

Relationship between Leadership Transparency Behaviors and Effective Communication: A Case of the Presbyterian University of East Africa

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Abstract

The foundation of successful organizations depends on effective leadership behaviors and communication, which promotes cooperation, understanding, and shared goals. Successful communication processes that support organizational cohesiveness and growth are guided and shaped by the behavior of leaders. For example, authoritarian leadership tendencies constrain employee morale and innovation efforts. This study investigated the relationship between effective communication practices and transparent leadership at the Presbyterian University of East Africa (PUEA). Various theoretical perspectives, including Situational Leadership Theory (SLT), the Social Exchange Theory (SET), Leadership Communication Theory (LCT), Servant Leadership Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory (TFL), underpinned this study. The research was descriptive, with the sample drawn from members of the PUEA academic community through a purposive sampling technique. The study revealed a statistically significant relationship between Leadership Transparency and the Concept of Effective Communication. Transparent or authentic leadership in higher education creates a culture of open communication and accountable behavior, serving as a role model for others. Thus, forthright, truthful, and open leaders can promote effective teamwork. Transparency in leadership fosters innovation and a feeling of togetherness among employees. According to the survey, for organization leaders to carry out their responsibilities efficiently, they should value transparent communication and responsible behavior.

Keywords: Leadership Transparency Behaviors, Leadership and Communication, Authentic Leadership

Introduction

Effective leadership practices and communication are the foundation of successful institutions. Leadership conduct can inspire and motivate individuals, thus creating an atmosphere conducive to open communication (Kouzes & Barry, 2017). Authentic leadership requires leaders to be self-aware, transparent, and ethical to foster trust and genuine interactions between leaders and followers (Avolio, 2019). For organizations and employees to flourish, leaders ought to prioritize the needs and development of their followers. This is achieved easily when the leader models the way.

Behavioral integrity is critical in leadership because the leader's words and deeds should align (Simons 2002). Leaders should set an example in their values and in keeping promises. Leaders should model and communicate their values to their followers, "When managers do not communicate their values or communicate false values, this failure may lead to a perceived incongruence between what managers say and do" (Leroy, 2012). Leaders should be open in their communication of values and guide personal lives and the institution. According to Leroy (2012), leaders' behavioral integrity is directly or indirectly communicated when promises are kept and when there is consistency in words and deeds. Behavioral integrity leads the followers to identify with the leader and the values they embody.

Four critical components of authentic leadership have been identified: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Avolio et al., 2004). The leader should be aware of their personal values and leadership philosophy and how it affects their operations. Relational transparency is when leaders openly express their values, emotions, objectives, motives, and plans, thus fostering trust among followers (Puni & Hilton, 2020). Studies have found that authentic leadership promotes job satisfaction, performance, and collaboration. (Valsania et al., 2016). Authentic leaders shape the practices of their organizations through their example and values.

Transparent communication entails having employees at the center of acquiring and disseminating information and valuing their participation in the process, thus promoting trust and confidence (Jiang & Men, 2017). Rawlins (2008) also argues that transparent communication includes Participation, Accountability, and Substantiality. Leaders should

value each member's input and perspectives, provide accountability frameworks, and communicate in clear and definite terms when communicating.

In an authentic leadership organizational context, communication should flow down and up. However, in other forms of leadership, like exploitative authoritarian leadership, managers mistrust their followers, communications and decisions are top-down, and the initiatives and ideas of the followers are disregarded (Gonos & Gallo, 2013). In such contexts, motivation is enhanced through fear and punishment. Authentic leadership distinguishes itself as value-centered, follower-centered, and transparent.

Mwangi (2022) highlights the importance of effective communication abilities in leadership roles. Specifically, the present study focuses on the connection between effective communication and leadership behaviors in higher education institutions to contribute to developing a more tranquil, successful, and well-functioning educational setting. Kiplagat (2020), who researched management practices and job satisfaction in selected universities in Kenya, notes that most dissatisfaction in organizations stems from communication challenges from supervisors. He notes some communication-related challenges, such as inadequate or poor communication, insufficient, unprecise, unrelated to the task at hand, one-way communication, and that some communication does not address the receivers' needs. Therefore, leaders should not minimize the impact of effective communication in their organizations.

Leadership characteristics and good communication must exist in tandem for any organization to be successful. Good communication contributes to effective leadership, and effective leadership conduct improves communication. Employees in the company can avoid getting sucked into arguments, disputes, and confrontations by practicing clear leadership and efficient communication, which promotes a peaceful workplace. The education process of students in higher education can be affected by ineffective leadership and communication. It can also lead to low productivity and poor performance. Further, poor leadership can cause conflicts, a lack of clarity on what needs to be done, and demoralized staff. This study examined the connection between transparent leadership practices and successful communication at the Presbyterian University of East Africa.

Empirical Review

Transparent or authentic leadership is vital in improving worker performance, fostering effective communication, building relationships, and achieving organizational goals. Effective communicators use concise, unambiguous language. They communicate their ideas, goals, and vision in a way that makes sense to other people. Effective communicators modify their tone of voice according to the circumstances and the people in the exchange. Communication flexibility enables leaders to connect with various team members, promoting improved comprehension and cooperation (Behrendt, 2016). Leaders who exhibit transparency communicate honestly and openly. They exchange pertinent data, including achievements and difficulties. According to Steven Steve Higgins et al. (2021), transparency fosters credibility and trust, two essential elements of successful organizational communication.

Leadership Transparency Behaviors and Effective Communication

Encouraging a positive and efficient academic environment at higher education institutions requires a strong relationship between leadership transparency behaviors and successful communication. Leaders who practice transparency communicate honestly, straightforwardly, and openly with their followers. Conversely, immediately and clearly exchanging information constitutes effective communication (Rothstein, 2022). Trust fosters collaboration among team members by allowing them to freely share information and voice divergent viewpoints. Employee willingness to communicate successfully is influenced by leadership transparency (De Cremer, 2006).

When leaders are transparent about their decisions and reasons, employees perceive procedural justice, positively affecting their willingness to voice concerns and ideas. Transparent leaders encourage open communication, enhancing overall organizational effectiveness—the relationship between authentic leadership and communication competence among public relations practitioners (Men, 2014). Authentic leaders who demonstrate transparency, openness, and honesty are likelier to build strong team relationships. Consequently, this enhances communication standards and increases job satisfaction and organizational performance.

Transparency in leadership improves organizational and employee performance (Nuzatul, 2023). Employees view transparent leaders as more reliable and trustworthy, which improves their opinion of the caliber of communication. Effective communication by

transparent leaders fosters a sense of shared vision, dedication, and trust among employees, all enhancing organizational success (Steve Higgins et al., 2021). Transparency in leadership has a good impact on team members' views of justice, which increases their desire to speak honestly and freely. Transparent managers cultivate a values-based culture within their workforce, enhancing collaboration and productivity.

Leadership Transparency

Leadership transparency refers to leaders being open, honest, and cooperative in their communication and actions with their followers. Transparent leaders share information, the rationale behind decisions, and the organization's overall direction, fostering trust, credibility, and a sense of shared purpose among team members.

This transparency extends to admitting mistakes, addressing concerns, and actively seeking employee input (Leroy, 2012). Authentic leaders are “more aware of the values that drive their decisions—which makes them better able to describe those values accurately and align their words and actions. Authentic leaders are more likely to communicate openly about those values and to apologize when their actions fall short of those espoused values” (Leroy, 2012). Also, since authentic leaders embrace vulnerability, they are non-defensive and thus allow their followers to be real in their conduct and work.

There exists a relationship between transparent leadership and employees' willingness to communicate successfully. Transparent leadership cultivates trust among team members, enabling open communication, information sharing, and collaborative decision-making (De Cremer, 2006). Transparent leaders who provide clear explanations for their decisions create an environment of procedural justice, encouraging employees to voice their concerns and ideas. Authentic leadership, characterized by transparency and honesty, influences communication competence among public relations practitioners (Men & Stacks, 2014). Authentic leaders who practice transparency establish strong relationships, leading to improved communication quality, job satisfaction, organizational outcomes, and the impact of leadership transparency on employee and organizational outcomes (Nuzatul, 2023).

Transparent leaders are perceived as trustworthy, leading to enhanced communication quality and a sense of shared vision among employees, improving organizational performance, the backgrounds, and consequences of leadership transparency (Norman, 2010). Transparent leaders create an atmosphere of fairness, positively affecting team members'

willingness to communicate openly. This transparency leads to better collaboration, trust, and overall team performance.

Openness in Leadership

Openness in leadership involves a willingness to share information, ideas, and thoughts openly. In the context of transparency, being open means fostering an environment where information is readily accessible and communication flows freely (Blau, 2017). In explanations, openness encourages trust and allows stakeholders to clearly understand what is happening in and around the institution. Openness refers to being accessible and receptive to sharing information, ideas, and thoughts. An open approach ensures that relevant information is available to those who need it and that there are no hidden agendas or barriers to understanding (Greenlee & Karanxha, 2010).

Clarity in Leadership

The attribute of clarity is being unambiguous and straightforward in the presentation of information. Effective leadership communicates clearly and promotes a positive workplace culture. Clear and accurate information reduces the possibility of miscommunication (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016). Clear communication facilitates a more accurate flow of information since there is less opportunity for misunderstanding or miscommunication. Honest communication emphasizes leadership bravery and vulnerability. Developing a culture of trust, vulnerability, and clear communication is essential for good leadership. Moreover, Bazerman (2020) discusses the value of open and understandable communication in leadership and how leaders who put their teams' welfare first foster cultures that foster trust and open communication.

Candor in Leadership

Candor is the practice of being honest and direct, even when discussing complex or sensitive matters (Calonge et al., 2021). When tied to transparency, honesty suggests that information is shared truthfully without attempting to hide uncomfortable truths. The concept of radical honesty, which involves a balance between caring personally for your team members and challenging them directly, provides practical guidance for leaders on fostering a culture of open communication. Honesty builds trust by showing that leaders and communicators are not hiding anything. Candor emphasizes the importance of honesty and frankness in

communication. It encourages individuals to express their thoughts truthfully, even when the truth might be uncomfortable or difficult to convey (Scott, 2017).

Honesty in Leadership

Honesty involves telling the truth and acting with integrity. In unpredictable times, integrity, which is a critical component of authentic leadership, stabilizes institutions (Walumbwa et al., 2008). In the context of transparency leadership, honesty means providing accurate information without distortion or manipulation (Hoffman, 2011). It creates a foundation of trust, ensuring that the information shared can be relied upon by stakeholders. Honesty in communication means giving and receiving feedback more effectively and fostering a culture of openness and honesty within organizations. It is the foundation of transparency—conveying information accurately and truthfully without distortion or concealment. Honest communication builds trust and credibility among individuals and within organizations. Employees and followers want honest, open leaders who facilitate their organizations' growth out of the challenges (Mulinge, 2023).

In summary, openness, clarity, candor, and honesty are closely tied to transparency leadership. These qualities ensure that information is shared openly and truthfully, leading to a clear understanding of a situation and fostering trust among stakeholders. Transparency provides a clear window into operations, decisions, and actions, and these qualities enhance its effectiveness.

The Theoretical Framework

Various theoretical perspectives, such as Situational Leadership Theory (SLT), The Social Exchange Theory (SET), Leadership Communication Theory (LCT), Servant Leadership Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory (TFL) have contributed to our modern understanding of organizational dynamics. Transformational Leadership theory highlights the value of inspiration and motivation. Transformational leaders are dedicated to empowering their team members to surpass their perceived limitations, fostering a culture of continuous growth and achievement (Bagga, 2023). They inspire their team members to work toward shared objectives by casting a vision for the future. Transformational leadership positively affects their followers' attitudes, values, and beliefs (Odeh et al., 2021). It means they frequently act as a role model, establishing high moral standards and inspiring others to follow in their footsteps, giving team members a sense of ownership and autonomy over their

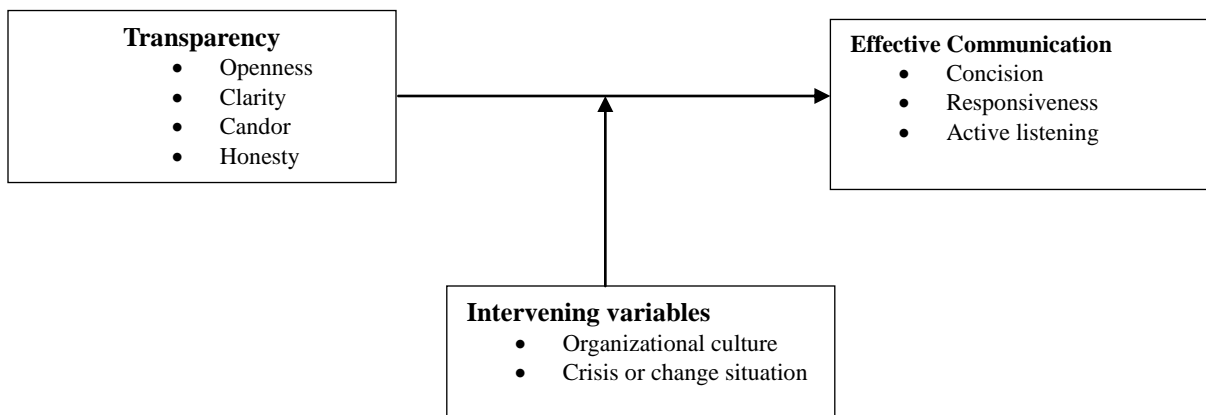
job empowers them. Giving team members a sense of ownership and independence over their jobs empowers them (Bertrand, 2018). This inspires initiative among people and promotes a culture of accountability.

Transformational leaders prioritize their team members’ personal and professional development (Stalter et al., 2019). They offer opportunities for growth and learning, boosting commitment and job satisfaction. Effective communication skills are a trait of transformational leaders. They can explain their vision compellingly and straightforwardly, which helps unite their staff behind a single objective (Davis, 2021). Modern leaders impacted by transformational leadership emphasize a captivating vision for their businesses or teams. They convey their vision in a way that encourages and inspires the group to work together toward a common objective.

Transparency in communication is a crucial component of transformational leadership. Modern leaders focus on open and honest communication, ensuring team members know the organization’s objectives, difficulties, and advancement. On the value of empathy and active listening, transformational leaders are recognized for their capacity to actively listen to and sympathize with the members of their teams. To foster an inclusive and encouraging workplace, leaders try to understand the opinions and concerns of their varied workforce. Leaders should listen attentively to their staff’s concerns, convince them by reason, and develop negotiation and conflict resolution skills in their communication (Kiplagat, 2020). Transformational leaders excel at giving assurance and guidance even in times of uncertainty. Modern leaders should use technology to reach and interact with their employees efficiently because of the growing reliance on digital tools and platforms for communication.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below shows the relationship between leadership transparency and effective communication. **Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

A research design is a structured plan outlining a researcher’s systematic approach to investigating a research problem. It serves as the framework for conducting the study, ensuring its validity and reliability (Chege & Odoyo, 2020). This study utilized a descriptive research design that involves systematic empirical inquiry, where the researcher lacks direct control over independent variables due to their demonstration having already occurred (Creswell, 2017). The target population for this study encompasses critical stakeholders within the PUEA academic community, spanning a diverse spectrum of individuals engaged in academic governance, instruction, and student life. The 164 respondents were identified through purposive sampling.

Results

4.1 Leadership Transparency Behaviors and Effective Communication

The research examined the relationship between leadership transparency behaviors and effective communication at the Presbyterian University of East Africa. The result of descriptive analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Leadership transparency behaviors and effective communication

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
The university encourages an open and inclusive work environment.	11%	5%	13%	38%	34%	3.79	1.25
There is transparency in how decisions are made within the organization.	9%	11%	23%	35%	23%	3.53	1.20
Communication from leadership is consistently clear and easy to understand.	6%	10%	20%	32%	33%	3.76	1.18
The university provides regular updates and information to keep workers and students well informed.	5%	6%	15%	35%	39%	3.99	1.09
Leaders are willing to address complex issues directly and do not shy away from tough conversations.	14%	15%	18%	32%	20%	3.28	1.33

Leaders communicate openly about successes and challenges faced by the organization.	10%	17%	27%	29%	17%	3.25	1.22
Employees and students trust that the information leadership provides is truthful and accurate.	6%	9%	26%	30%	30%	3.68	1.15
Leaders and students admit mistakes and take responsibility when things go wrong.	12%	11%	28%	24%	25%	3.39	1.29

Transparent leaders can build trust and cultivate lasting relationships within their organizations. According to the study, 72% of the participants indicated that the university encourages an open and inclusive work environment. Correspondingly, 58% affirmed transparency in how decisions are made within the organization. Thus, a workplace that values transparency fosters creativity and a sense of belonging among staff members. By carefully weighing all available perspectives, they reduce blind spots and improve decision-making. The findings are consistent with Leroy’s (2012) research, which showed that open and honest communication about facts, decisions, and the organization’s general direction builds team members’ credibility and feelings of purpose. This includes being open about errors, responding to complaints, and proactively soliciting feedback from staff members.

Developing productive relationships at work requires effective communication. In this study, 65% of the participants affirmed that communication from leadership is consistently clear and easy to understand. Comparable views were propounded by 74% of the participants, who indicated that the university provides regular updates and information to keep workers and students well informed. It can be inferred that when leaders are unclear about the decision-making process, including who makes the decision, they risk generating conflict or alienating staff members. The present study’s results align with Nuzatul’s (2023) observations, which indicate that genuine leaders who exhibit transparency foster robust relationships that enhance communication quality, job satisfaction, and organizational outcomes. Additionally, the impact of leadership transparency on employees and organizational outcomes is noteworthy.

One essential quality of a successful leader is transparency. It promotes a positive, high-performance atmosphere and the development of trust. According to the study, 52% affirmed that leaders were willing to address complex issues directly and did not shy away

from tough conversations. Furthermore, 46% of the participants indicated that leaders communicate openly about the organization's successes and challenges. It implies that leaders maintain the team's knowledge, cohesion, and engagement by giving frequent updates and feedback. The results corroborate those of practitioners Canavesi and Minelli (2022), who assert that transparent, truthful leaders who provide definite explanations for their decisions encourage a procedural justice culture and encourage employees to voice their thoughts. For public relations professionals, genuine leadership, characterized by candor and openness, impacts effective communication.

Effective communication of organizational issues to stakeholders is paramount for the organization's leadership. According to the research, 60% of the participants affirmed that employees and students trust that the information leadership provides is truthful and accurate. Also, 49% affirmed that leaders and students admit mistakes and take responsibility when things go wrong. This viewpoint is consistent with Norman's (2010) statement that reliable leaders are seen as trustworthy. It improves organizational performance by fostering a sense of shared purpose and enhanced communication among staff members. Norman also discusses the causes and effects of leadership transparency. Fairness is fostered by transparent leaders, which encourages candid communication among team members.

Hadziahmetovic & Salihovic recommend that "Executives at all levels should receive communication training to practice transparency in interactions with employees, such as through individual meetings, social listening on the company's social media outlets, employee surveys, and other forms of communication" (Hadziahmetovic & Salihovic, 2022).

Correlation Analysis for Objective One

The degree and direction of the relationship between two variables are measured by correlation analysis, a bivariate form of analysis. Variables that have a linear relationship with one another are the best alternatives for the measure. The correlation between two quantitative variables was assessed in this study using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 2 presents the analytical results.

Table 1: Relationship between Leadership Transparency and the Concept of Effective Communication

		Concept of Effective Communication
Leadership	Pearson	.617**
Transparency	Correlation	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	153

****.** *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The results show a statistically significant relationship between Leadership Transparency and the Concept of Effective Communication ($r=0.617^{**}$; $p<0.01$). This implies that honest and transparent leaders could foster effective team interaction. Thus, openness in the workplace encourages innovation and a feeling of belonging among employees.

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypothesis was stated as follows:

H01: There is no significant relationship between leadership transparency and effective communication at the Presbyterian University of East Africa. The benchmark for rejecting the null hypothesis is based on a 0.05 significance level. According to Table 2, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the conclusion was made that there is a statistically significant relationship between Leadership Transparency and the Concept of Effective Communication ($r=0.617^{**}$; $p<0.01$).

Discussions

Transparent leadership encourages honest communication and responsible behavior within the company, serving as a role model for others to follow. Transparent leaders can build trust and cultivate lasting relationships within their organizations. According to the study, most participants indicated that the university encourages an open and inclusive work environment. Correspondingly, over half affirmed transparency in how decisions are made within the organization. This suggests that a varied and open workplace fosters creativity and a sense of belonging among staff members. By carefully weighing all available perspectives, they reduce blind spots and improve decision-making.

Developing productive relationships at work requires effective communication. In this study, most participants affirmed that communication from leadership is consistently clear and easy to understand. Comparable views were propounded by a section of the participants who indicated that the university provides regular updates and information to keep workers and students well informed. It can be inferred that when leaders are unclear about the decision-making process, including who makes decisions, they risk generating conflict or alienating staff members.

Effective communication of organizational issues to stakeholders is critical for the organization's leadership. According to the research, most participants affirmed that employees and students trust that the information leadership provides is truthful and accurate. Some participants affirmed that leaders and students admit mistakes and take responsibility when things go wrong. Fairness is fostered by transparent leaders, which encourages candid communication among team members.

When a leader is transparent, it promotes a positive, high-performance atmosphere and the development of trust. According to the study, over half affirmed that leaders were willing to address complex issues directly and did not shy away from tough conversations. Furthermore, some participants indicated that leaders communicate openly about the organization's successes and challenges. This implies that leaders maintain the team's knowledge, cohesion, and engagement by giving frequent updates and feedback. Genuine leadership, defined by openness and truthfulness, affects public relations professionals' communication ability.

Conclusion

The study underscored the role of transparent leadership behavior and effective communication for leadership success. It is noted that successful organizations depend on effective leadership behaviors and communication, which promote cooperation, understanding, and shared goals. Leaders have to be authentic in their conduct and practices.

The study revealed a statistically significant relationship between leadership transparency and effective communication. Transparent leadership in higher education creates a culture of open communication and accountable behavior throughout the organization, serving as a role model for others. Thus, forthright, truthful, and open leaders can promote effective teamwork and organizational performance. According to the study, transparent

leadership creates a culture of open communication and accountable behavior throughout the organization, serving as a role model for others. Therefore, open, honest, and transparent leaders can encourage productive teamwork. As a result, transparency promotes creativity and a sense of community among staff members. The study recommends that organizational leaders embrace open communication and accountable behavior to perform their duties effectively.

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