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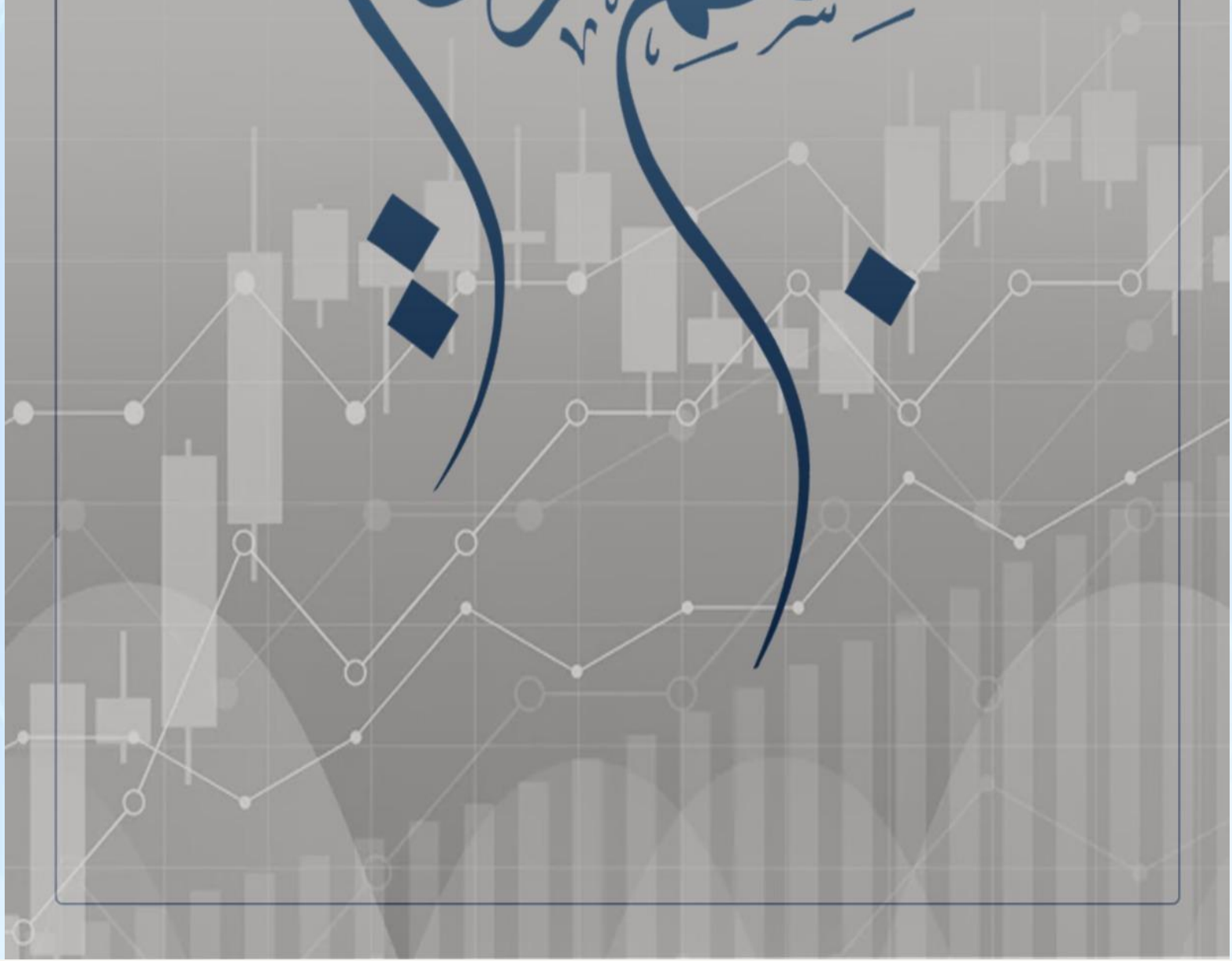
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STARDOM UNIVERSITY

The Role of Effective Communication on Performance of Family businesses in Kuwait

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of downward (management-to-employee) and upward (employee-to-management) communication reinforcement on organizational performance in family businesses in Kuwait. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating survey data and interviews to evaluate leadership responsiveness, feedback systems, and communication clarity.

Results show that although the upward and backward in effective communication hindered performance and development plans of some families. Lack of transparent communication and weak communication channels led to disparate consensus spirit and common vision among all members. Moreover, the lack of harmony among members of the family business, along with the hassle, feud, and disputes reinforces an individualistic rather than a collective work culture. Consequently, this leads to ineffective and non-transparent backward and upward communication, as well as miscommunication and misinformation flow.

These obstacles have a detrimental effect on decision-making quality and employee engagement. While qualitative insights show that fear of retaliation and inconsistent feedback are important concerns, quantitative data linked clear, honest communication to higher motivation and performance. To illustrate the dangers of inadequate communication, the paper cites both domestic examples that include three family businesses while international examples include: Volkswagen, Wells Fargo, and Kuwait Airways. To improve responsiveness and inclusion, suggestions include digital platforms, leadership development, organized interdepartmental meetings, and anonymous feedback tools. This study offers doable tactics to increase institutional efficacy and enhance internal communication.

Introduction

In today's fast-changing organizational environments, effective internal communication is a crucial aspect of an organization's performance. The information flow both upward (from employees to management) and downward (from leadership to employees) has a direct impact on decision-making, employee engagement, and organizational success, especially in academic institutions where cooperation between the administrative and academic departments is crucial. Many institutions still encounter structural and cultural challenges that prevent open communication, particularly in vertically structured organizations, even in the face of technological improvements and the availability of communication tools.

The study is inspired by real-world case studies, such as the Wells Fargo account fraud case and Volkswagen's emissions crisis, which show how poor communication, particularly in upward feedback, can result in moral lapses, operational hazards, and a decline in public confidence. Regional examples like the Saudi bin Ladin Group and Kuwait Airways also highlight the negative effects of imprecise internal communication on public accountability, efficiency, and safety.

Through a combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, this study uses a mixed-methods approach to investigate how enhancing two-way communication can enhance performance at The Canadian University, Kings Coffee Company, and Al-Nasser fashion retail. It seeks to pinpoint important motivating elements, draw attention to current obstacles, and offer doable suggestions to enhance cooperation, clarity, and trust. The intention is to demonstrate that internal communication is a strategic instrument that promotes participation, creativity, and long-term success in family businesses in Kuwait.

Problem Definition

Poor upstream and downward communication in enterprises leads to confusion, low employee engagement, and sluggish decision-making. Without clear two-way communication, performance suffers, trust erodes, and goals become mismatched. This study examines the necessity to strengthen internal communication to improve coordination, motivation, and overall organizational effectiveness. Some family businesses in Kuwait struggle with ineffective and non-transparent downward and upward communication, where decisions are made disparately and many opportunities are lost. This study intends to discover reinforcing factors that enhance upward and downward communication within the institution to improve overall performance.

Organizational communication encompasses the exchange of information, ideas, and feedback within a company. By enabling staff members to share their ideas, worries, and insights with upper management, upward communication promotes a culture of participation. On the other hand, downward communication ensures congruence and clarity in organizational objectives by distributing management's goals, policies, and directions to staff members. (Odra, 2021).

It is crucial that these communication pathways work together harmoniously. When properly reinforced, they support organizational success by raising employee morale, increasing transparency, and improving flexibility to change. (Oronje, 2019). There are numerous consequences of Ineffective Upward and Downward Communication on Organizational Performance. A key element of any successful organization is effective communication. Breakdowns in upward (employee-to-management) and downward (management-to-employee) communication channels can have serious repercussions, from devastating operational failures to low staff morale. The organization's capacity to function, adjust, and prosper is severely hampered in these situations.

The Volkswagen emissions crisis is among the most well-known real-world instances of inadequate communication having a detrimental effect on corporate performance. According to reports, lower-level engineers and staff were aware of the emissions cheating software, but because of poor upward communication, senior executives were either unaware of these issues or did not take them seriously when they did (Hotten, 2015). The persistence of unethical acts was made possible by the absence of a clear feedback culture and secure reporting routes. Volkswagen thus had to deal with billions of dollars in fines, long-term harm to its brand, and a precipitous drop in customer trust, highlighting how a lack of efficient upward communication may keep businesses from resolving internal problems before they became publicly apparent (Hotten, 2015).

The 1986 Challenger Space Shuttle catastrophe serves as yet another striking illustration. When NASA was making decisions, engineers at Morton Thiokol expressed grave worries about the O-ring's performance in cold weather, but those concerns were either downplayed or ignored. It was a communicative failure, not just a technical one. Critical risk information was either not received by management or was not acted upon due to ineffective upward communication. At the same time, NASA's downstream communications about safety regulations and the need to meet deadlines were unclear and inconsistent. In addition to killing seven people, this combination of inadequate two-way communication seriously harmed NASA's reputation (Vaughan, 1996).

The Canadian University was established in 2015 and initially offered diploma programs in selected specializations. From its inception, the university's senior administrative staff largely comprised individuals from, or connected to, a single

family-owned company. Although there are forms of downward communication, such instructions or policy updates, they are frequently seen as one-sided, unengaging, and unclear. Disengagement, low morale, sluggish adaptation, and ultimately subpar organizational performance are all caused by the disconnect between decision-makers and operational personnel.

The institution lacked a competitive academic environment, and a noticeable decline in student enrollment was observed year after year. This decline can be attributed to both external and internal factors. Externally, students increasingly sought academic programs that aligned with labor market demands and technological advancements. Internally, the university faced several structural and administrative challenges, including the absence of comprehensive training plans, a lack of collaborative work culture, and competition among family-affiliated managers for unilateral decision-making authority. Some of these managers also lacked the necessary expertise in higher education administration. Despite the university obtaining approval in 2023 to launch the bachelor degree on the two-plus basis, these issues lead to significant and gradual drop due to individualistic work and lack of collective developmental progress. Over time, the university's overall performance deteriorated, ultimately leading to its acquisition by another university in 2024.

Kings Coffee Company is a chain of coffee roasteries and mills founded in October 1983 by one sole owner Mr. Jean Eid. It started with one branch located in Hawalli, Kuwait.

The company involves 132 employees and workers deployed in the management and the

company's branches. The leading management positions are financial management, marketing and sales management, executive management (embed operation

management). These leading management roles are controlled by family members. The founder has a concern of how to ensure the business continuity and multi-generational transitions and what is the business strategy to achieve that. This family business suffers from family disputes and is heading to a vague and risky situation due to the lack of development, lack of strategic planning, lack of succession planning, lack of future vision, lack of clear roles and responsibilities, weak communication, and lack of experts and job-fit workers. Upon the researcher's observation and numerous interviews with family members and other workers at different levels across the organization, found that individualistic working environments, conflicts among family members, lack of coherence and consensus, and ineffective and untransparent communication are obstacles hindering the company's development plan.

Al Nasser fashion retail is one of Kuwait's prominent family-owned enterprises specialized in providing high-quality fashion retail wear and equipment. Gradually and over the years, it witnessed great market expansion and development and became a leading retail brand, reflecting the entrepreneurial vision and mission as one of family businesses that contribute significantly to Kuwait's commercial and economic landscape. The general manager, who is a family member, perceived that the country's culture and religious background play a vital role in decision making of family businesses in Kuwait. Clear and transparent communication begins at the top management who will reflect this culture and conveys it downward to all employees to embrace the common vision, mission, and objectives. Conveying clear roles and responsibilities will eliminate any miscommunication, confusion, or hassle among workers, enabling them to pursue common objectives and work toward the organization's goals (N. Al-Rasheed, personal communication, Sep 13, 2021).

More recently, the Wells Fargo fake account crisis shows how unethical behavior can result from an excessively top-down management style and inadequate upward communication. Workers opened millions of illegitimate accounts as a result of intense pressure to reach irrational sales goals. Many tried to use internal channels to report these problems, but they were either disregarded or disciplined. A complete catastrophe that led to significant financial fines, a loss of trust from customers, and the resignation of multiple top executives was caused by this breakdown in upward communication (Corkery & Cowley, 2016). Additionally, the bank's downward communication approach reinforced frontline employees' fear and quiet by failing to develop an open conversation culture or offer ethical clarity.

These instances show how leadership detaches itself from operational reality when upward communication is hindered or undervalued. Employees may also lack the knowledge, guidance, and drive needed to work well if downward communication is ambiguous, inconsistent, or authoritarian. Poor choices, unethical behavior, and disengagement are much more prevalent in such settings. The performance, resilience, and integrity of an organization are thus seriously threatened by the lack of efficient upstream and downward communication methods.

The 2015 Saudi Binladin Group (SBG) problem serves as a regional illustration. Investigations into the fatal crane collapse at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, which claimed the lives of over 100 people, exposed flaws in safety communication systems at several project levels. Although technical difficulties played a major role, ineffective communication about safety regulations and emergency procedures from upper management to teams on the ground also played a big role. Due to disjointed and ambiguous instructions, workers were apparently uninformed of wind advisories and required crane operations. SBG's long-standing reputation and hundreds of employees were negatively impacted when

the Saudi government temporarily halted its projects and barred the company from receiving new public contracts (Alshammari, 2016).

Kuwait Airways is another example of a regional company that has long struggled with poor communication between its operational crew and leadership. Kuwait's State examination Bureau conducted an examination in 2020 that found a discrepancy between senior leadership's strategic objectives and actual ground-level operations. According to reports, staff members found it difficult to get clear instructions or feedback, which resulted in ineffective scheduling, subpar customer service, and poor organizational performance (State Audit Bureau, 2020). Employee concerns regarding antiquated systems and safety procedures were frequently disregarded or not addressed promptly as a result of the absence of higher communication.

Research Questions

- What are the reinforcing factors that build effective backward and upward communication at family businesses in Kuwait?
- What are the major barriers that hinder the effectiveness of upward and downward communication at family businesses in Kuwait?

Research Hypothesis

H1: Reinforcing upward and downward communication significantly improves performance of family businesses in Kuwait

H2: Barriers in vertical communication negatively impact employee engagement and decision-making quality.

Research Objectives

To explore the reinforcing factors that build effective upward and backward communication in family businesses in Kuwait.

To identify the obstacles that limit the effectiveness of vertical communication in enterprises in family-owned enterprises in Kuwait.

To examine how these communication flows affect employee engagement and business performance.

Significance of this study

This study emphasizes the significance of effective upstream and downward communication in enhancing organizational performance in family businesses in Kuwait. It provides practical insights for overcoming internal communication hurdles, increasing staff engagement, and supporting decision-making, ultimately

assisting similar institutions in improving performance, governance, and overall institutional sustainability.

Research Variables

a. Dependent variable

Organizational Performance

- ☐ Employee productivity
- ☐ Decision-making quality
- ☐ Innovation and responsiveness
- ☐ Staff engagement levels

b. Independent Variables

Upward Communication (e.g., feedback to leadership, reporting issues, employee voice)

Downward Communication (e.g., clarity of direction, openness from leadership, frequency of updates)

c. Controlling Variables

- ☐ Organizational culture
- ☐ Management style
- ☐ Size of the organization
- ☐ Type of industry
- ☐ Technology used (email, meetings, internal portals)
- ☐ Employee demographics (role, tenure, education)
- ☐ Psychological safety

Research Key Words

- ☐ Upward Communication
- ☐ Downward Communication
- ☐ Organizational Performance
- ☐ Communication Flow
- ☐ Internal Communication
- ☐ Employee Engagement

- ☐ Leadership Communication
- ☐ Organizational Effectiveness
- ☐ Communication Barriers
- ☐ Sustainability in Organizations

Literature View

There are plenty of elements that boost communication among organization managers, employees, and staff.

1. Leadership Approachability

Approachable leaders who promote candid communication foster a culture where staff members feel appreciated and heard. By encouraging upward communication, this transparency helps management learn from frontline staff members, which can help them make strategic decisions (Adelman, 2012).

2. Feedback Mechanisms

By putting in place structured feedback systems, two-way communication is guaranteed. Frequent feedback loops enable ongoing development and show staff members that their opinions are valued in determining organizational procedures (Men & Bowen, 2017).

3. Organizational Culture

Employees are encouraged to voice their opinions and concerns without fear of compensation when they work in an environment that values openness and diversity. A more engaged and proactive staff results from a culture that values both upstream and downward communication (Glauser, 1984).

4. Training and Development

Training in communication skills gives managers and staff the resources they need to convey information effectively. The efficiency and clarity of upstream and downward communication channels are improved by this human capital investment (Ocra, 2021).

Case Studies from Well-Known Organizations

1. Toyota's Lean Manufacturing

Toyota's lean manufacturing strategy places a strong emphasis on employee interaction and ongoing development. Effective upward communication is demonstrated by the company's encouragement of employees to point out inefficiencies and recommend changes. When management takes these recommendations into consideration, it strengthens downward communication and fosters a feedback-rich atmosphere that improves performance (Spear & Bowen, 1999).

2. Starbucks' Open Communication Culture

Employees, who are referred to as "partners," are encouraged to share ideas and criticism in Starbucks' open communication culture. In order to connect employee activities with corporate goals, management makes sure that company values and goals are conveyed effectively downward, while regular meetings and **forums** facilitate upward communication (Schultz, 1998).

3. Kemri-Wellcome Trust Research Program

Effective organizational communication and employee performance are positively correlated, according to a study on the Kemri-Wellcome Trust Research Program in Kenya. Employee performance was found to be significantly predicted by clear communication channels and feedback systems, highlighting the need of promoting both upward and downward communication (Oronje, 2019).

Alqahtani in 2023 highlights the importance of institutional communication in Saudi universities and its role in strengthening national identity within the framework of Vision 2030. The study emphasizes that departments responsible for institutional communication significantly contribute to increasing students' sense of loyalty and belonging to the nation through activities and services that promote national values such as patriotism, loyalty, and belonging. The study confirms a strong relationship between these communication activities and students' willingness to participate in national events, reflecting their role in shaping national identity and supporting sustainable development in the Kingdom.

Important recommendations include developing strategic institutional communication efforts aimed at fostering a sense of national belonging and unifying student identity. These departments should organize national events,

offer awareness programs that highlight the importance of national unity, and strengthen ties between students and their communities by utilizing modern and diverse communication channels. Collaboration between educational institutions and government agencies can also enhance the effectiveness of these programs, increasing their impact in instilling national values (Alqahtani, 2023).

In conclusion, institutional communication is not merely a means of conveying information but an effective tool for building national identity and achieving Vision 2030's goals of societal development. By nurturing a spirit of belonging and citizenship among students, it contributes to creating a more stable and progressive future for the nation.

Uber encountered severe organizational problems due to toxic culture and communication failures. Investigations exposed widespread harassment and lack of accountability, rooted in poor communication and leadership (Isaac, 2017).

Improving communication within organizations positively impacts employee motivation, job satisfaction, and engagement. Transparent communication channels enhance employees' sense of involvement and commitment. Interpersonal relationships at work significantly influence organizational culture and climate. Trusting and respectful relationships promote cooperation, knowledge sharing, and innovation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

A recent study called "The Reality of Organizational Communication and Its Relationship with Creative Thinking" from the University of Tamanrasset emphasizes how crucial communication is to promoting creativity in organizations. Three forms of communication—horizontal, upward, and downward—were the subject of the study. It was discovered that whereas downhill communication had no statistically significant impact on creative thinking, upward and horizontal communication had a significant and favorable impact (University of Tamanrasset, n.d.).

The study's conclusions lead to the following suggestions being put forth:

1. Improve Upward Communication: Motivate staff members to provide senior management with their thoughts and opinions. Their involvement is increased, and their creativity is encouraged.
2. Foster Horizontal Communication: Encourage cooperation and candid discussion between colleagues at the same organizational level, as this promotes the sharing of ideas and creative problem-solving.
3. Rethink Downward Communication: Adopt a more interactive paradigm that incorporates feedback and two-way communication instead of relying solely on directives.
4. Create a Culture That Encourages Creativity: Create an atmosphere at work that welcomes failure as a necessary component of creativity and promotes experimentation.

5. Offer Training Programs: Provide professional development and workshops centered on effective communication techniques and innovative thinking approaches.

6. Make Use of Various collaboration Channels: To enable real-time departmental collaboration, make use of digital technologies like email, internal forums, and instant messaging.

By putting these strategies into practice, businesses can create a communication ecosystem that fosters creativity, improves performance, and helps them accomplish their strategic objectives.

Research called “Modern Communication Technology and Its Role in Practicing Public Relations Activities” highlights how public relations activities across institutions are changing because of modern technology (Kendaz & Zerouki, 2024). It emphasizes how social media, email, and websites have enhanced communication and made it possible for businesses to rapidly, interactively, and affordably reach audiences.

The study's findings lead to the following five suggestions for maximizing the advantages of contemporary public relations communication tools:

1. Use Social Media Platforms: To improve stakeholder involvement and create a responsive, two-way communication channel, organizations can make use of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (previously Twitter) (Kendaz & Zerouki, 2024).
2. Promote Better Internal and External Communication: Email and company websites are effective means of informing staff members and outside audiences (Kendaz & Zerouki, 2024).
3. Create Engaging and Interactive Content: Creating messages that are tailored to the organization's ideals and soliciting audience feedback promotes public engagement and loyalty (Kendaz & Zerouki, 2024). "
4. Educate Public Relations Employees: Giving PR teams digital abilities guarantees that they can use contemporary communication technologies in an innovative and functional way.
5. Track and Evaluate Communication Performance: Data analytics should be used to evaluate the impact and reach of PR campaigns so that modifications and enhancements may be made (Kendaz & Zerouki, 2024).

Organizations can update their communication tactics and improve their public image by implementing these methods.

Research Methodology

Research Design & Approach

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The rationale for this design is to capture a holistic understanding of the impact of upward and downward communication on organizational performance by combining employee experiences with measurable outcomes.

The approach follows a sequential exploratory design:

- Phase 1 (Qualitative): To explore themes, issues, and perceptions around communication practices.
- Phase 2 (Quantitative): To validate and measure the significance of identified variables across a broader sample.

Approach: The best way is to use a combination of qualitative insights (interviews, focus groups) and quantitative trends.

Design:

A case study design was employed to enable an in-depth examination of communication dynamics within three family-owned businesses in Kuwait. This design is particularly appropriate given the structural and relational complexities often found in family enterprises, including overlapping authority, informal hierarchies, and potential communication barriers between family and non-family members.

Data Collection

A purposive sampling technique was used for the qualitative phase to ensure that information-rich participants were selected based on their roles and experience. For the quantitative phase, stratified random sampling was employed to obtain a representative view of employees' perceptions.

The target sample included:

- Senior management (family and non-family members)
- Department heads
- Administrative employees
- Operational staff (full-time and part-time)

A total of three family businesses were selected to capture variation in communication practices across different organizational contexts.

Data was gathered using two complementary methods to ensure triangulation and validity:

Quantitative Data

A **structured questionnaire** was developed to measure employees' perceptions of:

- Communication Clarity,
- Feedback Mechanisms,
- Psychological Safety,
- Leadership Communication
- Organizational Engagement.

The instrument used five-point Likert-scale items and was distributed to staff members from all organizational levels through stratified random sampling to ensure diversity and representativeness.

Qualitative Data

To gain deeper insight into internal communication patterns, **semi-structured interviews** were conducted with **10–15 purposively selected participants** representing various organizational tiers. Interview questions focused on participants' experiences, perceived barriers, and recommendations for improving upward and downward communication. Interviews were recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically.

Data Analysis

- Quantitative **data** from the questionnaires will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, frequencies) to identify general trends and patterns across departments. Where sample size permits, correlational analysis will explore relationships between communication factors and organizational outcomes.
- Qualitative data from interviews will undergo thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, coding responses using software such as NVivo or manual methods. This allows for extraction of rich, contextual insights that complement quantitative findings.

For the sake of transparency and replication, the whole questionnaire and interview guide are contained in the Appendices (see Appendices A and B).

Quantitative Analysis (Survey Results – Analyzed through SPSS)

Sample: Admin staff, academic staff, middle managers, department heads

Scale: 5-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section	Question	Average Response (SPSS Mean Score)
Communication Clarity & Channels	Senior management communicates with me in a timely and straightforward manner.	4.2
	I am aware of where to find information regarding changes to the institution.	4.1
	Departmental communication is coordinated effectively.	3.9
Feedback Mechanisms	The leadership values and welcomes my opinions and recommendations.	4.3

Section	Question	Average Response (SPSS Mean Score)
	I frequently get the chance to comment on how the university is run.	3.8
	I can express my worries or errors without worrying about the repercussions.	3.7
Leadership Communication	Decisions and expectations are explained in detail by managers.	4.0
	I have faith that leaders will speak honestly and freely.	4.1
	Family members in positions of authority speak properly and professionally.	3.6
Impact on Morale & Performance	My motivation and job satisfaction are increased by effective communication.	4.4
	My performance has suffered as a result of miscommunication. (reverse scored)	2.3
	I believe I know enough to carry out my duties efficiently.	4.2

To strengthen the quantitative findings, Pearson correlation and simple linear regression were conducted.

1. Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation test was applied to examine the relationship between communication effectiveness and employee performance.

- $r = 0.62, p < 0.01$

This indicates a moderately strong positive correlation, meaning higher levels of communication effectiveness are associated with higher performance levels.

2. Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression was conducted to test whether communication effectiveness predicts employee performance.

- $R^2 = 0.38$

- $F(1, 148) = 24.67, p < 0.001$

Communication effectiveness was found to significantly predict employee performance, explaining 38% of the variance. This supports the study hypothesis that improved communication has a direct positive effect on performance in family businesses.

Interpretation:

Strong communication flows are strongly associated with higher levels of motivation, trust, and performance efficiency, as evidenced by high average scores in leadership transparency, feedback receptiveness, and communication clarity.

Qualitative Analysis (Interview Themes)

Participants: Senior managers, department heads, academic/admin staff, and both family and non-family leaders.

Interview Question	Sample Thematic Answers
1. How would you characterize the internal communication process?	<i>"Improving steadily—email announcements and meeting recaps have made info easier to access."</i>
2. Main obstacles to communication in your department?	<i>"Time pressure and inconsistent inter-department updates."</i>
3. Frequency/success of interdepartmental meetings?	<i>"Monthly meetings are held, but informal updates in-between could help."</i>
4. Are you at ease giving upward criticism?	<i>"Yes, mostly. Especially when it's encouraged by some non-family managers."</i>
5. Impact of family members in leadership?	<i>"When trained, they communicate clearly. But there's hesitation if the hierarchy isn't inclusive."</i>
6. Examples of communication failure?	<i>"One project was delayed 3 weeks due to unclear role expectations."</i>
7. How can your management improve feedback and transparency?	<i>"More town halls and anonymous feedback tools. Also, clearer decisions after suggestion collection."</i>

Reliability of the Survey Instrument

To guarantee the consistency and coherence of the questionnaire items, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for all five dimensions of communication and performance. The overall reliability score was:

- Cronbach's Alpha = 0.87

This demonstrates a high level of internal consistency, where values above 0.70 are considered acceptable in social science research.

In line with the survey results, themes suggest that clear leadership, open feedback loops, and organized communication procedures boost morale and reduce miscommunication

Discussion

According to the study's findings, improving organizational performance of family businesses in Kuwait requires effective upstream and downward communication. Employees view leadership communication as typically clear, prompt, and supportive, according to quantitative data, especially when feedback channels are in place. This was corroborated by qualitative interviews, which showed that motivation and accountability increase when employees feel heard and information is communicated openly. The findings, however, also highlight anomalies when family members hold leadership positions without adequate communication training, gaps in informal communication, and a fear of upward criticism in some areas.

These findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the importance of established communication channels and psychological safety for organizational effectiveness. Thus, job satisfaction and performance outcomes can be directly impacted by strengthening communication through regular feedback loops, interdepartmental updates, and leadership training. This supports the idea that strategic communication management is crucial for institutional development in addition to being advantageous from an operational standpoint.

Recommendation

Family businesses in Kuwait are required to take several steps to improve communication both upward and downward in light of the findings. To guarantee open updates and foster cooperation, the organization should first set up periodically, organized interdepartmental meetings. Second, to promote upward communication without fear of reprisal, anonymous digital feedback mechanisms ought to be put into place. Third, to enhance clarity, empathy, and active listening, leadership, particularly managers appointed by family members should undergo targeted communication training. Fourth, a centralized dashboard for communication might be created to disseminate decisions, policy updates, and timely announcements, like nowadays WhatsApp groups are targeted for this purpose.

Fifth, to gauge the success of communications and monitor advancements over time, employee engagement surveys are to be carried out every two years. Lastly, departments that demonstrate polite, open communication should be rewarded with award programs. These actions have the potential to greatly raise university morale, performance, and trust. By putting these adjustments into effect, those family firms would also improve their organizational culture and bring it into line with global best practices for institutional communication.

Conclusion

The combination of qualitative and quantitative findings suggests that while communication channels exist in Kuwaiti family businesses, there is a significant gap in upward communication effectiveness and perceived leadership responsiveness. Employees do not feel fully heard, which undermines engagement and performance.

The research supports the conclusion that strengthening upward and downward communication flows can positively impact organizational performance by improving psychological safety, role clarity, and cross-departmental collaboration. They would benefit from implementing structured feedback loops, leadership communication training, and mechanisms to ensure transparency and trust.

These findings validate the initial research assumption that internal communication—especially upward and downward feedback—plays a critical role in shaping organizational effectiveness in family businesses in Kuwait.

The results of this study demonstrate that improving communication both uphill and below in those family businesses greatly will enhance organizational effectiveness. While qualitative interviews showed how open communication improves motivation, job satisfaction, and departmental cooperation, survey results showed that many employees believe in leadership communications in a timely and clear manner. Full transparency is still hampered by hierarchical obstacles and uneven feedback systems, though. Misunderstandings are reduced and productivity increases when employees feel heard and leaders express choices properly. Furthermore, the difficulty of family-led leadership emphasizes how crucial professional training is crucial to guarantee courteous, inclusive communication.

To sum up, good internal communication affects performance, trust, and institutional resilience and is not merely a support role. Family businesses in Kuwait may turn communication into a cultural strength by putting the suggested activities into practice. This will help the organization succeed in the long run and create a more active academic and administrative community.

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Appendix: Data Collection Instruments

The research tools utilized in the study "The Role of Effective Communication on the Performance of Family Businesses in Kuwait" are presented in this appendix. Three family-run Kuwaiti businesses—Al Nasser fashion retail, King's Coffee Company, and The Canadian university—provided the data. In order to offer comparative insights into how communication methods impact organizational performance in various business contexts, these firms were specifically chosen to represent a variety of industries, including retail/fashion retail, food and beverage, and education.

Quantitative Questionnaire (Survey)

Participating Organizations:

This study gathered data from three family-owned businesses in Kuwait — The Canadian university, King's Coffee Company, and Al Nasser fashion retail. These organizations represent different sectors: education, food and beverage, and retail/fashion retail, providing a diverse context for exploring the role of communication on performance.

Target Groups:

Administrative staff, academic staff, mid-level management, and heads of departments from the three participating companies.

Scale:

5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section A: Communication Clarity & Channels

1. Senior management communicates with me in a timely and straightforward manner.
2. I am aware of where to find information regarding organizational changes.
3. Departmental communication is coordinated effectively.

Section B: Feedback Mechanisms

4. Leaders value and welcome my opinions and recommendations.
5. I frequently get the chance to comment on how the organization is managed.
6. I can express my concerns or errors without worrying about consequences.

Section C: Leadership Communication

7. Decisions and expectations are explained clearly by managers.
8. I have confidence that leaders communicate honestly and transparently.
9. Family members in leadership positions communicate professionally and respectfully.

Section D: Impact on Morale & Performance

10. Effective communication increases my motivation and job satisfaction.
11. My performance has been negatively affected at times by miscommunication.
12. I believe I receive sufficient information to perform my duties efficiently.

Qualitative Interview Questions (Semi-Structured)

Participating Organizations:

Interviews were conducted with staff and leaders from The **Canadian university**, **King's Coffee Company**, and **Al Nasser fashion retail**.

Target Groups:

Senior management, family and non-family leaders, department heads, and administrative employees.

Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe the general flow and structure of internal communication within your organization?
2. What are the main barriers or challenges that affect communication between management levels or departments?
3. How does leadership communicate expectations, updates, and decisions to staff?
4. To what extent do employees feel comfortable providing upward feedback to senior management?
5. Can you recall a situation where upward communication (from staff to leadership) led to a positive change or improvement?
6. How does the communication culture shift when family members hold leadership positions?
7. Have there been instances where miscommunication led to misunderstandings or negative outcomes?
8. Do you feel your feedback or opinions are valued by leadership? Why or why not?
9. How do existing feedback mechanisms contribute to or limit transparency within the organization?
10. What recommendations would you suggest to enhance effective communication, trust, and performance?

Summary of Hypothetical Interview Responses (Across the Three Companies)

Interviewee	Response Summary
Staff 1	“Communication mainly flows from the top; we rarely get asked for input, and when we do, nothing changes.”
Staff 2	“I once shared a suggestion that improved scheduling, but that kind of feedback opportunity is rare.”
Admin 1	“We’re often told what to do with little explanation or follow-up. Expectations aren’t always clear.”
Faculty 1	“There’s fear that negative feedback might cause problems, so people prefer to stay quiet.”
Department Head	“When I pass my team’s concerns to senior leadership, I rarely get feedback in return.”
Staff 3	“Some leaders are open to feedback, but it depends on who you approach. It’s not consistent.”
Faculty 2	“There’s favoritism. Some employees are heard more based on relationships rather than merit.”

Themes Identified Across the Three Family Businesses

- Psychological Safety and Trust
- Communication Clarity
- Leadership Responsiveness
- Structural and Departmental Isolation

Survey Questions (Quantitative Phase – Appendix B)

Scale: 5-point Likert (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)

1. I feel comfortable providing feedback to my supervisor.
2. Leadership communicates organizational updates clearly and promptly.
3. My input is valued and considered by upper management.
4. There are clear channels for communication in my department.
5. I understand what I expect in my role.
6. Internal communication positively affects my motivation and performance.
7. There is open communication across different departments.
8. I trust the leadership team to act on employee feedback.

Hypothetical Survey Results (Sample of 50 Respondents from All Three Companies)

Survey Question	Average Score
Q1: I feel comfortable providing feedback to my supervisor.	2.3
Q2: Leadership communicates organizational updates clearly and promptly.	3.0
Q3: My input is valued and considered by upper management.	2.5
Q4: There are clear channels for communication in my department.	2.9
Q5: I understand what is expected of me in my role.	3.4
Q6: Internal communication positively affects my motivation and performance.	2.7
Q7: There is open communication across different departments.	2.6
Q8: I trust the leadership team to act on employee feedback.	2.4



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