shown that communicating with employee's variable show $\alpha = .847$. For the next variable is upward and downward communication and the alpha value has shown $\alpha = .907$. Communication problems variable, has showed that the alpha value is $\alpha = .956$. Lastly, the remote working variable shows that the alpha value for this variable is $\alpha = .938$.

7.2 Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between communicating with employees and remote working.

Hypothesis 1 is discussed on relationship between communicating with employees and remote working. ($r = .474$, $p > 0.01$). It shown that communicating with employees contributes towards remote working as most of the remote worker employers will still have to communicate during working hours to get tasks done. Therefore, the hypothesis is failed to reject (Table 2).

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between upward and downward communication and remote working.

Hypothesis 2 is discussed on relationship between upward and downward communication and remote working. ($r = .638$ $p > 0.01$). It shown that upward and downward

Table 2. Correlation between Communicating with Employees Remote Working

Communicating with employees	Remote working
r.	.474**
N	125
P	.000

r significant at the level 0.01**

Table 3. Correlation between Upward and downward communication with Employees Remote Working

Upward and Downward	Remote working
r.	.638**
N	125
p	.000

r significant at the level 0.01**

communication contributes towards remote working as there will be the communication flow that is being used by remote workers such as upward communication and downward communication. Therefore, the hypothesis is failed to reject (Table 3).

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between communication problems and remote working.

Hypothesis 3 is discussed on relationship between communication problems and remote working. ($r = .381$, $p > 0.01$). It shown that communication problems contribute towards remote working as remote worker will still have communication problems or barrier due to working remotely as they could not communicate effectively. Therefore, the hypothesis is failed to reject.

Communication Problems	Remote working
r.	.381**
n	125
p	.000

r significant at the level 0.01**

8 Discussions

Objective 1: To determine the relationship between communicating with employees and remote working. Based on the finding, this research has successfully achieved the objective of this research. The first objective is there is a relationship between communicating with employees and remote working. This is because communicating with employees is one of the processes that employers have to make so that they could deliver the task to their employee. Moreover, when employer communicate regularly with their employees, employees will then achieve communication satisfaction that will make the employees to be committed during remote working. Communicating with employees will also bring successful tasks during remote working. These findings are similar with past researchers such as [2, 23, 24, 26, 28, 30]. The past researchers have found that there is a relationship between communicating with employees and remote working.

Objective 2: To examine the relationship between upward and downward communication and remote working.

Next objective is to study whether if there is a relationship between upward and downward communication and remote working. The hypothesis is there is a relationship between upward and downward communication and remote working. This is due to employees have to communicate to their superior that uses the flow of upward communication while employer uses downward communication when communicating with their employees and communication still happens during remote working.

Next, organizations that uses upward and downward communication can successfully make a positive outcome for the tasks given as it could toughen their teamwork and could break any communication blurriness among them during communicating. These findings are similar with past researchers such as [32–35, 37]. The past researchers have found that there is a relationship between upward and downward communication and remote working.

Objective 3: To analyze the relationship between communication problems and remote working.

Next objective is to study whether there is a relationship between communication problems and remote working. The hypothesis is there is a relationship between communication problems and remote working. This is due to remote workers will experience communication problems when communicating during remote working. Remote workers often experience blurry communication due to communicating virtually. Due to having to need internet connection, remote workers do experience communication problems when having internet disruption.

Lastly, when remote workers are having communication problem, they could decrease their work productivity. These findings are similar with past researchers such as [40–45]. The past researchers have found that there is a relationship between communication problems and remote working.

9 Conclusion

This research focusing on communication between employee and organization. As mention by [27] and [36], effective two-way communication between these two important elements in organization communication brought positive outcome toward employee; task, motivation, comfort and understanding. Thus, this study can be useful towards organization in building a better course of action in communicating with employee both face to face and remote.

During conducting this research, there is a few implications that the researcher got. First, the researcher suggests organization have a policy about remote working so that the information, the communication and the external source usage at home will be sufficient to remote workers and this will help remote workers from having burn out phase and stress about job related. This is because it is found that remote workers will not feel stressed or burned out when they receive enough sources during completing their task. Especially when remote working has been a common practice in every country, the researcher suggests that the government should urge and encourage every organization to emphasize on this policy.

Next, the implication that the researcher got is knowledge. It is because the researcher has read many sources that lead to facts and myths about what people have thought remote

work is. When the researcher has finished studying about communicating with employees and remote working, the researcher has found that how useful that this research might be. This is because this research may help future researchers that may want to retrieve information that is inter-related with this research. Not just for future researchers, this research may help present researchers as well. Last but not least, due to the pandemic that has splurged every country, future researchers may have wanted to study the clear picture of how remote working works. Having to compile every past researcher's opinion will help other researchers to really understand what is remote working. As such, researchers should retrieve more knowledge, researchers should study about this research and have a much-needed information with a lot of articles reading, future researchers will get their study to be reliable and valid.

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Communicating with Employees During Remote Working

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Abstract

This research objective is to identify the relationship between communicating with employees, upward and downward communication, communication problems and remote working. This study applied the Neo-institutional Theory as the main theory to be applied in this study in order to strengthen the relationships between each variable. The method of this research is quantitative and the data that are found in this study was the response from respondents from Finance Division and Infrastructure Management Division at Prasarana Malaysia Berhad. The findings shown that there is a relationship between communicating with employees, upward and downward communication, communication problems and remote working. To conclude, this study contributes to the field of communication through the establishment of a more comprehensive variables related to participation in training and adoption of innovation and help to develop and strengthen the Neo-institutional Theory.

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