

Obstacles of Corporate Communication in SANA and Their Effects on the Corporate Performance of Its Employees During the Syrian War

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Abstract-The question of corporate communication especially its obstacles during the Syrian war continue to be timely. Coming to terms with cases such as these relies on the task of defining obstacles of corporate communication, and more broadly figuring out their effects on corporate performance.

This study aimed to identify the obstacles of corporate communication in SANA, as well as their effects on the corporate performance of its employees during the Syrian war.

Keywords-Corporate Communication- Corporate Performance- SANA- Syrian War

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that effective communication is a must for the success of any organization, without which its employees cannot know what their colleagues do, management cannot receive information about the inputs it needs, while supervisors also cannot issue instructions and guidelines in order to coordinate between all units of their work. This makes corporation between individuals totally impossible because they cannot meet their needs and desires, eventually leading to the collapse of the organization. On the other hand effective corporate communication leads to improved corporate performance and greater satisfaction at work, as every employee can better understand his/her work, feel more involved in achieving the targets of the organization, as well as he/she understands the roles of other colleagues and increase cooperation with them.

II. STUDY'S PROBLEM AND PECULIARITY

Corporate communication is the linchpin of all pulsating organizations, as no organization can achieve its goals without its presence together with a grid of communications through which information is transferred between its employees. Corporate communication is also the vital nerve through which organization operates and

transmits information to all its different parts. Without such effective corporate communication, organizations cannot succeed even if they have excellent strategies and wise plans.

Despite this fact, field practice during the Syrian war indicates that corporate communication has faced many obstacles that has affected the achievement of the objectives of many Syrian organizations, whether these obstacles are related to the management, to the employees themselves, or to the technical aspects of communication, especially lines of authority, competence, distribution of tasks and responsibilities, as well as any other constraints that affect the corporate performance of the organization towards achieving its objectives.

Due to the lack of studies dealing with corporate communication and its obstacles in the Syrian war, this study was carried out with the aim of identifying the corporate communication obstacles in SANA including administrative, organizational and technical obstacles, as well as exploring the existence impact of these obstacles on the corporate performance of its employees, besides reaching constructive proposals to activate corporate communication within the agency.

III. CORPORATE COMMUNICATION: DIRECTIONS AND OBSTACLES

Any organization cannot continue without communication, as effective corporate communication works to eliminate rumors, diminish conflict and encourage dialogue. M. Al-Majad [4], points out that corporate communication within organizations aims to ensure the flow of information and ideas to the maximum degree from different administrative levels to subordinates, as well as to guarantee the return of the feedback from these subordinates to the various administrative levels. Corporate communication is not just an exchange of meanings and information but an exchange that leads to predictable

actions related to the nature of organizational and administrative relationships. Corporate communication defines the organizational coherence with the purpose of increasing the coherence of all corporate elements by creating a common understanding of the nature of the objectives to be performed.

Information in the process of corporate communication refers to data, facts, ideas, opinions, inquiries, complaints, wishes, attitudes, views, orders, decisions and instructions to be made in order to maintain the life, growth, progress and prosperity of any organization in its society.

Corporate communication can be divided into two kinds:

Formal communication: This is done through channels and lines defined in accordance with the policies and instructions of the organization and its corporate structure.

Informal communication: It includes all personal contacts outside the official lines.

In formal communication, information is conveyed through clear channels, specific and traditional trends. There are three directions in this flow of information:

1- **Downward communication:** this communication according to N. Basov, V. Minina [1] is related to giving orders and instructions from senior management, with the aim of providing specific information on procedures. Through this kind of communication, information is collected about the corporate performance in order to achieve the objectives of the organization.

2- **Upward communication:** this communication often has two forms: problems, suggestions or practical feedback. J. Doorley, H. Garcia [3] points out that upward communication is used to inform highest levels about the achievements and practices of the lower levels, as well as to transfer unresolved problems to them so they can help in solving them through raising the proposals of the lower levels to the higher levels about the effective tactics of developing business or corporate performance in the future.

3- **Horizontal communication:** this communication is very important in organizations especially in the modern ones because it has a coordination task [2].

On the other hand, the communication system, like any other administrative system, faces many difficulties and problems. Not paying enough attention to them, creates a misunderstanding in communication processes, but by recognizing these constraints, appropriate action could be made to overcome these difficulties. Communication obstacles are any problem or difficulty that occurs between the source and recipient that causes any change in the original meaning of the message. Communication obstacles include all influences that prevent the effective process of exchanging information, as well as the disruption or delay of its transmission, distorting its meaning or affecting its quantity, i.e. any constraint that reduces the effectiveness of communications and preventing the achievement of any

desired purpose in the appropriate degree. Therefore, the obstacles of corporate communication in this study can be divided into four types according to M. Hijab, S. Wahbi [5]:

- **Administrative obstacles:** they include lack of strategic planning necessary to develop communication systems, lack of availability by the management for the opportunity to obtain information only to a limited number of employees, lack of management to take into account the individual differences between all employees, lack of acceptance by some managers of the opinions and proposals of their subordinates and shortcomings in training employees in the right use of modern communication methods and means.

- **Organizational communication obstacles:** they include geographical spread and multiple locations, difficulty of communicating the general manager only through the direct manager, intense centralization of work, lack of clear policy of work system, lack of precise definition of objectives, lack of clarity of responsibilities and tasks and lack of information management in all departments.

- **Employee-related obstacles:** they include weak encouragement of feedback among employees, poor social relations among employees, varying perceptions of employees and their understanding of orders, lack of qualified human resources to use modern communication techniques, lack of suitable time for communication by employees and poor cooperation between employees.

- **Technical obstacles:** they include old communication means, long-distance communication, old work equipment, high cost of creating the right climate to maintain modern communication techniques, high prices of modern communication technologies and inadequate financial allocations for the acquisition of modern communication means.

IV. STUDY'S OBJECTIVES

1- Identifying the existence degree of corporate communication's obstacles in SANA during the Syrian war from the point of view of the respondents.

This objective includes the following sub-objectives:

A- Identifying the existence degree of organizational obstacles of corporate communication in SANA from the point of view of the respondents.

B- Identifying the existence degree of administrative obstacles of corporate communication in SANA from the point of view of the respondents.

C- Identifying the existence degree of employee-related obstacles of corporate communication in SANA from the point of view of the respondents.

D- Identifying the existence degree of technical obstacles of corporate communication in SANA from the point of view of the respondents.

2- Analyzing the impact of existence degree of corporate communication's obstacles on the corporate performance of SANA's employees during the Syrian war from the point of view of the respondents.

The objective includes the following sub-objectives:

A- Analyzing the impact of existence degree of corporate communication's organizational obstacles on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents.

B- Analyzing the impact of existence degree of corporate communication's administrative obstacles on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents.

C- Analyzing the impact of existence degree of corporate communication's employee-related obstacles on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents.

D- Analyzing the impact of existence degree of corporate communication's technical obstacles on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents.

3- Discovering the proposals of the respondents to activate corporate communication in SANA during the Syrian war.

V. STUDY'S SAMPLE AND TOOL

Data was collected from the fifteenth of January 2019 till the fifteenth of February 2019 through personal interviews with 200 SANA's employees using 200 questionnaires prepared in order to provide the necessary data for this study. The questionnaire was initially tested before data collection was confirmed in order to make sure of the clarity of all its questions and phrases. Then the necessary amendments were made to the questionnaire before distributing it to a random sample that included 200 employees in SANA from different managerial levels from the main headquarter of the agency in Damascus and its offices in other Syrian governorates.

The Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) is the official Syrian news agency, one of the media sectors of an administrative nature, which has all the rights enjoyed by the governmental bodies in the Syria. It is affiliated with the Ministry of Information, its main headquarters in Damascus and its centers are spread inside and outside Syria.

VI. RESULTS

The results show that the weighted average of the existence degree of obstacles of corporate communication was 66.09%. This finding indicates that the obstacles of corporate communication in SANA are not weak, which require minimizing these obstacles in order to maximize the use of corporate communication and its positive return on corporate performance of the agency's employees.

The results proved that the administrative obstacles ranked first in terms of their existence degree with a weighted average of 86%, while the employee-related obstacles ranked second with a weighted average of 70.62%. Technical obstacles ranked third with a weighted average of 56.94% and the organizational obstacles ranked fourth with a weighted average of 50.79%.

Regarding the impact of existence degree of corporate communication's obstacles on the corporate performance of SANA's employees during the Syrian war, the results showed that the administrative obstacles ranked first in the impact on the performance of employees with a weighted average of 49%, followed by technical obstacles in second place with a weighted average of 48.8%, then organizational obstacles in the third place with a weighted average of 47.66%. The employees- related obstacles ranked fourth with a weighted average of 39.77%

From this finding, it could be concluded that administrative obstacles were in the first place in terms of their existence and impact on the corporate performance of SANA's employees, perhaps because the management and its core functions are focused on planning and organization, making the management the key element in facilitating the business, and thus causing the administrative obstacles associated with them to become the most important as they represented negative constraints hindering the achievement of key functions of the management and impeding carrying out its major administrative processes, including communication.

1- The existence degree of the administrative obstacles and their impact on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents:

The obstacle of the lack of strategic planning necessary to develop a system of corporate communication ranked first together with the obstacle of bad work routine as a result of rapid progress and development in communication means, which necessitates a strategic planning stems from the vision that reflects the need to keep abreast of these means and to benefit from them in the agency's services and corporate performance. The fact that SANA's management limited access to information only to a certain number of its employees ranked second in terms of existence degree of administrative obstacles of corporate communication, while this obstacle ranked eighth in impact of existence degree on the corporate performance of the agency's employees (which might show that despite the weakness of the openness of the management and its reliance on some certain employees while ignoring the others, this did not affect the corporate performance of the employees, and this indicates that although it is important to provide information to all the agency's employees in terms of their presence within the administrative system, this did not have much impact on the corporate performance of employees, as they could have faced the lack of information by contacting the officials within the agency through informal communication).

2- The existence degree of the employee-related obstacles and their impact on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents:

The obstacle of discouraging and neglecting feedback from the SANA's employees ranked first among the employee-related obstacles hindering the corporate communication in the agency. This might be consistent with the nature of two-way communication which considers feedback of the employees of great importance because they are the executors of the work and hence their feedback is useful in performing the agency's work more effectively. This rank of this obstacle slightly decreased regarding its impact on the corporate performance of the employees to the third place, and this is also probably justified that despite the importance of feedback in the process of corporate communication, its impact on work performance might be decreased as a direct result of the increasing work routine which was expressed by the respondents as one of the administrative obstacles to the corporate communication in the agency.

The results indicate that the weak social relations between the employees of SANA ranked second in terms of its existence degree, while ranked in the eleventh place regarding its impact of existence degree on the corporate performance from the point of view of the respondents. This result might be due to the fact that social relationships are of great importance to the process of corporate communication so as to eliminate the routine of work. However, the weak social relationships between the employees might not affect much of the corporate performance in the agency because the work was largely characterized by traditionalism.

The difference between the perception of SANA's employees concerning orders and instructions ranked third in terms of existence degree and sixth in terms of impact of existence degree on the corporate performance. This might be attributed to the difference in perception of the employees and their different understanding of the orders and instructions, as this difference usually has a great effect whenever the work is not characterized by traditional but by constant renewal, keeping in mind that informal communication relationships may also play a role in overcoming this obstacle, so that agreement can be reached in order to understand instructions and orders.

The shortage of qualified human resources for the use of modern communication technologies ranked fourth in terms of existence degree, while ranked first in terms of the impact of existence degree on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents. The impact on the employees' performance may be attributed to the availability of qualified human resources to use modern communication techniques, which leads to speed and efficiency in the work and therefore the lack of availability of these cadres affects the performance of employees, making the speed and effectiveness of work less. The lack of availability of those cadres ranked fourth

in terms of existence degree due to the old age the agency's employees and their habitual use of traditional means of communication.

3- The existence degree of the technical obstacles and their impact on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents:

The old used means of communication ranked in the first place in terms of existence degree of technical obstacles and fourth in terms of impact degree on the corporate performance of SANA's employees. Although the used means of communication are not modern, their impact on corporate performance did not receive the same rank from the respondents' point of view, perhaps due to the fact that the respondents were mostly from older employees, which reflects their experience and thus can determine the value and effect of modern means of communication on the corporate performance of the employees. This result was confirmed by the occupation of this obstacle (the old used means of communication) which ranked first in terms of its existence degree.

The long period of communication was in the second in terms of its existence degree, while ranked sixth in terms of impact degree on the corporate performance of the agency's employees. It may be noted that the obstacle of the old means of communication was first in terms of existence degree and hence it caused a long period of communication, which is confirmed by the occupation of this obstacle the second place in terms of existence degree, as this obstacle occupied the sixth place in terms of its impact on corporate performance of the employees due to the fact that big part of the work in the agency was done in a traditional way in most cases.

4- The existence degree of the organizational obstacles and their impact on the corporate performance of SANA's employees from the point of view of the respondents:

The obstacle of geographical diffusion and the number of SANA's offices in the Syrian governorates ranked first in terms of existence degree among the organizational constraints and third in terms of impact degree on corporate performance. This might reflect the importance of this obstacle and confirms that the geographical spread and the multiple workplaces of SANA require a review of the corporate communication means in order to develop them.

The difficulty of contacting SANA's director general only through the direct manager ranked second in terms of existence degree, while it ranked eighth in terms of impact degree on corporate performance. This might be explained by the wide geographical scope of the agency and its offices, which reflects difficulties in communication exclusively through the direct manager, as well as the administrative nature of the bureaucratic work that requires the need to communicate the direct manager instead of the higher manager, and this is confirmed by the occupation of the obstacles of the severe centralization and the lack of a clear policy for the organizational communication system the third place in terms of existence degree and the fifth

and sixth place in terms of their impact degree on corporate performance.

The obstacle of lack of information management in SANA's departments took the first place among the organizational obstacles that affect corporate performance of the employees, while ranked eighth in terms of its existence degree. Perhaps this can confirm that the respondents had sufficient experience in the work of the agency that was reflected in their requirements to develop their work. Despite the lack of information management departments in SANA, the desire to develop work makes its impact on corporate performance very important.

The obstacle related to absence of a real management to address the agency's problems and crises ranked first in terms of corporate impact on corporate performance of the employees, while was in the fifth place in its term of existence degree. This might be explained by the fact that the traditional working method in SANA made this obstacle rank in the fifth place concerning the term of its existence degree, while ranked second its term of impact degree because the agency needed development, which must start with a clear vision directed to the problems and crises facing it, especially during the Syrian war when facing the misleading propaganda about the developments of the war.

5- Respondents' proposals to activate corporate communication in SANA during the Syrian war.

The proposal to provide modern communication technologies was first among the proposals mentioned by the respondents to activate corporate communication in the agency because these technologies will undoubtedly help to achieve speed of communication and feedback.

In the second place was the respondents' proposal to train the agency's employees on the use of modern communication technologies as providing modern communication technologies become useless unless there are qualified and trained personnel to efficiently use these technologies. Adopting open door policy at all administrative levels ranked third because of the urgent need for direct communication, especially in the process of decision-making. The proposal to reduce work routine was in the fourth place because work system must integrated all its inputs and outputs in order to be able to achieve the desired changes, and this is confirmed by the fifth-ranking proposal of clarifying all the required tasks and responsibilities of the employees as achieving this leads to reducing the routine of work and then activating corporate communication. Developing social relations between employees at all administrative levels also helps in activating corporate communication so it was ranked fifth together in the same place with the proposal of clarifying employees' tasks and responsibilities.

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