
UNIVERSITY OF THE PEOPLE

BUS 4402-01 ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR - AY2025-T1

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT UNIT 7

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TITLE: NAVIGATING COMMUNICATION HURDLES IN ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

INTRODUCTION:

In the complex ecosystem of modern organizations, effective communication serves as the lifeblood of productivity and collaboration. However, various obstacles can impede this vital process, leading to misunderstandings, inefficiencies, and potential conflicts. This essay delves into three significant communication barriers: information overload, workplace gossip, and gender differences. By examining how these barriers impact organizational communication, we can better understand their effects and develop strategies to overcome them.

1. INFORMATION OVERLOAD: THE COGNITIVE BOTTLENECK

In today's digital age, organizations grapple with an unprecedented volume of data and information. This deluge can overwhelm individuals, leading to a phenomenon known as information overload. According to Eppler and Mengis (2004), information overload occurs when the amount of input exceeds an individual's capacity to process it effectively. This barrier significantly diminishes the communication process by:

- ❖ Reducing comprehension: When bombarded with excessive information, individuals struggle to discern critical details from noise, potentially missing crucial messages.
- ❖ Increasing decision fatigue: The constant need to filter and prioritize information can lead to mental exhaustion, impairing judgment and decision-making abilities.



- ❖ Slowing response times: Overwhelmed by data, employees may take longer to respond to important communications, causing delays in organizational processes.

Example: In a multinational corporation, a manager receives hundreds of emails daily, along with reports, memos, and instant messages. Struggling to keep up, they miss a critical update about a project deadline, leading to cascading delays across multiple departments.

2. WORKPLACE GOSSIP: THE TRUST ERODER

Informal communication channels, while potentially beneficial, can also give rise to workplace gossip - a pervasive barrier that can severely disrupt organizational communication. As noted by Kurland and Pelled (2000), gossip involves informal and evaluative talk about absent colleagues. This barrier blocks and changes communication by:

- ❖ Distorting information: As gossip spreads, facts often become embellished or altered, leading to misinformation.
- ❖ Undermining trust: The prevalence of gossip can create an atmosphere of suspicion, making employees hesitant to share information openly.
- ❖ Diverting attention: Time spent engaging in or addressing gossip detracts from productive communication and work activities.

Example: A rumor circulates that the company is planning layoffs, based on a misinterpreted conversation overheard in the break room. This leads to increased anxiety, decreased productivity, and a flood of inquiries to management, disrupting normal operations.

3. GENDER DIFFERENCES: THE SUBTLE DIVIDER

While diversity can enrich organizational communication, gender differences can sometimes act as a barrier, subtly altering how messages are conveyed and interpreted. Tannen (1995)



argues that men and women often have different communication styles and expectations, which can lead to misunderstandings. This barrier changes the communication process by:

- ❖ Creating misinterpretations: Different communication styles between genders may lead to misreading of intentions or tone.
- ❖ Reinforcing stereotypes: Preconceived notions about gender-specific communication can influence how messages are delivered and received.
- ❖ Impacting participation: In mixed-gender settings, these differences may affect who speaks up and how often, potentially silencing valuable contributions.

Example: In a team meeting, a female member's suggestion is overlooked, but when a male colleague rephrases the same idea moments later, it gains traction. This subtle dynamic can lead to frustration and reduced engagement from certain team members.

CONCLUSION:

Communication barriers such as information overload, workplace gossip, and gender differences pose significant challenges to effective organizational communication. By recognizing how these barriers block, change, or diminish the communication process, organizations can take proactive steps to address them. Implementing strategies like information management systems, fostering a culture of open and respectful communication, and promoting awareness of diverse communication styles can help mitigate these barriers. Ultimately, overcoming these hurdles is crucial for creating a more efficient, harmonious, and productive organizational environment.

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