

Internal Communication Practices Among Administrative Personnel in the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz: A Case Study on Organizational Efficiency

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Abstract. Internal communication serves as the backbone of operational efficiency within government institutions, particularly within the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz. This qualitative single-case study investigates how internal communication practices among five key administrative personnel—comprising an acting division chief, supply officer, secretary, cashier assistant, and accountant officer—influence organizational performance and daily operational efficiency. The findings reveal that while communication is an indispensable, continuous function that facilitates the flow of information through a hybrid of formal memoranda, meetings, and digital platforms, the system is frequently compromised by significant barriers. Participants identified information ambiguity, transmission latency, and channel inconsistency as primary obstacles that trigger a ripple effect of delays, increased error rates, and redundant workloads. To navigate these challenges, personnel often resort to reactive strategies such as constant verification, proactive clarification, regular follow-ups, and lateral coordination to maintain workflow continuity. Ultimately, the findings demonstrate that communication quality plays a crucial role in shaping institutional output, showing that clear, timely, and consistent messaging is foundational to accuracy and task completion. Conversely, systemic communication breakdowns necessitate "workarounds" that, while functional, detract from overall productivity. These results suggest that to optimize the Bureau's efficiency, there is a pressing need to move beyond informal adaptations and instead institutionalize standardized protocols that ensure clarity and consistency across all hierarchical levels. By addressing these communicative gaps, the Sub-Port of Ozamiz can minimize operational friction, strengthen inter-personnel coordination, and better fulfill its administrative mandates.

Keywords: administrative personnel; Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz; communication practices; internal communication

Introduction

Effective internal communication is crucial for an organization to succeed, especially in public-sector institutions, where coordination, accuracy, and timeliness are needed. In government agencies, communication acts as the foundation of daily operations. It helps ensure that information flows smoothly, that policies are clearly communicated, and that tasks are carried out efficiently. In agencies like the Bureau of Customs, where work involves processing documents, adhering to regulations, and coordinating between departments, internal communication is essential in maintaining efficiency across different ports and sub-port offices.

In recent years, studies have shown that poor communication within organizations can lead to delays, misunderstandings, and lower productivity (Ruck & Welch, 2012). In bureaucratic settings, these problems can worsen due to strict hierarchies. These structures may slow down the flow of information and create gaps between managers and staff. In addition, the growing complexity of office processes and the use of digital systems have added new communication challenges. Administrative personnel, who handle documents, coordinate tasks, and carry out office procedures, may face unclear instructions, inconsistent information, and slow decision-making. These issues can affect both their performance and the organization's overall efficiency.

Even though many studies have examined organizational communication, most focus on private companies or general government systems. There is limited attention given to specific groups within public offices. In particular, there is a lack of detailed qualitative studies examining the experiences of administrative personnel in local units, such as sub-port offices. These offices serve as frontline units where communication is essential to daily operations. However, the unique communication practices and challenges in these settings, especially in the Bureau of Customs, remain poorly studied. Many studies use quantitative methods, which may not fully capture employees' real experiences and deeper insights in a specific work environment.

The Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz, located in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, is one of the frontline government offices responsible for customs clearance, document processing, and inter-agency coordination in Northern Mindanao. As a sub-port operating under the Port of Cagayan De Oro City, it manages the flow of regulated goods and administrative transactions with a relatively small workforce organized into three divisions. Given its scale and the volume of coordination required among personnel, effective internal communication is not merely desirable but operationally essential. Yet, no systematic study has examined how communication practices within this specific office influence its day-to-day efficiency. Given these gaps, it is important to examine the internal communication practices of administrative personnel at the Sub-Port of Ozamiz. Understanding their experiences can help identify communication problems, improve coordination, and increase efficiency in the office. This study can also help improve internal processes and support better service delivery and organizational performance in local government units. The findings may help in creating better communication strategies and offer practical suggestions for improving administrative work in similar offices.

This study aimed to explore and analyze the internal communication practices of administrative personnel in the Bureau of Customs through a qualitative case study. It sought to understand how communication affects organizational efficiency, identify the challenges faced by administrative personnel, and provide insights to improve communication systems within the office.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the internal communication practices among administrative personnel in the Bureau of Customs and how these practices influence organizational efficiency. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions;

1. How do administrative personnel experience and make sense of internal communication practices in their daily tasks in the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz?
2. What internal communication practices are commonly observed among administrative personnel?
3. What challenges are encountered in internal communication among administrative personnel?
4. How do administrative personnel manage or cope with communication challenges?
5. In what ways do internal communication practices influence organizational efficiency in the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examined the internal communication practices among administrative personnel in the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz and how these practices influence organizational efficiency. The study was conducted during the academic year 2025–2026 and focused specifically on the Administrative Division of the Sub-Port of Ozamiz, located in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Philippines. The scope of the study was limited to five (5) administrative personnel who were actively employed in the Administrative Division at the time of data collection. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and were required to have at least one year of work experience and direct involvement in communication-related tasks such as document handling, coordination, and office procedures. The study did not include personnel from the Piers and Inspection Division or the Assessment Division, as their functions are more technical in nature and outside the primary focus of the research. In terms of research design, the study employed a qualitative single-case study approach, which enabled an in-depth exploration of communication practices within a specific organizational setting. Data were gathered exclusively through individual face-to-face interviews guided by a researcher-made interview guide, and were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The study did not employ quantitative measures, surveys, or experimental methods, as the primary aim was to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of administrative personnel rather than to generalize findings across a broader population. The findings of this study are specific to the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz and may not be directly applicable to other sub-port offices, government agencies, or private organizations. Additionally, the study was conducted within a defined time frame and reflects the communication practices and organizational conditions present during

the period of data collection. Changes in personnel, organizational structure, or communication systems after this period are not accounted for in the findings.

Literature Review

Internal Communication in Organizations

Internal communication refers to the exchange of information, instructions, and feedback among members of an organization. It serves as the backbone of daily operations, enabling coordination, transparency, and accountability (Welch & Jackson, 2007). In formal organizations such as government agencies, internal communication follows structured channels including official memoranda, meetings, and written reports, which ensure that information is properly documented and disseminated. These formal systems help maintain procedural consistency and establish clear lines of authority (Falkheimer et al., 2022). However, the increasing complexity of organizational functions has necessitated the integration of informal and digital communication practices that complement formal channels and allow for faster coordination among personnel (Denner et al., 2024). In the Philippine context, Larroza et al. (2024) found that in government agencies, communication barriers such as organizational structure and inadequate channels hinder effective open communication, while a supportive work environment and accessible information improve employee engagement and performance. This dual-channel approach is particularly evident in local government units and attached agencies where direct supervision and informal networks coexist with official documentation systems. Barrera and Cabalida (2022), in a study of a credit corporation in Dipolog City, Philippines, found that employees perceived their overall internal communication process as effective across all components (communicator, message, channel, feedback, and environment), but identified barriers that had a significant effect on communication outcomes. Alviola (2024), examining state university employees in Eastern Visayas, Philippines, further demonstrated that communication climate positively predicted job satisfaction, with effective communication practices enhancing collaboration and overall organizational participation.

Organizational Sensemaking Theory

This study is anchored on Karl Weick's Communication Theory of Organizations, specifically his concept of Organizational Sensemaking (Weick, 1995). According to this framework, organizations are constituted through communication, and individuals rely on communication to interpret their roles, responsibilities, and the information they encounter in the workplace. Sensemaking highlights that organizational members actively construct meaning from communication in order to guide their actions and coordinate effectively with colleagues. This theoretical lens is particularly appropriate for examining how administrative personnel at the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz understand and respond to internal communication practices in their daily work. Problems such as unclear instructions, delayed messages, and inconsistent information can be understood as failures in the sensemaking process that disrupt workflow and reduce organizational efficiency. In the Philippine context, sensemaking has been applied to examine how organizations process ambiguous information during crisis situations. Koschmann et al. (2017) demonstrated that organizations involved in disaster relief coordination following Typhoon Yolanda did not possess inherent authority but instead constructed authority through ongoing sensemaking processes, constantly negotiating their roles as they coordinated with other entities. Similarly, Comes et al. (2020) found that volatile information during Typhoon Haiyan response led to what they termed "coordination-information bubbles," where urgent sensemaking pressures caused fragmentation and misalignment of coordination structures. These findings highlight that sensemaking failures in Philippine organizational settings can have immediate and measurable consequences, a dynamic equally relevant to the bureaucratic environment of customs administration where information ambiguity and delayed responses can disrupt operational continuity.

Communication Challenges in Government Agencies

Research consistently identifies clarity, timeliness, and consistency as critical dimensions of effective organizational communication (Men, 2021). The absence of these elements leads to misunderstandings, duplicated effort, and operational delays that undermine productivity (Ruck & Welch, 2012). In hierarchical public institutions, communication barriers are particularly common due to rigid authority structures that slow the flow of information between levels (Kamal et al., 2023). Studies further emphasize that when personnel receive incomplete or inconsistent instructions, their capacity to perform tasks accurately and efficiently is significantly compromised. The reliance on informal verification and follow-up strategies as workarounds reflects the systemic nature of these communication challenges (Karanges et al., 2015). Local studies in the Philippines have documented similar patterns in government offices, where centralized

decision-making processes and inadequate technological resources create communication challenges that prompt personnel to seek alternative coordination mechanisms (Go, 2025). These findings underscore that communication challenges are not unique to large bureaucracies but are equally present in smaller government units such as sub-port offices, where limited staff and centralized authority can amplify the consequences of communication breakdowns.

Digital Communication in Public Offices

The integration of digital communication tools, including electronic mail, messaging platforms, and online portals, has transformed organizational communication in government settings (Men, 2021). These technologies enable faster information exchange, support real-time coordination, and enhance the accessibility of official communications. In the Bureau of Customs, the adoption of digital platforms such as the E2M system and online payment portals has improved transaction processing and reduced opportunities for human error (Verčič & Men, 2023). Nevertheless, the coexistence of formal and informal digital channels also introduces risks of inconsistency and information overload that organizations must proactively manage to maintain operational efficiency. In the Philippine government context, digital communication adoption has been uneven across agencies and levels. Lorenzana and Soriano (2021) observed that digital communication in the Philippines is shaped by material, social, and structural conditions, where the rise of digital platforms has transformed how organizations and publics interact, yet disparities in infrastructure and digital literacy persist. Roengtam et al. (2017), in a comparative study of three ASEAN cities including Iligan City in the Philippines, found that social media adoption in local government enhanced public engagement but also created challenges in managing information consistency across multiple digital channels. At the agency level, Castillo et al. (2022) assessed user satisfaction with the Bureau of Customs' electronic-to-mobile (e2m) system and found that while end-users were generally satisfied with the platform's format and ease of use, issues related to content accuracy and timeliness remained areas of concern. Furthermore, Larroza et al. (2024) documented that in Philippine government agencies, barriers such as organizational structure and inadequate communication channels hinder effective open communication, underscoring the need for standardized digital protocols to complement existing formal systems. The reviewed literature establishes that internal communication practices—specifically the use of formal channels, integration of digital and informal platforms, clarity and completeness of information, and timely dissemination—are significant determinants of organizational efficiency in government institutions. The hierarchical nature of public agencies such as the Bureau of Customs further shapes how communication flows among administrative personnel, influencing the extent to which information is accurately received, interpreted, and acted upon. Despite the growing recognition of communication as a driver of organizational performance, inequities in communication quality and consistency persist, particularly in local government units and sub-port offices where standardized protocols may be lacking. These findings highlight the importance of examining the combined influence of internal communication practices and organizational structure on efficiency, providing a strong foundation for the present study.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study design. This approach allowed for a deep, complete understanding of a specific situation in its real-life setting. A qualitative method was appropriate because the study focused on understanding experiences, meanings, and processes, rather than on measuring variables or testing hypotheses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike quantitative research, which uses numbers, this study focused on participants' personal experiences and views in their actual work environments. This study was an exploratory case study because it examined internal communication practices among administrative personnel—a topic that has received limited research attention in the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz (Yin, 2018). Case studies are useful for studying real-life situations in which the problem and the setting are closely connected (Yin, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

Sampling Design

The study employed a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling. Purposive sampling facilitated the selection of participants who possessed direct and relevant experience with the phenomenon under study—namely, internal communication practices within the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach ensured that only individuals with sufficient knowledge and involvement in administrative communication tasks were included, thereby producing rich and meaningful qualitative data. The number of participants was limited to five (5), meeting the researcher's criteria for an in-depth qualitative case study. Notably, a sample size of five to ten participants is generally

deemed adequate for qualitative case study research, as it allows for thorough data collection and analysis without compromising depth of understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This sample size aligned with the bounded nature of the case, as the Administrative Division of the Sub-Port of Ozamiz has a limited number of personnel directly involved in communication and coordination tasks. To ensure that participants were appropriately situated to provide relevant data, specific inclusion criteria were applied. Participants were required to: (a) be currently and actively employed in the Administrative Division of the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz; (b) have a minimum of one year of work experience in their current position; and (c) be directly involved in communication-related tasks such as document handling, coordination, or administrative procedures. These criteria ensured that only personnel with sufficient contextual knowledge and practical experience in the office's communication processes were selected. The five participants represented a range of administrative roles within the division, including an acting division chief, a supply officer, a secretary, a cashier assistant, and an accountant officer, providing diverse and complementary perspectives on internal communication practices within the office.

Research Locale

The research took place at the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz, a government office under the Department of Finance located in Ozamiz City. This office handles customs operations, processes documents, and coordinates with other government agencies. It has a structured system with three divisions: the Administrative Division, the Piers and Inspection Division, and the Assessment Division. The Sub-Port of Ozamiz was selected because it provided direct access to administrative personnel involved in communication processes, represented a manageable size suitable for a case study approach, and served as a typical government office where communication is important but may also face challenges.

Research Participants

The study involved five (5) administrative staff from the Administrative Division of the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz. This sample size was suitable for qualitative research, allowing for in-depth and meaningful data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were selected through purposive sampling to identify individuals with relevant experience and knowledge of the workplace. Inclusion criteria required that participants: (a) currently work in the Administrative Division; (b) have at least one year of experience; and (c) be involved in communication tasks such as coordination, document handling, or office procedures. Participants came from different roles, including acting division chief, supply officer, secretary, cashier assistant, and accountant officer, to ensure varied perspectives.

Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main tool for collecting data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A researcher-made interview guide was developed and used to organize the data collection process. It included: (a) introductory questions; (b) a main question about communication practices; (c) sub-questions about experiences and challenges; (d) probing questions for deeper answers; and (e) a closing question for additional insights. The interview guide was validated prior to data collection to ensure its appropriateness and relevance to the study objectives. Specifically, the instrument underwent content validation by three expert validators with backgrounds in qualitative research and organizational communication. The validators evaluated the interview guide for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research questions. Based on their feedback, minor revisions were made to improve the wording and sequencing of questions. The validated instrument was subsequently used in the conduct of all participant interviews.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection followed a clear and ethical process. First, the researcher obtained permission from the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz. After approval, participants were selected by the division head. Each participant was informed about the study and asked to provide free, prior, and informed consent before joining. The interviews were conducted individually in a confidential setting to encourage candid responses. With participants' permission, the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Participants reviewed their transcripts and initial findings to confirm accuracy through member checking, which helped ensure that the data were correct and trustworthy.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: How do administrative personnel experience and make sense of internal communication practices in their daily tasks?

In the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz, where a small administrative team manages the documentation, coordination, and processing functions of a government customs office, internal communication takes on heightened significance. Studies on organizational communication in Philippine government agencies have noted that employees tend to rely on accessible communication channels and peer interaction to maintain engagement, particularly where organizational structures create barriers to formal information flow (Larroza et al., 2024). The following themes reflect how administrative personnel in this specific context experience and make sense of internal communication in their daily work. Two main themes emerged from participants' narratives: (1) Internal Communication as an Essential Work Process, and (2) Communication as a Continuous Process of Information Flow and Sensemaking.

Theme 1: Internal Communication as an Essential Work Process

Internal communication was viewed by participants as a fundamental component of their daily work, serving as the primary means for aligning tasks, clarifying responsibilities, and ensuring coordination among personnel. Participants consistently emphasized that communication is not merely an exchange of information but a necessary process that enables the smooth functioning of office operations.

Prior studies consistently establish that internal communication is not merely a supportive function but a core operational mechanism within organizations, particularly in public sector settings where role clarity and task coordination are essential (Welch & Jackson, 2007). In smaller government offices such as the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz, personnel tend to assign even greater importance to communication as a means of maintaining coherence and accountability across their interdependent responsibilities, as employees who perceive accessible communication channels and a supportive work environment report higher levels of engagement and task alignment (Larroza et al., 2024).

"Very important gyud ang communication sa adlaw-adlaw nga work... para ma-align ang tasks ug responsibilities sa tanan." (TP01) [Translation: "Communication is really very important in day-to-day work... so that the tasks and responsibilities of everyone are aligned."]

"Importante kaayo ang communication sa akong role... especially para masiguro ang accuracy sa financial processes." (TP05) [Translation: "Communication is very important in my role... especially to ensure accuracy in financial processes."]

"Importante kaayo ang communication sa akong role kay naga-prepare ko sa documents before processing." (TP04) [Translation: "Communication is very important in my role because I prepare documents before processing."]

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of communication in ensuring that tasks are clearly understood and properly executed. One participant explained that communication helps align responsibilities among staff, allowing them to work cohesively toward common goals (TP01). This response suggests that communication serves as a guiding mechanism that helps employees understand their responsibilities and maintain unity in performing office tasks. Similarly, another participant highlighted that communication is critical in maintaining accuracy in financial processes, as it ensures that all information is complete and consistent before transactions are finalized (TP05). This indicates that communication is closely associated with accountability and precision, particularly in tasks involving financial verification and documentation. This is further supported by another participant who noted that communication plays a vital role in preparing documents and coordinating tasks prior to processing (TP04). The participant's response implies that communication enables smoother coordination among personnel, helping minimize delays and ensuring that office processes are completed systematically and efficiently. These findings suggest that internal communication functions as a foundational mechanism that supports coordination, accuracy, and task execution. This aligns with Organizational Sensemaking Theory, which posits that individuals rely on communication to interpret their roles and responsibilities within the organization (Weick, 1995). Effective internal communication fosters organizational cohesion and improves operational efficiency by enabling employees to understand expectations, collaborate with colleagues, and respond appropriately to workplace demands (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Gomes et al., 2023).

Theme 2: Communication as a Continuous Process of Information Flow and Sensemaking

Participants also described internal communication as an ongoing and dynamic process involving the reception, organization, and dissemination of information. This theme highlights how communication flows across different roles and how personnel actively interpret and manage information in their daily work.

Organizational communication scholars describe the management of information flow within an institution as a dynamic and continuous activity requiring active participation from all personnel (Weick, 1995). This sensemaking process is particularly evident in government offices where employees must constantly interpret, organize, and relay information across different roles and levels of authority to ensure that operational tasks are carried out correctly and on time (Falkheimer et al., 2022).

"Communication is a continuous process of receiving, organizing, ug pag-forward sa info sa sakto nga personnel." (TP03) [Translation: "Communication is a continuous process of receiving, organizing, and forwarding information to the right personnel."]

"Makadawat ko ug documents gikan sa lain-laing personnel, so ako i-check kung complete ug consistent ba ang details." (TP05) [Translation: "I receive documents from various personnel, so I check whether the details are complete and consistent."]

"Mix of active participation, observation of information flow and reflection on how messages are received and acted upon." (TP02)

Participants described communication as a continuous cycle of receiving and forwarding information, particularly in roles that involve documentation and coordination. One participant explained that communication involves organizing and transmitting information accurately to the appropriate personnel, emphasizing the importance of clarity before dissemination (TP03). This response suggests that personnel play an active role in ensuring that information is properly managed and delivered to avoid confusion and maintain workflow continuity. Another participant highlighted the need to verify the completeness and consistency of information received from different sources before proceeding with tasks (TP05). This implies that communication is closely linked to accountability, as employees carefully assess information before taking action to ensure that tasks are performed correctly. Additionally, a participant described communication as involving active participation and reflection on how messages are interpreted and acted upon within the organization (TP02). The response further indicates that personnel continuously evaluate and make sense of information in relation to their responsibilities, allowing them to respond appropriately to organizational demands and workplace situations. These insights indicate that internal communication involves active sensemaking, where personnel interpret information based on their roles and responsibilities. The process of verifying, organizing, and disseminating information reflects the dynamic nature of communication in the workplace, supporting Weick's (1995) Organizational Sensemaking Theory. Effective communication processes contribute to organizational adaptability and collaborative decision-making (Falkheimer et al., 2022; Men, 2021).

Research Question 2: What internal communication practices are commonly observed among administrative personnel?

The Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz, as a frontline government office managing customs documentation and inter-division coordination, operates through a combination of formal and informal communication channels. In the Bureau of Customs, the adoption of digital platforms such as the e2m system has improved transaction processing, while administrative personnel simultaneously rely on both official memoranda and informal digital platforms such as group messaging applications to coordinate daily tasks efficiently (Castillo et al., 2022). This hybrid communication approach reflects the practical demands of a small office where formal procedures must be maintained for regulatory compliance, while informal channels allow for the speed and flexibility needed to address time-sensitive operational concerns. The following themes describe the specific communication practices commonly observed among administrative personnel at the Sub-Port of Ozamiz. Two main themes emerged: (1) Use of Formal Communication Channels, and (2) Integration of Informal and Digital Communication Practices.

Theme 1: Use of Formal Communication Channels

Formal communication channels—including memoranda, meetings, official emails, and written instructions—serve as the foundation of official transactions and documentation within the office, ensuring clarity, accountability, and proper record-keeping.

Research on organizational communication in public institutions highlights that formal communication channels serve as the structural backbone for ensuring consistency, accountability, and

procedural compliance within hierarchical settings (Welch & Jackson, 2007). In the Bureau of Customs, formal channels such as memoranda and official emails are mandated by administrative regulations and are considered the authoritative medium for conveying policies, instructions, and official decisions to personnel, while digital platforms like the e2m system have further standardized how official communications are processed and documented (Castillo et al., 2022).

"Formal kay memo, meetings, ug written instructions." (TP01) [Translation: "Formal communication is through memoranda, meetings, and written instructions."]

"Mostly through memoranda, BOC official email..." (TP02)

"As secretary... ako jud handle sa formal side, labi na sa documentation ug dissemination." (TP03) [Translation: "As secretary, I really handle the formal side, especially documentation and dissemination."]

Participants emphasized that formal communication provides clear guidelines and documented instructions necessary for task execution. One participant noted that formal channels ensure that responsibilities and expectations are clearly defined (TP01). This response indicates that formal communication helps employees understand their assigned duties and minimizes confusion regarding workplace responsibilities. Another participant highlighted the use of official emails and memoranda as primary tools for disseminating information (TP02). This suggests that the use of official communication platforms allows information to be distributed systematically and ensures that instructions are properly documented for reference and compliance purposes. Similarly, a participant responsible for documentation stressed the importance of formal communication in organizing and forwarding accurate information (TP03). The participant's response further implies that formal communication strengthens coordination among personnel by ensuring that messages are properly recorded, organized, and transmitted to the appropriate individuals. These findings confirm that formal communication plays a critical role in ensuring accountability and consistency in organizational processes, aligning with organizational communication theories that emphasize structured communication as essential for coordination and control within institutions (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Falkheimer et al., 2022). Formal channels also contribute to transparency and institutional reliability (Men, 2021).

Theme 2: Integration of Informal and Digital Communication Practices

In addition to formal channels, participants reported the widespread use of informal and digital communication methods, such as group chats via Viber, verbal instructions, and online platforms. These practices enable faster coordination and real-time updates, complementing formal communication systems.

The integration of informal and digital communication tools in organizational settings has been widely documented as a strategy for improving speed, flexibility, and real-time coordination among personnel (Denner et al., 2024). In government contexts, messaging platforms and group chats have emerged as practical supplements to formal channels, enabling personnel to address time-sensitive concerns without the procedural delays associated with official memoranda or formal correspondence (Men, 2021).

"Informal kay group chats para sa dali nga updates." (TP01) [Translation: "Informal communication is through group chats for quick updates."]

"Information is sent... through official email... and Viber community." (TP02)

"Most of the time kay mag communicate mi through chat or direct talk kay mas dali." (TP04) [Translation: "Most of the time, we communicate through chat or direct talk because it is faster."]

Participants highlighted that informal communication allows for quick exchanges of information, especially when immediate coordination is required. One participant noted that group chats are useful for providing updates efficiently (TP01). This response suggests that informal digital platforms allow employees to communicate more conveniently and respond to work-related concerns in a timely manner. Another emphasized the role of digital platforms in facilitating communication (TP02). The participant's response implies that online communication tools help ensure that personnel remain informed and connected even when immediate face-to-face interaction is not possible. Additionally, direct communication through conversations was identified as a practical approach for faster task coordination (TP04). This indicates that informal interactions, such as direct conversations and chats, help employees coordinate tasks more efficiently by allowing immediate clarification and faster exchange of information. These findings indicate that informal and digital communication practices enhance flexibility and responsiveness within the organization, reflecting the evolving nature of workplace communication where technology and informal interactions support faster decision-making and coordination (Denner et al., 2024; Men, 2021).

Research Question 3: What challenges are encountered in internal communication among administrative personnel?

Within the Sub-Port of Ozamiz, these communication challenges are particularly consequential given that administrative personnel simultaneously manage multiple regulatory and documentary tasks with limited staffing support. Go (2025) observed that Philippine government agencies with centralized decision-making processes tend to experience communication delays, as information must pass through hierarchical levels before reaching operational personnel, a challenge compounded by limited technological infrastructure. The following themes describe the specific communication challenges encountered by administrative personnel in this setting. Two major themes emerged: (1) Lack of Clarity and Completeness of Information, and (2) Delays and Inconsistencies in Communication.

Theme 1: Lack of Clarity and Completeness of Information

A recurring challenge identified by participants is the presence of unclear, incomplete, or inconsistent information that leads to confusion, misinterpretation, and additional work in clarifying instructions.

The lack of clarity and completeness in organizational communication is widely recognized as a critical barrier to effective workplace performance (Ruck & Welch, 2012). When personnel receive instructions that are vague, partial, or inconsistent with previous directives, their capacity to perform assigned tasks accurately is significantly diminished, often resulting in errors, redundant work, and unnecessary delays (Kamal et al., 2023). In Philippine government offices, this challenge is further compounded by centralized decision-making processes and limited technological infrastructure that restrict frontline personnel from obtaining timely clarification (Go, 2025).

"Usahay kulang ang info... maka-confuse sa staff." (TP03) [Translation: "Sometimes the information is incomplete... it causes confusion among the staff."]

"Usahay kulang ang instructions or dili detailed." (TP04) [Translation: "Sometimes the instructions are insufficient or not detailed enough."]

"Incomplete or inconsistent ang info... maka-delay sa verification." (TP05) [Translation: "Incomplete or inconsistent information can delay verification."]

Participants emphasized that incomplete or unclear instructions create difficulties in understanding tasks and responsibilities. One participant noted that missing details in communication can lead to confusion among staff (TP03). This response suggests that when information is not fully communicated, employees may interpret instructions differently, resulting in misunderstandings and inconsistent task execution. Another highlighted that insufficient instructions affect task preparation (TP04). The participant's response implies that unclear instructions make it difficult for personnel to organize and complete their responsibilities efficiently, often requiring additional clarification before proceeding. Similarly, a participant involved in financial processes stressed that incomplete information delays verification (TP05). This indicates that the lack of complete information not only slows down processes but may also affect the accuracy and reliability of organizational transactions and outputs. These findings suggest that clarity and completeness are critical components of effective communication. The absence of these elements can disrupt workflow and reduce overall efficiency (Ruck & Welch, 2012; Kamal et al., 2023; Falkheimer et al., 2022).

Theme 2: Delays and Inconsistencies in Communication

Another challenge involves delays in receiving information and inconsistencies in communication sources, which affect coordination and task completion.

Communication delays and inconsistencies across channels are among the most disruptive barriers to organizational efficiency, as they undermine coordination and create uncertainty regarding the accuracy of information received (Karanges et al., 2015). Studies on public sector communication emphasize that when information arrives late or conflicts with messages from other sources, personnel are forced to pause their work and await further direction, consuming time and resources that would otherwise be directed toward productive tasks (Men, 2021).

"Usahay pud, naay delay sa replies nga maka-apekto sa trabaho." (TP01) [Translation: "Sometimes there are also delays in replies that affect the work."]

"Challenges arises when communication are late." (TP02)

"Naa pud times nga lain-lain ang source sa info." (TP04) [Translation: "There are also times when the sources of information are different."]

Participants reported that delayed responses and inconsistent information create inefficiencies in the workflow. One participant explained that delays in communication slow down task execution (TP01). This response implies that when information is not immediately relayed or acknowledged, employees are unable to proceed with tasks on time, resulting in interruptions in workflow and reduced productivity. Another

highlighted that late communication affects coordination (TPo2). This suggests that administrative personnel rely heavily on timely exchanges of information to coordinate responsibilities and maintain smooth office operations. Additionally, receiving information from multiple inconsistent sources leads to confusion and misalignment (TPo4). The participant's response further indicates that conflicting instructions or varying sources of information may create misunderstandings among personnel, making it difficult to determine the correct procedures or priorities. These findings highlight how timeliness and consistency are essential for effective organizational communication. Delays and inconsistencies disrupt coordination, hinder productivity, and create uncertainty among personnel. Effective organizational communication therefore requires not only the availability of information but also its timely delivery and consistency across channels (Karanges et al., 2015; Men, 2021; Verčič & Men, 2023).

Research Question 4: How do administrative personnel manage or cope with communication challenges?

In the Sub-Port of Ozamiz, where a small administrative team handles multiple overlapping functions under a centralized authority structure, the ability to independently manage communication challenges is critical to maintaining daily workflow. Studies on communication dynamics in Philippine government offices have noted that centralized decision-making processes create delays that compel frontline administrative personnel to develop personal strategies for navigating unclear or delayed information, including direct consultation with supervisors, peer verification, and proactive coordination with colleagues (Go, 2025). These adaptive strategies become especially important in offices with limited redundancy, where one personnel's inability to proceed due to incomplete information can delay the work of others. The following themes reflect how the administrative personnel at the Sub-Port of Ozamiz manage and cope with communication challenges in their specific work context. Two main themes emerged: (1) Clarification and Verification of Information, and (2) Monitoring, Follow-ups, and Coordination.

Theme 1: Clarification and Verification of Information

One of the primary strategies employed by participants is actively seeking clarification and verifying information before proceeding with tasks, thereby preventing errors and ensuring task accuracy.

Proactive clarification and information verification are widely recognized as effective strategies for managing communication uncertainty in organizational settings (Karanges et al., 2015). Research indicates that employees who consistently seek clarification before acting on incomplete or ambiguous instructions significantly reduce the risk of committing errors and are better positioned to meet task deadlines with accuracy (Men, 2021). This behavior reflects a high degree of communication responsibility and is particularly important in regulatory offices such as the Sub-Port of Ozamiz where procedural accuracy is non-negotiable.

"Mangutana dayon... para malikayan ang sayop." (TPo1) [Translation: "I ask questions right away... to avoid mistakes."]

"Seek clarification from the immediate supervisor." (TPo2)

"Ako i-clarify sa supervisor before i-forward." (TPo3) [Translation: "I clarify with the supervisor before forwarding."]

Participants emphasized the importance of clarifying unclear instructions to avoid errors. One participant encouraged open communication by allowing staff to ask questions (TPo1). This response indicates that employees recognize the importance of immediate clarification in preventing mistakes and ensuring that tasks are performed correctly. It also reflects the presence of an open communication environment where personnel feel comfortable raising concerns or asking for additional explanations. Another highlighted the need to consult supervisors when information is unclear (TPo2). This suggests that supervisors play a significant role in guiding employees and confirming whether instructions are properly understood before actions are taken. Similarly, a participant responsible for information dissemination ensured that all details were verified before forwarding messages (TPo3). The response further implies that careful verification of information helps minimize the spread of incomplete or inaccurate instructions, thereby supporting smoother coordination and reducing confusion among personnel. These findings indicate that proactive clarification helps reduce misunderstandings and improves communication effectiveness. Verification and clarification practices contribute to maintaining accuracy, coordination, and accountability in office operations (Karanges et al., 2015; Men, 2021; Verčič & Men, 2023).

Theme 2: Monitoring, Follow-ups, and Coordination

Participants also emphasized the importance of monitoring progress, conducting follow-ups, and maintaining coordination among personnel as strategies for ensuring task completion and workflow continuity.

Follow-up communication and ongoing coordination are identified in organizational communication literature as essential mechanisms for sustaining workflow continuity, particularly in environments where tasks are interdependent and delays in one area can cascade across the entire system (Welch & Jackson, 2007). In small government offices where personnel handle multiple overlapping responsibilities, systematic monitoring and follow-through on delegated tasks serve as critical safeguards against miscommunication and incomplete task execution, especially where centralized authority structures create bottlenecks that individual personnel must actively navigate (Go, 2025).

"Naa pud follow-ups ug monitoring para masiguro nga okay ang progress." (TP01) [Translation: "There are also follow-ups and monitoring to ensure that the progress is on track."]

"Gina-confirm nako daan ang details..." (TP04) [Translation: "I confirm the details first..."]

"Naa pud mi regular coordination ug follow-ups." (TP05) [Translation: "We also have regular coordination and follow-ups."]

Participants described follow-ups and coordination as essential practices for maintaining accuracy and ensuring task completion. One participant highlighted the importance of monitoring task progress (TP01). This response suggests that monitoring allows personnel to track whether assigned responsibilities are being completed properly and on time, helping prevent delays and overlooked tasks. Another emphasized confirming details before proceeding (TP04). The participant's response implies that careful confirmation of information serves as a preventive measure against mistakes that may disrupt office operations or require additional corrective work. Additionally, regular coordination was identified as a strategy for maintaining efficiency and accuracy (TP05). This indicates that continuous interaction and collaboration among personnel help ensure that information remains aligned and that tasks are carried out smoothly across different units or responsibilities. These strategies demonstrate how personnel actively manage communication challenges to maintain workflow continuity. Monitoring, follow-ups, and coordination function as practical mechanisms for sustaining accuracy, accountability, and efficiency in the workplace (Karanges et al., 2015; Men, 2021; Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Research Question 5: In what ways do internal communication practices influence organizational efficiency in the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz?

In the Sub-Port of Ozamiz specifically, the relationship between communication and efficiency is particularly visible in the day-to-day processing of customs documents, coordination among the three divisions, and compliance with regulatory timelines. Given the office's relatively small workforce and the volume of transactions it must handle, any communication failure has an immediate and measurable impact on operational output. The following themes reflect how participants in this specific organizational context experienced the link between communication quality and organizational efficiency. Two major themes emerged: (1) Clear Communication Enhances Efficiency, and (2) Poor Communication Leads to Delays and Errors.

Theme 1: Clear Communication Enhances Efficiency

Participants consistently emphasized that clear, complete, and timely communication enables faster task completion, reduces errors, and improves overall workflow.

Empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between communication clarity and organizational efficiency, with studies showing that clear, timely, and accurate information exchange enables faster decision-making, reduces operational errors, and improves overall staff performance (Karanges et al., 2015). In public sector organizations such as the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz, where regulatory compliance and documentation accuracy are critical, the quality of internal communication directly determines the speed and reliability with which administrative tasks are completed (Verčič & Men, 2023).

"Kung klaro ug sakto ang communication, dali mahuman ang tasks." (TP01) [Translation: "If communication is clear and accurate, tasks are completed quickly."]

"Kung klaro ang communication, smooth ang operations." (TP05) [Translation: "If communication is clear, operations run smoothly."]

"Dali ug sakto ang trabaho kung klaro ang communication." (TP04) [Translation: "Work is faster and more accurate when communication is clear."]

Participants highlighted that clarity in communication leads to efficient task execution. One participant explained that clear instructions minimize confusion and allow tasks to be completed efficiently (TP01). This response suggests that personnel can perform their responsibilities more confidently and effectively when instructions are properly communicated and easily understood. Another emphasized that effective communication ensures smooth operations, particularly in financial processes (TP05). The participant's response further implies that clear communication supports accuracy in documentation and verification processes, helping maintain organized and uninterrupted office operations. Similarly, a participant noted that clarity enables both speed and accuracy in task completion (TP04). This indicates that personnel can accomplish tasks more efficiently when information is complete, consistent, and communicated at the appropriate time. These findings suggest that effective communication is a key driver of organizational efficiency, contributing to smoother coordination, reduced misunderstandings, and improved productivity. Communication clarity, timely feedback, and accurate information exchange are essential in improving efficiency and achieving organizational goals (Karanges et al., 2015; Men, 2021; Verčič & Men, 2023).

Theme 2: Poor Communication Leads to Delays and Errors

Conversely, unclear or delayed communication results in inefficiencies, including errors, rework, and workflow disruptions that affect both individual and organizational performance.

The negative consequences of poor internal communication on organizational efficiency are well-documented in the literature, with studies identifying communication breakdowns as a primary driver of operational delays, increased error rates, and diminished staff productivity (Ruck & Welch, 2012). In hierarchical government institutions like the Sub-Port of Ozamiz, these consequences are often amplified because frontline personnel have limited authority to make independent decisions when instructions are unclear, forcing them to halt their work and await further direction from supervisors before proceeding (Kamal et al., 2023).

"Kung dili klaro... ma-delay ang trabaho ug naay double effort." (TP01) [Translation: "If it is not clear... the work gets delayed and there is double effort."]

"Personnel fail to report or act..." (TP02)

"Dili ko ka-proceed dayon kung kulang ang details." (TP05) [Translation: "I cannot proceed right away if the details are insufficient."]

Participants described how poor communication leads to delays and additional workload. One participant explained that unclear instructions result in repeated work (TP01). This response suggests that unclear communication forces personnel to repeat processes or seek additional clarification, consuming more time and effort in completing tasks. Another noted that lack of communication leads to inaction (TP02). The participant's response implies that when important information is not communicated promptly, employees may become uncertain about their responsibilities, resulting in delays in decision-making and task execution. Additionally, incomplete information prevents task completion, causing delays in processes (TP05). This further indicates that missing details disrupt workflow continuity because personnel cannot proceed with tasks until the necessary information is clarified or completed. These findings highlight that ineffective communication negatively impacts productivity and organizational performance. Communication breakdowns weaken coordination, reduce efficiency, and negatively influence organizational effectiveness (Karanges et al., 2015; Ruck & Welch, 2012; Verčič & Men, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participation was voluntary, and participants were fully informed about the study before agreeing to join. They could withdraw at any time without consequences. Confidentiality was protected at all times; names and personal details were not revealed. Instead, participant codes (TP01–TP05) were used in all data reporting. The study adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012, Republic of the Philippines, to ensure the protection of all personally identifiable information gathered during the research process.

Conclusion

The study concludes that internal communication practices significantly influence organizational efficiency in the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz. Administrative personnel experience communication as an essential part of their daily work, particularly in coordinating tasks, clarifying

responsibilities, and ensuring the smooth flow of operations. Effective communication practices characterized by clarity, completeness, consistency, and timeliness contribute to faster task completion, reduced errors, and improved coordination among personnel. Guided by Organizational Sensemaking Theory, the findings further revealed that employees actively interpret and make sense of the information they receive in performing their responsibilities. However, unclear, delayed, and inconsistent communication creates misunderstandings, workflow disruptions, and operational inefficiencies. The study affirms that internal communication is a critical factor that shapes how organizational tasks are understood, coordinated, and efficiently carried out within the office.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommended that Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz enhance the clarity and completeness of communication by establishing clear guidelines in delivering instructions, ensuring that all necessary details such as tasks, responsibilities, and deadlines are consistently included. In addition, standardizing communication processes through the use of uniform formats for memoranda, reports, and digital messages can help reduce inconsistencies and misinterpretations among personnel. The integration of digital communication tools should also be strengthened by optimizing and formalizing their use to improve coordination and ensure that important information is properly disseminated and not overlooked. Furthermore, promoting a culture of open communication is encouraged, where personnel feel comfortable seeking clarification and providing feedback, thereby minimizing misunderstandings and fostering collaboration. The implementation of regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms is also recommended to ensure that communication practices remain effective and are continuously improved over time. Administrative Personnel is recommended that they practice proactive communication by actively seeking clarification when instructions are unclear and ensuring that they fully understand their assigned tasks before proceeding. They should also take responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information they provide to others, as this can help prevent delays, errors, and inefficiencies in work processes. Future Researchers is suggested that they expand the scope of the study by including other divisions or multiple sub-ports of the Bureau of Customs to gain a broader understanding of internal communication practices. Future studies may also incorporate mixed methods approaches to provide deeper insights into the relationship between communication practices and organizational efficiency. Additionally, further research may explore the role of digital transformation and communication technologies in improving efficiency and transparency in government agencies. Lastly, examining the influence of leadership styles on communication practices and organizational performance may provide valuable contributions to the field. These recommendations aimed to improve internal communication practices and enhance organizational efficiency in the Bureau of Customs Sub-Port of Ozamiz.

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