Communication Challenges in the Military Institution

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Abstract

This paper examines communication challenges within the military institution in Botswana. There seems to be rigid ways of delivering messages which in the end impede smooth communication practices between senior personnel and their subordinates within the institution. This study adopted the qualitative analysis to interrogate issues underlying communication practices from military classrooms for three years. The target group was middle ranking officers in institution who take Communication and Study Skills course as a requirement for their study at the University of Botswana. Data were collected using open ended questionnaires, interviews and group discussions in the classrooms. The model of communication process and new media were used to benchmark the practices within the institution against what the concepts say. The findings indicated that indeed communication processes were marred with problems that hinder smooth transition of messages from the sender to the receiver and ended up frustrating the subordinates. The study concluded that revamping and sanitizing communication practices within the military institution was necessary through educating the leadership to address the barriers encountered.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the integral part of every organization, institution or company. It drives processes, operations and procedures in every aspect of an institution or organization, therefore its role cannot be undermined or taken for granted by the leadership. In this study, classroom discussions with the military students in the Communication and Study Skills course for three conservative years sparked a debate that led to further interrogation and clarification of communication practices within the institution. Communication within the military institution seemed to be rigid and impacted negatively on smooth operations of the institution. The rigidity of communication within military could be a problem because it could easily delay decision making, change may not be easily considered, a lot of time could be wasted in between, there could be some disunity towards achieving a common goal and again, the success of an institution or organization depends on the quality of its internal communication. Hence, the absence of communication that easily flows could bring about unexpected communication barriers. Although the rigidity of communication seemed to be the institution's norm, it could

easily bring about regrettable problems to the military personnel and the institution itself. Hence, this paper problematizes the issue. The military in Botswana was established in 1977 following political climate change within the Southern African region (Republic of Botswana, 2011). The neighbouring countries' unstable political situations demanded the establishment of the military to address foreign peace keeping issues, respond to civil support services, and restore the country's territorial integrity on land and in the air and respond to anti-poaching activities (Republic of Botswana, 2011). Also, the idea was to strengthen the country's international relations by participating in regional and international security cooperation activities and to prepare for disastrous situations from nature. In this regard, the institution has fully fledged defense force under three main commands: Ground forces, Defense logistics and Air arm (Republic of Botswana, 2011). Therefore the structure starts with commander in chief, commander, defense council, and at the bottom the three commanders – ground forces, air arm and defense logistics.

Both male and females are recruited as private or officer cadets (Republic of Botswana, 2011). The military institution is interdisciplinary and multifaceted with various skilled manpower that are trained both internally and internationally. Training could be done on basic military trainees' behavior. Amongst other things discipline and integrity are the core values emphasized for all the trainees (Republic of Botswana, 2011).

In most cases communication comes from top to bottom because of the cultural context of the institution and this requires the leadership to have a true understanding of the institutional operation (Republic of Botswana, 2011). As a larger institution, communication could be a struggle and this requires a review of continuous communication processes between superiors and subordinates that is effective for the success and growth of the institution. The institution operates in both oral and written communication. This paper focuses on mostly the oral communication between superiors and subordinates that seemed to be problematic with the military students with a blend of written communication.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational communication comprehends everything from individual to mass communication and therefore and wide field. Communication is the practical effect of conversation is to establish a basis of action and to maintain the coordination of members of the organization in responding to a mixed material and social environment (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004). In effect, words are translated into action. It is defined as the sending and receiving of messages among interrelated individuals within a particular environment or setting to achieve individual and common goals. Communication is not just messaging; it is a continuous process of adjustment in which each participant's speech provides the material for the interpretive skills of the hearer to fill in the gaps, to guess at the speaker's meanings and motives, to verify assumptions, and to correct misapprehensions (Heritage, 1984). In this regard, communication is associated with specific circumstances of time, place, occasion, identity of the participants, history and purpose (Taylor, 1999). Hence, interaction is perceived as a component of a complete theory of communication. Alvesson, (2002) views communication as a 'social glue' that grips an organization together. Communication within an organization, institution or company is critical and therefore the leadership must ensure that it is effective and efficient because it assists in planning, making informed decisions, achieving goals (Holth & Boe, 2017)

and realizing the mission and vision of the military. Communication is seen by Cacciattolo, (2015) as the most important skill a person can have because organizations and institutions invest very little time in improving their communication skills and processes. Most importantly, it is an essential tool for achieving organizational goals (Fussell & Kreuz, 2011).

Holth & Boe (2017) argued that it is the responsibility of the leader to make himself understood to and to collect information to check whether all individuals understand what they have to do when, how and with whom. Holth and Boe (2017) emphasized that leaders must be accountable and take the lead to develop their subordinates' ability to effectively communicate because an organization is not a physical structure but a collection of people meant to connect through communicate (Taylor, 1993). It is the top management that has to develop skills of communication and provide information resources for information to successfully reach the lower members. This means that effective interaction within the military is vital to succeed in its daily operations. In this regard, the daily orders, tasks and operations should not be seem as a routine that has to be done with rigid rules that are not questioned even if there are problems. The subordinates need to participate, show comprehension and understanding of the orders. According to Holth and Boe (2017) the Norwergian Military Academy provided a revamp of the military by educating officers to ensure that they confront challenges in daily basis. This was done on the basis that communication serves to control, motivate, express feelings and give information as well as controlling behaviours. Therefore the military institution leaders can use it to connect the various levels of operations within the military.

In addition to the above, Downs and Hazen (1977) categorized several dimensions of communication that was good and effective and pointed out that: personal feedback, relationships with supervisors, informal horizontal communication, relationships with members from lower ranks, unity, organization, a perspective of the organization and quality channels of communication are a necessity. The latter could lead to effective interaction, openness, open doors that allow free discussion without being victimized. Further, the subordinates could support the senior personnel in orders and communication channels used for the success of the organization. It could allow smooth operations and focused activities.

Locker (1995) believed that the choices of channels of communication depended on the culture of the organization and were seen as the most important factor in communication processes. Despite this, it seemed scholars preferred face to face interaction to computers because the communication was faster and the sender got feedback quickly. Further, this seemed the military's choice because it was more open and transparent and therefore used on daily. However, this does not mean that other channels that used the computer and its networks could not be utilized such as the electronic mail, letters, memorandum and faxes. Bordia (1997) believed that computers could have different effects on expectations, acceptance and effectiveness of communication and it could depend on whether the users were skilled and saw it as an assert or an effective channel depending on the status of the computer and regular service. Looking at it from another perspective, it could be arguable whether the face to face interaction was effective, open and transparent. If subordinates were allowed not just to take orders, but can ask questions for clarity, then it could be effective, but if it was an order, it might be difficult to conclude that it is open and transparent. As leaders, effective channels of communication that could be used by management could include meetings, oral presentations and skills to address conflicts within the organization.

Amansham (2012) argued that if not carried out effectively communication can be problematic: it can affect plans, the level of success and impede on the growth of the organization, it could also negatively affect the performance of the institution or organization as well as lack of trust amongst individuals. On the same breadth, Robin and Coulter (2009) painted a picture about the military institutions and their uniqueness in the sense that they are characterized by high specialization, rigid departmentalization's, narrow span control, high formalization, limited communication networks and small participation by subordinates in decision making. This uniqueness has resulted in consequences of subordinates failing to comply with directives as issued. Since the institution is multidisciplinary, internal communication teams have a significant role to support, coach and assist the leaders to effectively communicate.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This paper used two concepts: the communication process and new media as frameworks for this paper to underpin the challenges encountered by the students within the institution and justify their communication practices. The reasons for the two concepts are that they complement each other because they address the roles of people involved in the communication process, they articulate effective channels that can be used in institution and the importance of feedback in the daily farm operations. Hence, the two concepts are relevant for the problem under study.

3.1. Communication Process

The old model of communication was used to explain human communication process. The major model was developed by Elwood Shannon in 1948 and it was further developed by Warren Weaver. Other scholars have contributed towards its development and this paper shares the ideas of Guffey Mary Ellen & Loewy Dana (2010).

Fig: Communication Process
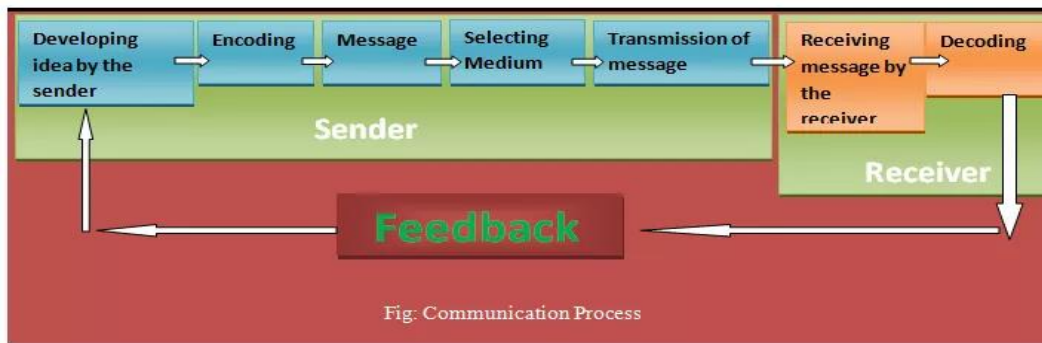
Figure 1. Communication Process **(Source: Guffey, M. E., & Lowely, D. (2010))**

Although this is an old model of communication theory, it is still applicable today because of its basic features that characterise sending and receiving information. The theory is applicable in both written and oral messages. For the military institution, the prevalent way of communication was oral and therefore messages started verbally from the sender to the receiver. Even though the oral communication within such the military could be taken over by events such as new media technology, the military still respected the oral and verbal

communication because the 'orders' are a norm. According to the figure above, the sender plays a critical role in preparing messages, organizing, editing and removing ambiguities before the messages are sent. The sender has to choose an appropriate channel of communication. For example, looking at military institution operations, what would be the suitable channels for subordinates and middle ranks and other top leadership brass and why? The sender cannot overlook this stage because it influences the way the message is sent and with what language. The language used has to be understood by the receivers. The receiver too has a vital role to play, they have to decode the message, interpret, analyse, synthesise, make meaning, make decisions and finally provide feedback. The receiver could do this only when he/she understands the language used. This is to avoid messages being misinterpreted or the sender being misrepresented. I this regard, feedback is very important in communication for various reasons. It indicates that information has reached the receiver – communication did occur, information was understood, and a response was provided or the sender needed to clarify information that was not clear. All these stages in the communication process challenge the employees in the military to play their roles and make sure that things do not go wrong.

3.2. New Media

The New Media concept was introduced in 1996 by Logan, M. and Logan, R.K. It appeared in the first edition of the Sixth Language in 2000. It is a move to digital technology which makes sense of information, records, stores and replays it. New media has changed how to collect, send, receive, listen to information and provide feedback. Information is stored electronically and can be played on many different platforms. New media has five characteristics that were identified for the internet: two-way communication, ease of access to and dissemination of information, continuous learning, alignment and integration and community and convergence. First, the new media in general, the Net, Web, Blog, Video Conferencing and Email all permit two way communication and this allows the user to interact with the information they access or with the producer of information. This process makes dialogue and knowledge sharing possible through the medium of shared visual or audio space. The two way communication allows testing the reliability of information. Again, the two way communication is speedy. Second, the ease of access to and control of information is one of the chief advantages of the new media for delivering and receiving information, stimulating dialogue and sharing knowledge. It often leads to avenues of exploration and amplifies literacy. The cellphone too provides easy access to individuals who can be tracked down wherever they roam. Radio and television provide access to a wide range and variety of programming. The ease with information has closed the gap between the producer and consumer, it disseminates information, triggers reaction, shapes responses and creates new facts. Third, the new media through the internet promotes continuous learning because of its two way communication and its ease access. It combines visual and audio with texts, it promotes dialogue, if properly designed, it provides instant feedback and users pursue educational activities. Four, the new media operates as a semantic web in which items refer to each other and are often linked to hypertext. In this way, the new media becomes aligned and integrated within the single medium of the Worlds Wide Web. For example, an alignment is provided by the success of Web site developers for commercial sites, which combine their Web development skills with their understanding of marketing which results in entailing. Lastly, hyperlinking and convergence are the two factors that bring information into close proximity. The internet and other new media create a community, all the other four characteristics are exploited making the new

media to become a knowledge based network available twenty four hours and on daily basis. They provide an environment for learning, knowledge creation, sharing the development of new ideas and projects. The other unique feature of new media is convergence, it has the ability to combine different media in one device. For example, the cellphone takes and transmits messages, takes photos, provides text messaging, serves as an internet port. In conclusion, the characteristics mentioned above are dependent on one another. They give the communication process a new breath of life that is fast and effective and also enables both the sender and receiver to learn and educate others.

The new media technology could be 'the thing' in military more so the institution is large in nature and requires effective communication practices at all ranks of animals. It could replace the orders that are a one way process. Further, the leadership could allow the subordinates at all ranks to use the new media for fast feedback and avoid frustrations that seem to saturate the voices of animals. The new media allows for face to face interaction and also accommodates face to face electronically such as video conferencing. The wide range variety is quite explorable for the employees to use.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Design

This study was conducted at the University of Botswana from 2017 to 2019 with the military students being the population. In this regard, this was a longitudinal study that was observed for three years to check how reliable information provided by the students was every year. The study used the qualitative analysis to get the views of students about communication practices in the military institution. The study preferred the qualitative analysis to hear the voices of the students at first-hand information and tap as much information as possible from them.

The military students take communication and study skills course as a requirement at the university. The participants hold hierarchical middle ranking positions and in charge of stations and units in other stations of the farm. They come from various other farms outside out stations within Botswana, hence, it's a mixed bag. The students have lived and experienced the communication practices within the institution. The Communication and Study Skills course is offered to all first year students at the university to assist them in getting grounded with university learning. Some of the objectives of the course are to develop their basic language skills in order to become competent in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills as well as to promote autonomous learners. The student population that made the target group were 2017 = 19; 2018 = 30 and 2019 = 39. In total 88 students were involved in the study. The students have specialties in different fields such as engineering, pilots, nurses, information technology, mechanics, supplies officers etc.

4.2. Objectives of the Study

The key research objectives of the study were to: a) find out their perspectives about communication practices within the military; b) examine the channels of communication used in the military; c) explore the challenges encountered in the communication practices; d) establish possible solutions to the challenges encountered in (c); and (e) share any other thing

related to the communication problem. The key research questions were derived from the key objectives of the study above. Despite the five key research objectives this paper focused on the challenges encountered within the military for the sole reason that most of the responses clustered around challenges.

4.3. Population of the Study

In 2017, students discussed their communication practices in the classroom discussions when they were learning about introduction to communication topic. The common answers from the students were "not in this military institution". A picture was painted about the rigidity of communication practices within the military and hence they were given open ended questionnaires to fill in. In 2018, the same problem emerged and students were given open ended questionnaires to fill in and were interviewed about communication practices and it justified and qualified the statements made by students in 2017. In 2019, students were requested and agreed to write down their thoughts by answering the key research questions from a questionnaire and were further interrogated on the same problem of 'not in this military institution'. There was no sampling involved in the classrooms because everybody wanted to open up and share their views about communication practices and therefore the study was a focused group as well. Each year, a consent form was issued out and signed by all the students to confirm their participation. Random sampling was done on a group of students who held high ranks than the rest of the class, hence ten out of eighty eight were interviewed and this included the foreign students. The open ended questionnaires were important for this study so that students could open up without being victimized by their seniors.

4.4. Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through classroom discussions, interviews and open ended questionnaires for over three academic years. The triangulation of these three methods was used for reliability and validity purposes, hence, the results proved to be reliable and valid in the end with basically the same answers from different groups of students over the years. The classroom discussions from the topic 'introduction to communication' made the students to freely express their feelings about communication practices within the military in a natural setting and without intimidation – it was a classrooms set up, a learning situation. The interviews of about ten students from different groups at different times made the participants to express their views about communication practices in a face to face interaction. Lastly, the open ended questionnaires documented what has been said in the classroom discussions for further scrutiny.

4.5. Data Analysis

The results were interpreted according to each key research question and sorted according to thematic statements. The open ended questionnaires and interviews were coded according to years of study. Where necessary responses were tabulated for easy data dispensation. Major and minor themes were identified from each key research question and data were further cleaned up to see the variations and similarities. It emerged from all the different groups that indeed there were communication challenges within the military and the trends and patterns were basically the same. Data were analyzed according to thematic statements to paint a picture about communication practices within the military.

4.6. Limitations of the Study

The study has limitations, it is limited to the military institution classrooms only and information should not be generalized to leadership within the military because they were not involved in the study and therefore, could have different views on the challenges on communication practices within the institution. Therefore, the intention was to share the communication views from a rather unique perspective – the students only, with other scholars from the language and communication field and not to point a finger or expose military processes and practices.

5. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the results of the study. From 2017, 2018 and 2019, the participants reported that they encountered the following challenges: communication breakdown; delays in addressing issues; no emergencies; abuse of office; self centred behavior; information not penetrating through to senior personnel; criticism – being a politician; lack of feedback; one sided communication; orders not questioned; leaders gossiped and draw wrong conclusions about subordinates; lack of a platform to express oneself; communication blockages; interrogation taken as insubordination; lack of open door policy and ambiguous instructions that ended up being wrongly carried out. The problems mentioned suggested that the military lacked transparency and openness in its communication practices. It also suggested frustration and powerlessness by participants to exchange views with the relevant senior personnel. These challenges overlapped with the views above. The challenges are tabulated below for better understanding.
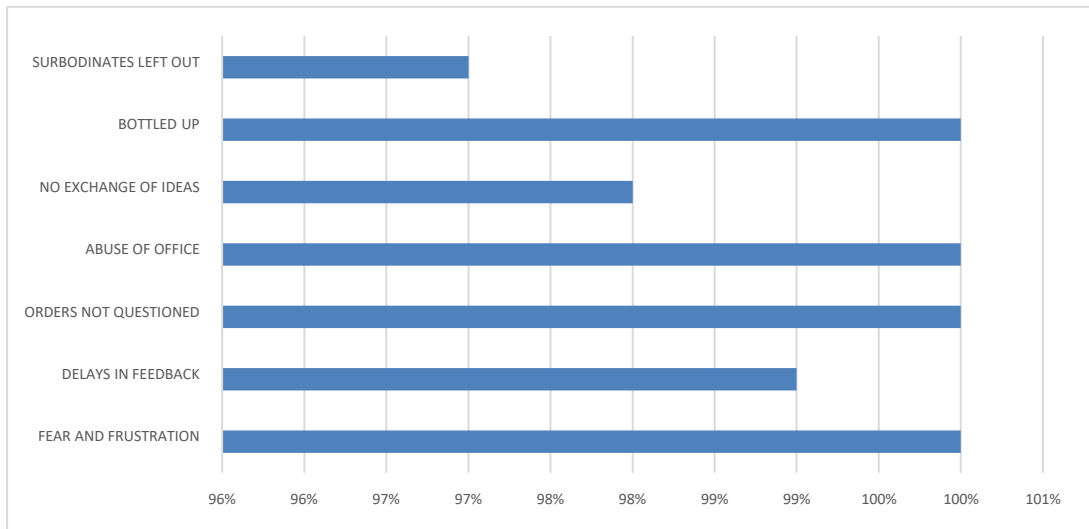
Figure 1. Challenges Encountered in Communication in Military in 2017-2018 (49 students) (*Source: research data 2017-2018*)

The above histogram paints a disconcerting picture about the challenges military students encountered in their military institution. All the students reported that they are bottled up and that they fear to discuss their problems or issues with leadership because of victimization and they ended up being frustrated because they were not listened to. This suggested uncomfortable

circumstances and environment within the institution that did not allow for freedom of expression.

Again, students reported that they do not exchange ideas with their leadership, hence, with the absence of such a forum there were delays in communication and therefore difficult to get feedback. This could mean that the middle ranks subjectivised and blocked communication and therefore did not play their role of passing on information and providing feedback.

Also, students reported that they were left out in decision making and therefore they were not well represented in various aspects that affected their daily livelihood. The pattern showed unhappiness in lines of communication practices that need to be worked on. Below is another graph showing challenges of a different group of 2019.
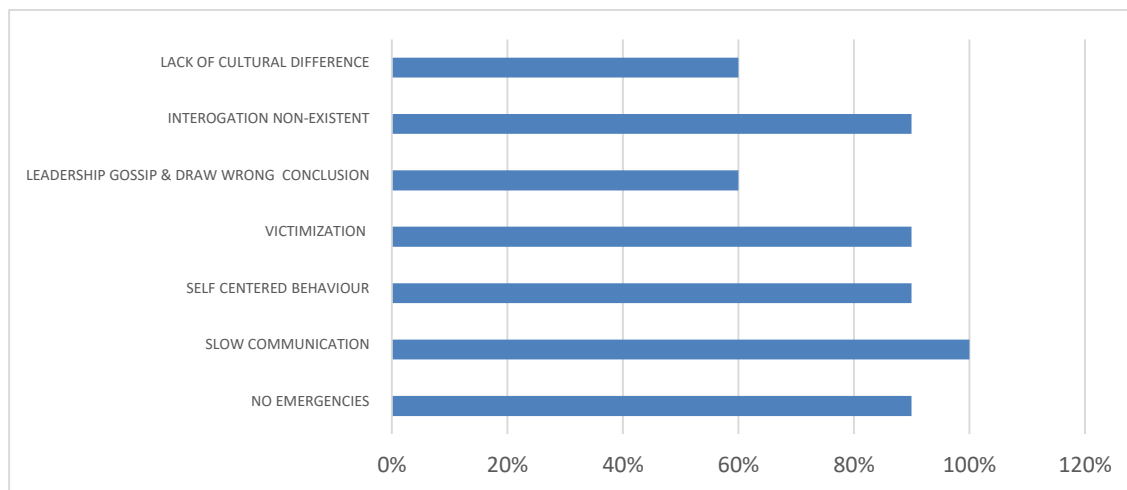
Figure 2. Challenges Encountered in Communication in the Military in 2019 (39 students) (*Source: research data: 2019*)

The bar graph above indicated similarities with the previous years though using different words. All the students reported that communication was slow and therefore delayed timeous responses because middle ranking officers sat on their issues and did not pass them at the right time to the relevant authorities. Again, students reported that they were not allowed to interrogate issues, when they did so they were victimized and labelled as politicians. On the same breath, students reported that leadership gossiped and drew wrong conclusions on them when they asked for clarification and or interrogated issues and students argued that this is unprofessional. Consequently, the whole communication practices became subjective, hence, students reported that the leadership displayed self centred behaviour and ignored their subordinates' welfare.

The information above painted a clear picture of discontentment and demotivated students that work under duress. They seem to be unhappy with communication practices within the military and therefore during lesson time, 'not in this military institution' was a common saying over the years. The students believed that whatever that was good communication could not work in the military because of the orders that seem to form and characterise the order of the day.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
6.1. Fear and Frustration

From the respondents' perspective, the findings indicated that there was fear in expressing the students' viewpoints. The students could not freely express their ideas with the military leadership and they ended up frustrated by this lack of expression. Like Holth and Boe (2017) argued, military officers need to be educated on communication practices to ensure that they confront challenges on daily basis. Education on communication processes should be done on the basis that communication serves to control, motivate, express feelings and give information as well as controlling behaviour. Therefore, the military leaders could use it to connect the various levels of operations within the institution. When military leadership was unable to allow their subordinates to express themselves then it could have negative consequences such as suicide, low motivation and morale or even exiting the farm because they were not listened to. Further, the leadership could stay in their offices not knowing what was happening on the ground because there was a gap between them and their subordinates. Therefore, the students wanted the situation changed, they wanted the bureaucratic barriers to be broken down to allow them to express their views and ideas without fear. The students further suggested that the institution should create a conducive environment for communication.

6.2.Delays in communication and responses

The findings also indicated that there were delays in transmitting information from the middle supervisors to the top brands of the institution where subordinates expected feedback. Although in some cases students communicated information that needed urgent attention, this could not be attended as an emergency due to bureaucratic procedures. In this regard, officers ended up failing to act timeously and therefore, bottle up their frustrations. Some students said, *"queries and misunderstandings should be dealt with, within a short period of time."* This suggested that from experience delays in addressing matters of concern had cost students a fortune. Amansham (2012) argued that if not carried out effectively communication could be problematic: it can affect plans, the level of success and impede on the growth of the organization. In this regard, when officers had planned to do something, whether, official or personal and it was not communicated to the rightful person on time and it does not receive urgent attention then it could impede on the plans and success of the institution. Further, the officers too could end up acting slowly on the institutions' plans thinking the leadership did not care about what they do. The students suggested that all officers working in the military should be educated on the importance of feedback and why it has to be dome timeously. Again, from the framework, the new media could play a vital role for fast and effective message delivery. It could be explored and utilized by the leadership especially in a large institution that is multidisciplinary. Utilizing the new media could avoid delays and hence, the new media should be seen as an investment rather than a cost.

6.3. Orders not Questioned

The other critical thing from the findings indicated that officers have to take orders that are not questioned. The problematic issue about such a situation could be that when the orders are not clear, a question for clarity can cost an officer a happy day. The officer can be labelled as not taking orders and therefore being insubordinate. The big question is how possible for one

to act on something that they do not understand? While it is essential for the sender to edit and clarify their messages, it is also vital for the subordinate officers to ask questions for clarification. It is close to impossible to undertake a task that officers do not understand. Officers can end up doing the wrong things and it can cost the military a lot of money and time to rectify the mistake. Some of the students confirmed that, *"I once undertook the wrong task because I did not understand what I was supposed to do and I could not ask… I did the wrong task because the message was ambiguous and I did not understand exactly what I must do…"* These comments do not come as a surprise in a professional institution. The students suggested that leadership should be able to explain their orders to avoid being mistaken and to avoid confusion. The emphasis on this one was that there must be a change of situation to avoid a lot of damage being done. While this point was valid and necessary, it has to be noted that the origins of military were based on taking orders and instructions, if not, it was regarded as insubordination. New media allows interaction to avoid carrying out wrong orders, the leadership could allow subordinates to ask questions for clarity even if they do not go to the offices because they could explore other ways of communication such as cell phones or emails.

6.4. Abuse of Office

It was gathered from the findings that officers in the leadership could sit on issues and not act on them just because they had personal differences in the past. Therefore, this not only sloughs the work of the military, it also impedes negatively on the progress of the institution and its daily operations. Most of the animals said, *"when there are differences between officers, the leadership can block your promotion, further studies or any development that can lead to personal growth."* In this regard, the officers can spend most of the time out of station in trips, away from their families just because the officers in the top brass abused their powers to demoralise and punish the subordinate officers. The officers argued that such situations make leaders to gossip and draw wrong conclusions about their subordinates because they could be misinformed or have wrong impressions about their subordinates. Most students suggested that good leadership leads to good communication skills and wish the leaders in institution could change for the better and avoid abusing their power. According to students, they were living in a changing world and therefore things should change and this has to start with the leadership in the military. Looking at the issue from a deeper perspective, abuse of power can lead to corruption and it should not be tolerated within military, it can disrupt the whole system if not seriously addressed. Again, it could also lead to subjectivity, issues would not be dealt with objectively and it would be a chain of corruption within the military itself. The conversation between leadership and subordinates could be recorded, this could detect abuse of office and again, dates and time will be recorded to check whether messages are attended to on time or there has been delays that lead to abuse of office.

6.5. Lack of Cultural Differences

The findings indicated that the leaders have no respect for cultural differences despite the fact that officers within the military come from different areas and therefore have different backgrounds. The students felt that their issues were treated on the same wave length and yet they were different. There could be a real risk when a message can get lost in translation. How one conveys the message is very important. While communication advocates for tolerances in differences in culture and background, this seemed not practical in the farm. Communication practices and cultural background seem not to be taken into consideration and this means

certain things could be overlooked that could contribute towards sound and reasonable decision making. Joynt & Warner (2018) argue that "culture is the pattern of taken-for-granted assumptions about how a given collection of people should think, act, and feel as they go about their daily affairs". Therefore the issue of cultural differences should not be over looked because that is what makes a person.

6.6. Lack of Open Door Policy

The findings also indicated that when officers have burning issues they do not have anywhere to take them because they are not passed on to the relevant offices on time and therefore, feedback delays. The students felt that it is a challenge when they cannot directly talk to the relevant leadership about their issues and yet the middle management do not pass them on timeously. Some of the students said, *"we need to directly talk to our leadership and solve some of the problems immediately. What is happening now is that I have to wait for days and weeks for an issue to be resolved and sometimes the issue disappears in their offices and never resurfaces."* This is an imbalanced treatment. Some of the students argued that, some mediators cannot fully represent them the way they could and therefore they should be allowed to go to the top management directly if they were not satisfied with something. The participants suggested that in the military there must be unions to communicate issues on their behalf. The leadership could choose new media that would help unload the burdens the officers are carrying for production levels to raise. Currently, according the students they were bottled up and did not know where to communicate their problems. Even if there were issues, there was no platform to discuss them and yet new media technology was advanced.

6.7. One Sided Communication

The findings indicated that communication within the military was one sided. Although, communication has more than one player, the participants reported that in their institution, communication was top down, it could never be bottom down. The participants argued that the senders of the messages are not concerned with feedback, for them the message was transmitted whether the receiver, does not understand it, does not want to act or have some questions was not their concern. The senders do not expect the receivers to make noise. While students saw the importance of feedback during lesson activities, they strongly felt that this was lacking in their case to make communication a two way process. Again, it might be difficult to assume that the leadership made informed decisions when they acted on issues that have not been fully communicated. Further, the students suggested that all the leadership needed to be educated on the communication practices so that they should expect that their messages could be interrogated and receivers may ask for clarity. The new media technology allows interaction and feedback to take place. One way communication is outdated. Although in military one way communication could be the core and origin of military, the world is evolving and there is nothing static under the sun, therefore things could change with the new media.

6.8. The roles of the sender and receiver

The roles of the sender and receivers of information were not clearly defined in the military. The leadership role is to organize, prepare and edit messages before they go out to the receivers. The findings indicated that this seemed not the case because ambiguous messages could be passed on and it could be difficult to ask for clarity because these were orders. Further, the receiver too sits in a difficult position where they cannot provide feedback to the

sender. The feedback could be wrongly carried out when mistakes could have been corrected before action was taken. Although the most common channel of communication was verbal, this seemed not to effectively work for the military because verbal communication could be affected by external factors and therefore both the receiver and the sender needed to clearly understand each other in order to carry out correct activities. The communication practices in the military seem to run parallel with the model of communication theory as well as the new media. The communication practices in the farm have been taken over by events. The new media allows freedom and accessibility of information in all aspects of communication. The roles cannot be mistaken or overlooked, each player has to do their part. However, important to note is that Locker (1996) and Bordia (1997) believe in face to face interaction in the institution rather than computers. This may be the sole reason why orders were passed on verbally to subordinate officers and yet the new media technology was available for use.

7. CONCLUSION

Serious communication challenges exist and are prevalent in the military and therefore calling for communication practices to be reviewed and revamped. Becoming a skilled communicator within the leadership can impact positively on the institution's daily operations. For the military to operate smoothly, the leadership has to listen to the very subordinate officers that are doing the spade work. Ethical and effective communication that avoid obvious challenges can help the leadership in military to be more knowledgeable and skilled communicators. The officers need to be motivated through taking their issues seriously and giving them feedback on the messages passed on. It can be a rather disturbing phenomenon if communication can be a one way process where listeners just take orders and not ask for clarification if they do not understand. This can be a costly exercise that can cost the military a fortune. Therefore, it is necessary for the top leadership to take communication courses to improve their practices, management and leadership skills. Further, the new media can be explored to improve service delivery in such a large institution.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY

There are implications for the study:

First, there are implications for subordinate officers because they did not feel free to express their ideas with the senior personnel and therefore their issues could not reach the top brass of the military and therefore become silent killers. This could create gaps that are difficult to close.

There are also implications for the senior personnel officers in management positions, they act as mediators between subordinates and top management. The crux of the matter is that information was not passed on, subjectivity plays a central role instead of looking at issues objectively and a barrier is created. This means this space absorbs problems and concerns but the process of working on them and helping with resolving issues becomes a problem. This space needs further reflection on communication practices to avoid unnecessary challenges.

The study has implications for top leadership in military. These are the senior personnel who have to make decisions that can improve the image of the institution or demoralize the subordinates. Hence, it means that if the status quo continues, some of the serious issues will

delay and cost a life, delays would harm individual and farm practices. To avoid negative impact, the leadership need to be educated and explore the new media to avoid further frustrations.

The results have implications for the military institution because it is operating on false faces, people claim to be happy and yet they are not, they carry out wrong instructions and make mistakes that can be costly. It makes the officers to be unaccountable and irresponsible and the buck could always be passed on to the wrong people.

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