ASSESSING THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AT THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, IMMIGRATION, SAFETY AND SECURITY IN NAMIBIA

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Declaration

I, Sakeus I. Kadhikwa, hereby declare that the work contained in this presented for the degree **Master of Journalism and Media Technology** at the Namibia University of Science and Technology, entitled **Assessing the strategic role of internal communication at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia,** is my original work that and I have not previously in its entirety or the past submitted it at any university or other higher education institutions for the award of a degree or diploma.

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Internal communication has long been the lifeblood of successfully and effectively managed organizations, especially when such communication is strategically managed. Though literature has established the benefits of internal communication, especially when it comes to employee engagement, commitment, and improved corporate reputation, research assessing the strategic role of internal communication in government departments is limited. The aim of the study was to assess the strategic role of internal communication at the ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia. To achieve this objective, four secondary objectives were pursued. The first secondary objective focused on examining the challenges faced by the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration in implementing the internal communication strategy. The second objective focused on analysing the impact of internal communication on service delivery, while the third focused on internal communication and employee morale. The last objective examined the alignment between internal communication and the department's strategy.

Data for the study were collected using a structured interview guide. Face-to-face online were conducted with a conveniently selected sample of 25 participants. The methodology that was employed was a qualitative research approach that followed a case study research design. Several challenges affecting the effective implementation of the internal communication strategy were identified. Furthermore, it was noted that participants had mixed views about the role of internal communication and service delivery, as well as its strategic role in the organisation. Based on these findings, the study makes recommendations and suggestions for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 Introduction

Internal communication is concerned with the management and building mutually beneficial relationships between the company and its internal stakeholders, who happen to be the employees (Men & Bowen, 2017). According to Mayfield and Mayfield (2018), organisations can shape and transmit what they stand for, mission and visions of the organisations to employees, and this process often helps employees with a sense of purpose.

Research shows that studies on internal communication have been lacking (Welch, 2012). This is despite the role internal communication plays (Men & Bowen, 2017). Consequently, this study seeks to assess the effectiveness of strategic internal communication at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security (MHAISS). Communication remains an important element in government, particularly in ministries, as the public needs to get a proper understanding of the functions of these ministries, and likewise, the ministries need to be in tune with the needs of their stakeholders.

MHAISS's primary objective is to manage and administer the national population register, receive and protect refugees and asylum seekers, and the facilitation. Subsequently, the Ministry deems communication as an important tool, which is one of the work streams under the Ministry's turnaround strategy, aimed at drastically improving the operation of the ministry (Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration [MHAI], 2015). Therefore, it is necessary for the Ministry to effectively communicate in the workplace as there are tremendous opportunities

for the ministry to deliver services better, faster, effectively, and smarter to contribute to building a performance-oriented Ministry and the government. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand that internal communication in any given organisation affects its employees' motivation, the corporate culture, and employee engagement overall (Jones, 2016).

MHAISS has strategies to sustain every change that it has implemented, but there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation of the strategies, focus on the quality of services, the importance of effective communication and the need for professional conflict management, hence this study. Based on this, this research aims to assess the effectiveness of strategic communication in the empirical context of MHAISS in Namibia.

This chapter aims to present the background of the study, the statement of the problem, and the research objectives. The limitations of the study and the delimitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter. It also highlights the significance of the study and provides the chapter summary.

1.2 Background of the study

Communication is deemed the lifeblood of organisations based on its importance in understanding one another and building relationships, especially at the workplace (Rogala & Bialowas, 2016). Internal communication is the interaction within the organisation, while external communication deals with interaction among stakeholders outside the organization (Tankosic, Ivetic & Mikelic, 2017; Verčič, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2012). Chong (2007) argues that internal communication merits close attention as employees are the most important audience for the company's organisational communication and corporate branding efforts. Therefore, it is imperative to highlight that strategic internal communication is critical for building a successful organisation (Hume & Leornard, 2014), especially if managed

strategically (Yates, 2006). Research shows that without an effective internal communication strategy in place, any business is at risk of employee disengagement and apathy (Hargie, Dickson & Tourish, 2017).

Hume and Leornard (2014) argue that internal communication becomes strategic in an organisation if it is managed to align internal stakeholders with the organisation's strategic intent. Research shows that when it is done properly, it can improve processes and the organisation's performance (Hume & Leornard, 2014; Dolphin 2005). This will be realised through several indicators that include improved and increased employee engagement, commitment and corporate reputation (Meyer & De Wet, 2007). Despite its importance, research on the effectiveness of strategic internal communication in the context of government ministries, including MHAISS, is scarce.

Strategic internal communication generally plays a critical role in strategy development in organisations through the integration of the views of internal stakeholders into the corporate strategy (Verywey, 2003; Hume & Leornard, 2014). This shows that internal communication is an ongoing process, and organisations, including government ministries, must always re-align themselves with strategic goals. Therefore, if organisations, both public and private, are to achieve this effectively, there is a need to ensure that internal communication is part of the senior management.

According to Men and Bowen (2017), internal communication is divided into three categories: corporate internal, leadership, and peer horizontal communication. Men and Yue (2019) defined corporate internal communication as one that is initiated by the organisation's communication department. The communication department of an organisation has the power

to control the message's timing and wording (Men & Bowen, 2017). Corporate communication from the communication department often reach employees of the organisation through the intranet, emails, social media and newsletters (Men & Bowen, 2017; Men & Yue, 2019).

Men and Yue (2019) explain that leadership communication is that kind of communication that often sets a key influence on the employees of an organisation. Thus, it is from this perspective why communication has to be strategic, and its effectiveness must be evaluated in the context of MHAISS. Senior leadership in the organisation often sets the tone for internal communication, which is critical in shaping the organisation's reputation. Therefore, leadership and corporate communication play a critical role in influencing organisational outcomes.

It is important also to highlight that the role of internal communication on organisational culture is widely investigated by communication and public relations scholars (Men & Bowen, 2017). However, Welch (2012) argues that literature regarding internal communication has been lacking, and there is no information that could be found concerning this in government ministries in Namibia. This is despite internal communication gaining increased academic interest among scholars and professionals who consider its strategic importance for the success of organisations (Sebastião, Zulato, & Trindade, 2017).

Since time immemorial, communication in organisations has been pursued for the purposes of achieving the bottom line. Based on this, communication activities have been developed with the intention to encourage clients to buy more (Sebastião *et al.,* 2017). However, internal communication has been gaining traction as a critical function of a business or organisations as noted earlier in this chapter (Ruck & Welch, 2012:294). Thus, more focus is shifting towards the understanding of the importance of strategic internal communication in organisations,

including government departments and ministries. Previous studies argue that there is a strategic link between internal communication and business performance (Yates, 2006:71). This implies that the effectiveness of internal communication thus enhances the organisational outcomes. In the context of government ministries, this could imply the improvement in service delivery, and this kind of research is limited in Namibia.

The importance of internal communication is widely reported in literature (Men & Yue, 2019; Men & Bowen, 2017; Welch, 2012). Other scholars chose to describe the importance of internal communication as the glue that binds the organisation together (Baker & Angelopulo, 2006). The term internal communication has been referred to with many synonyms including intra-organisational communication, employee communication, internal public relations and internal relations among others (Welch 2012, Men & Yue, 2019; Men & Bowen, 2017). Therefore, in the context of the current study, it will strictly refer to communication that takes place within MHAISS.

Internal communication is critical for the organisation to meet its objectives (Welch & Jackson, 2007). This shows that internal communication has the potential to influence the ability of managers to engage employees and achieve objectives (Sebastião *et al.,* 2017). This has made internal communication to become a top management priority (Men & Yue, 2019). This study assess the role of internal communication at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia. This assessment is done in order to determine the role of internal communication on employee morale.

This study investigated the effectiveness of internal communication strategy in the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration (DHAI) at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration,

Safety and Security (MHAISS) is that there is a theoretical gap in internal communication within public sector organisations. This is although communication is an essential element in government. For example, DHAI's primary objectives are to manage and administer the National Population Register, facilitate legal migration, and receive and protect refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore, communication is an essential tool within DHAI, and it is listed as a critical pillar of the department's turnaround strategy, aimed at improving the operations (Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, 2015).

It is necessary for the DHAI to effectively communicate in the workplace to enhance service delivery and performance. However, internal communication can affect the motivation of employees, the corporate culture, and employee engagement overall (Jones, 2016). Though DHAI has strategies to sustain every change that it has implemented, there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation of the strategies, especially the strategic role of internal communication and the need for professional conflict management, hence this study.

1.3 Problem statement

An investigation by FeverTree consultant (New Era, 2015), who led the DHAI turnaround strategy, found ineffective internal communication as a significant barrier to the effective and efficient delivery of quality services by the Ministry (Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, 2015). The consultant indicated that alignment of the organisation vision, mission, values and strategy to the organisation mandate was possible only with an effective internal communication strategy (Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, 2015). Previous studies argue that effective internal communication is critical in aligning management and employees with the organisation strategy (Rogala, 2011; Men, 2012). The strategic value of internal communication resulted in the consultant building internal communication structures

and links in the DHAI to align the turnaround strategy with the Ministry's mandate. The change was supposed to improve the operations of the DHAI gradually. However, since its inception, the internal communication strategy has not been evaluated to see if it has been effective or not. Therefore, the question is, to what extent has it been effective and what challenges are currently being experienced by DHAI employees. The need to answer these questions prompted the proposed study to conduct an assessment to establish the role of internal communication in driving the organisation strategy to recommend informed decisions.

1.4 Research objectives

The main aim of the study is to assess the role of DHAI's internal communication strategy. The specific objectives, which will guide the study, are.

1) To examine the challenges that are currently being faced by the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration in implementing the internal communication strategy.
2) To analyse the impact of effective internal communication on service delivery in the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration.
3) To assess the influence of the DHAI's internal communication strategy on employee morale.
4) To examine the extent to which the existing internal communication practices are aligned with the department's strategy.

1.5 Significance of the study

The work of government ministries today is increasingly becoming conducted more like the work done in businesses. The insights generated in this study are important in enhancing the communication strategy of MHAISS. Internal communication is believed to be a critical construct for developing organisational excellence and effectiveness (Welch, 2012). The findings of this study are critical in that they will help ministerial management strengthen internal communication to improve staff morale and alignment with the goals and mandate.Though internal communication is a well-researched area, there are limited studies conducted in Namibia to assess the effectiveness of strategic internal communication. This study is significant because it helped contribute to the literature on the strategic role of communication within ministries in Namibia and thus helped fill the literature gap. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing body of literature in strategic internal communication.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The study only collected data from MHAISS employees who are not in managerial and supervisory roles to gauge how the communication strategy is helping employees to contribute towards the ministry's goals and mandate.

1.7 Definition of key terms

Internal communication: All forms of communication taking place within the organisation. It is also called intra-organisation communication (Vercic *et al.*, 2012, p.225).

Strategy: The framework that guides the choices and actions that determine the nature and direction of the organisation (Nickols, 2011, p.2).

1.8 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is divided into five major chapters, and they are described as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and problem statement

This chapter presents the introduction and background of the study. It also discusses the statement of the problem that forms the basis of this study. Chapter 1 also outlines the study's research objectives, its significance and discusses the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter discusses the literature related to the topic. Definitions, models and categorisation of internal communication are discussed in this chapter. The study also discusses the importance of internal communication and its effects on staff morale.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology that was followed in the study and the research design. The chapter also describes the population, sample size, and methods of data collection. Data instruments, data collection procedures, and ethical aspects are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings and data presentation

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The results are also discussed concerning the research books. Results are presented and interpreted in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations.

This chapter summarises the research findings and makes recommendations based on the findings and literature review.

1.9 Summary of this chapter

This chapter aims to establish an outline of the problem statement and develop clear objectives, primary and secondary. The chapter also served as an outline for the study by discussing the study's background and the problem statement.

Chapter 2 presents a detailed literature review on internal communication and business strategy execution issues, which is contextualised using MHAISS.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Internal communication is critical for organisational success because it adds to the development of internal positive relationships between the company's management and its employees. The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature that is relevant to the study critically. This chapter first reviews the literature on the definition of internal communication and evaluates literature that focuses on the value of internal communication on the overall strategy of an organization. Furthermore, the chapter review literature that focuses on internal communication and employee morale. A chapter summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

2.2 Defining internal communication

Men and Stacks (2014) define internal communication as "the central process in which employees share information, create relationships, make meanings and construct organisational culture and values". Other scholars such as Tankosic, Ivetic and Mikelic (2017) define internal communication as the interaction within the organisation. These two definitions show that the critical focus of internal communication is concerned with the dissemination of information among members of the organisation.

According to Dolphin (2005), internal communication is communication that takes place between management, employees and critical publics of the organisation. Internal communication has also been defined as "a social interaction through messages" (Kalla, 2005, p. 303). Furthermore, internal communication is defined as the ability of management to build

relationships and engage with its employees who constitute a critical section of the organisation's internal stakeholders at all levels within an organisation (Welch & Jackson, 2007). This implies that internal communication is a critical strategic management function that is concerned with the development of relationships and interactions among internal stakeholders at all levels within organisations (Welch & Jackson, 2007). There is a difference in terms of the communication that occurs between employees in an informal environment and that which takes place in a formal corporate environment of the organisation, which is often performed between management and employees.

According to Borcaa and Baesu (2014), it is argued that the primary purpose of corporate internal communication is to notify and engage the organisation's internal stakeholders, including the employees regarding the policies, procedures and strategic goals of the organisation as a means of helping internal stakeholders to understand their merits. Furthermore, Kennan and Hazleton (2006) note that the concern of internal communication is to ensure there is engagement between internal social actors, in this case, the employees of the Ministry. This is achieved through the use of structures in a social context that consists of both informal and formal communication mechanisms.

Welch (2012) argues that these communication mechanisms are usually observed by management, organisational employees, teams, and project groups (Welch, 2012). Consequently, according to Welch (2012), internal communication reinforces the notion of effectiveness in organisational contexts through the development of positive internal relationships that are critical in enhancing the transfer of essential information among social

actors. Based on this, it is clear that when the communication is done in contexts where it is deemed to be more open, through the incorporation of feedback and being in a position to listen, it often leads to involvement, which an essential ingredient in terms of the decision is making process in organisations (Men & Bowen, 2017). This can also be further used to build and maintain organisational relationships that are positive (Men & Bowen, 2017).

According to Men and Bowen (2017), internal communication is divided into three categories that include corporate internal, leadership and horizontal peer communication. Men and Yue (2019) defined corporate internal communication as one that is initiated by the organisation's communication department. Men and Bowen (2017) argue that the communication department of an organisation has the power to control the message's timing and wording. Furthermore, Bowen and Men (2017) note that corporate communication from the communication department often reaches employees of the organisation through the intranet, e-mails, social media and newsletters (Men & Yue, 2019). This has been considered in the literature to be the foundation upon which successful modern organisations are built (Men & Stacks, 2014).

According to Welch (2012, p.246), several types of internal communication ranges from the "informal chat and office gossip to formal corporate communication to all employees from senior management". Furthermore, there is a range of informal and formal communication that also exists between individual employees who are working in teams, project teams, staff and management (Welch, 2012, p.246). This shows that internal communication is used in business organisations in order to provide employees with information that is required to do their job.

Based on the views of Wilcox, Cameron, Ault and Agee (2003) and Zerfass (2008), internal communication has been applied in public relations and corporate communications for an extended period. As alluded to earlier, this communication occurs between management and the organisation's internal stakeholders, which in this case, are employees within the MHAISS.

Welch (2012) argues that this type of communication is critical in promoting commitment as well as a belonging sense to the organisation. For this study, the definition by Men and Stacks (2014), as well as the dimensions, argued for by Welch (2012) is applied throughout this dissertation using the medium theory.

2.3 The goals of internal communication

According to Welch and Jackson (2007, p. 188), internal communication has four primary goals that include "contributing to internal relationships characterised by employee commitment; promoting a positive sense of belonging in employees; developing their awareness of environmental change; and developing their understanding of the need for the organisation to evolve its aims in response to, or in anticipation of, environmental change". Thus, it is evident in this that these goals exhibit a sense of inseparability in terms of what organisations seek to achieve from internal communications.

Internal communication is considered a critical aspect of most organisations because of its effects on commitment (De Ridder, 2004) and the development of positive relationships (Welch, 2012). The construct of commitment is argued in the literature to refer to aspects of commitment in the workplace (Welch & Jackson, 2007). On the one hand, Workplace commitment is often exhibited through the attachment that employees have with the organisation. Research shows that employees that have affective commitment are those that always exhibit that they want to be with the organisation (Welch, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007). On the other hand, commitment in the workplace can also be displayed through the notion of "continuance commitment" (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p.188). This refers to the notion of having employees for the sake of just being there but given a choice they would not.

According to De Ridder (2004, p.21) "commitment refers to a positive attitude among employees and is defined as the identification and involvement of individuals in an organisation". Research shows that if organisations want to have committed employees, there is a need to improve internal communication, especially among management and the rest of the employees (Welch, 2012). In addition to this, internal communication is also critical in the development of "a sense of belonging among employees" (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 188). Based on this, it can be argued that through internal communication, employees can have a heightened sense of belongingness that would result in them being able to identify themselves with the organisation and be able to support it (Lee & Li, 2020; Welch, 2011).

Through a strong sense of belonging, organisations can use that as a strategy through which they can also influence stakeholder relationships internally through beliefs that are shared as well as values (Lee & Li, 2020). This implies that internal communication is critical in shaping the identities of employees at the organisation, and this is something that MHAISS needs in order to implement its Turnaround Strategy successfully. However, earlier studies have also questioned the use of internal communication, especially in areas where it was used as propaganda, where employers used it to manipulate employees (Moloney, 2000). Internal communication within organisations can thus be used as "a way to develop positive internal stakeholder relationships" (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 188). This implies its positive side and goal. However, in other instances, internal communication can also be a propaganda tool that can be employed by those in power to manipulate and control internal stakeholders, such as employees.

Internal communication is also critical in terms of spreading environmental awareness and the implications of the environment on the organisation (Lee, 2018). These are argued in literature as some of the crucial communication goals that internal communication is designed to achieve

(Welch, 2011). Successful organisations, with harmonious relations, are those that have regular two-way communication with both its internal and external publics (Lee, 2018). MHAISS must be in a position to explain its mandate, services and mission to the external stakeholders as espoused in its Turnaround Strategy. Furthermore, it is also critical that MHAISS is in a position to communicate its opportunities and challenges that it faces so that its internal stakeholders, in this case, employees, have a good appreciation of what happens in the Ministry's external environment.

The operating business environment of business organisations is divided into three significant levels that are the internal environment, the micro-environment and the macro-environment (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Furthermore, it is critical to know that these environments are dynamic, implying that internal communication occurs in dynamic operating environments. Due to the dynamic nature of the operating environment, organisations must be in a position to use internal communication in a way that helps them to communicate changes and increase the level of awareness (Lee, 2018). Therefore, employees must not find themselves in a situation where they are not aware of what is going on in their environment, that is the internal organisational environment. Internal communication should thus help organisations in terms of raising awareness of any changes that could have been done, specifically those that have strategic implications for the broader organisation (Men & Stacks, 2014). This is critical in the sense that it could be beneficial to the organisation in terms of building the understanding of employees regarding strategic matters and could also be important in enhancing commitment (De Ridder, 2004).

Internal communication has inseparable goals, thus, one can argue for their interrelatedness. Based on this, there is need to ensure that internal communication is of good quality, and is useful in terms of creating commitment while being in a position to raise critical levels of

awareness (De Ridder, 2004; Welch & Jackson, 2004). Doing this could be beneficial for organisations in shaping trust among internal stakeholders, including employees and management. Thus, internal communication has the potential to lead to a more developed culture of trust within the organisation and strategic direction. It is imperative to note that if employees do not understand the strategic direction the organisation is taking, the chances of being committed could be challenging to achieve. Furthermore, the issue of trust will remain contested between management and employees.

2.4 Strategic importance of internal communication

Communication plays a critical role, especially when it comes to accepting the value of the intangible aspects of the organisation (Ruck & Welch, 2011). As a result, many scholars have linked communication with high organisational performance based on the relationships that are often created when good internal communication exits (Tourish & Hargie, 2009; Ruck & Welch, 2011). Given this, there is a continuous need for the evaluation of internal communication within organisations, including government Ministries.

Research shows that the importance of internal communication is widely communicated (Ruck & Welch, 2011). A review of the literature shows that a majority of the existing studies have focused more on the management perspective compared to the employee perspective, suggesting a theoretical research gap. Therefore, limited research has "focused on finding out what employees consider to be important when it comes to internal communication" (Uusi-Rauva & Nurkka, 2010, p. 303).

According to Welch (2012), internal communication is the tool that underpins the effectiveness of organisations based on the contributions it makes to positive internal relationships. Welch (2012) argues that internal communication is critical because it enables the communication

between management and its employees. Consequently, scholars such as Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Vercic, and Moreno (2010) and Welch (2012) highlight that internal communication is an active area of research and practice, whose importance is significantly growing. Despite the growth in research, as suggested by Welch (2012), earlier scholars noted the need for further research given the magnitude of importance that it plays (Hargie & Tourish, 2009). Hargie and Tourish (2009, p. 419) note the need for increased research on internal communication "as a vital issue requiring further research".

Existing literature also shows that internal communication can be successful and essential in organisations when it is used to promote employee awareness regarding the organisational opportunities and threats obtaining in the business environment (Welch, 2012). Other scholars argue that internal communication is essential in the development of employee understanding concerning the changing priorities of the organisation (Zerfass *et al.,* 2010). Despite the benefits, research has also shown that internal communication could be dangerous as it poses a threat to organisational relations emanating from poor communication (Welch, 2012). Therefore, it is essential to highlight that poor internal communication is not suitable for the firm. This implies that the benefits that could arise from the use of internal communication are often based on messages that are suitably designed to reach the intended audiences, which in this context, are the employees of the Ministry. These messages are supposed to be acceptable and useful to the intended audience to which the message has been designed (Welch, 2012). However, if employees feel such communication is conducted inappropriately, the communication process could inadvertently damage the internal relationship (Welch, 2012).

Welch (2012) argues that, due to the social nature of organisations, both public and private, internal communication is considered a fundamental element that influences the success of the organisation. This shows the need for organisations to grasp that effective communication with

employees is critical for organisational success (Zerfass *et al.,* 2010). Consequently, internal communication should, therefore, focus on the creation of a work environment in which there is respect for all employees within the organisation. This involves making sure that communication, especially, corporate, must come from one manager to the next, and from the supervisor to the employee.

2.5 Internal communication channels

Several channels are available for use by the organization (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). These channels differ based on the size, profile, culture, environmental culture, and the qualifications of the employees (Dévényi, 2016). According to Verčič and Špoljarić (2020), each communication medium seeks to achieve a different engagement goal with both external and internal stakeholders, and this tends to define the speed and scale of such communication.

Communication channels that can be used internal vary from traditional, through face-to-face communication, interactive web tools, and phone calls, including social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter handles (Crescenzo, 2011). According to Berger (2008) argue that there are two main categories of internal communication channels, that is written channels and oral channels. On the one hand, the written channels comprise of the traditional medium including letters, brochures, reports, posters, manuals, bulletin boards, websites, electronic mails, the internet, blogs, chatrooms, podcasts, the intranet or instant messaging systems including WhatsApp or Messenger applications. These traditional written channels allow employees to transmit information for strategic reasons (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020).

On the contrary, oral communication channels that are employed in business organisations include face-to-face meetings, inclusive of focus group discussions, social gatherings, meetings, telephone conversations, and video conferencing (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). The

effectiveness of these channels of internal communication has largely been investigated using the media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984, cited in Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). The theory of media richness combines the equivocality of the task and richness of the medium to determine the effectiveness of the communication medium used (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020).

Verčič and Špoljarić (2020) argue that uncertainty and equivocality are essential aspects when the concern is to reduce successful information processing. This is especially so, in circumstances where lack of information could potentially cause uncertainty. This is typically reduced by having enough amounts of information. Equivocality is defined in literature as the general lack of understanding which in many circumstances cannot be reduced by offering a whole lot quantity of information but can be dealt with through the richness of information that has been provided (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). According to Ishii, Lyons and Carr, (2019), e-mails as a means of internal communication allows for a low level of uncertainty due to their ability to handle a large amount of information. However, e-mails can potentially have higher equivocality due to the significant absence of cues (Ishii *et al.,* 2019).

The richness of the medium is explained by four major characteristics that include how immediately one can be in a position to get feedback. Furthermore, a communication medium is considered to be rich if it enhances the interaction between two parties using several methodologies that could include verbal and non-verbal cues, natural language and personal factors (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). Based on this, face-to-face is generally acknowledged in the literature to be the richest means of internal communication, because of its capability to convey information and messages that could be complex and more importantly the personal focus that it can generate (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). On the other side of the continuum are statements, written documents, and posters; while telephones, videoconferencing, emails, and instant messages are in the middle (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020).

A review of the literature shows that the use of rich media as a means of communicating internally has the potential to contribute towards the organisation's effective and symmetrical communication since there is the immediacy of feedback and internal dialogues in place (Men, 2014). This view is extended by Lee (2018), who argues that rich internal media channels are those that are capable of using both non-verbal and verbal cues in conjunction with a personal focus. However, though organisations generally prefer face to face internal communication as a medium, the choices of employees tend to vary with tasks (Reder & Conklin, 1988) and this needs to be investigated in the context of MHAISS in Namibia. As a result, Braun, Hernandez Bark, Kirchner, Stegmann, and Van Dick (2019) argue for the need to investigate in the context of MHAISS if computer-mediated communication could help meet the needs of organizational employee with advances in information and communication technology, there is a significant shift regarding how internal communication is being cascaded in the organisation, specifically, private sector organisations. Most organisations are beginning to communicate using social media, including Facebook, and Twitter handles. These channels have been associated with enhanced interactivity and improved two-way communication (Crescenzo, 2011) as well as employee engagement (Braun *et al.,* 2019). Though social media is a powerful means of creating dialogue (Berger, 2008; Lee, 2018), the strategic importance of this channel as a means of communication is yet to be investigated in the context of MHAISS.

2.6 Internal communication and staff morale

The need for employees' enthusiasm in performing their duties and responsibilities is widely documented in the literature (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014). A review of the literature

shows that there is a need for building strong emotional bonds with their employer (Lee & Li, 2020). Previous research has found that several organisational internal communication practices enhance employee communication and morale (Mishra *et al.,* 2014). Thus, internal communication is a critical element in the context of an organisation and can result in employee engagement or disengagement (Welch, 2011).

Internal communication has a critical role to play in terms of influencing employee engagement (Welch, 2011). This is an organisational practice that is used by many to transfer the organisational values and involve them with the goals of the organisation, thus leading to increased staff morale (Bindl & Parker, 2010). This view suggests that organisations that can design internal communication programmes will be able to leverage this essential strategy for employee engagement and staff morale (Welch, 2011). Literature focusing on this relationship in government Ministries is limited, explicitly so in the Namibian context.

Previous studies acknowledge that communication emanating from senior managers, when open, it is instrumental and can play the role of developing employee morale (Bakker *et al.,* 2011). This is a communication that is generally deemed to be one of the four dimensions of internal communication (Welch, 2011). Senior management communication, a form of internal communication, is typically designed communication that occurs between the organisation's strategic managers and its employees, who happen to be the internal stakeholders.

This communication aims to promote commitment, morale, sense of belonging and propagating awareness of the changing business environment and its aims (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Welch, 2011). The notion of whether this has been effective and strategic in government Ministries is yet to gain sufficient academic attention. This is a critical research gap because internal communication is about organisational practices that have been developed in order to promote employee understanding concerning the goals of the organisation, as well as enabling

the internal stakeholders to identify with the organisational values. Previous studies have acknowledged the role of internal communication regarding employee engagement (Bindl & Parker, 2010; Welch, 2011) and improving staff morale (Welch, 2011).

There is a positive and significant association between internal communication and employee morale (Borcaa & Baesu, 2014). However, regardless of the strategic importance of internal communication in terms of influencing employee morale, there are several theoretical gaps in the literature concerning internal communication (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Welch, 2011; 2012), especially in the context of government Ministries and departments. According to Heide and Simonsson (2014), employees have always been the recipients of internal communication. Based on this, there is a general agreement among management practitioners that employees at all levels of the organisation need to be informed for them to effectively contribute to the organisation (Heide & Simonsson, 2014) and this requires high morale to achieve (Welch, 2011).

Research has shown that very high levels of internal communication are critical antecedents of productivity, generation of solutions, and the attainment of goals. These aspects have been argued in literature as critical for enhancing the satisfaction of employees within organisations (Heide & Simonsson, 2014; Tourish & Hargie, 2009). It has been argued in the literature that for communication with employees to be effective it must be positively correlated with several organisational outcomes and outputs, including organisational commitment and employee satisfaction (Heide & Simonsson, 2014). Therefore, Vercic et al. (2012) argued that internal communication must be treated as a critical antecedent for employee motivation, something which is crucial for the organisation to achieve higher customer engagement and personal satisfaction, which is something that is still problematic in the context of MHAISS and more

exceptional service delivery in government Ministries. This relationship has not sufficiently been investigated in Namibia.

2.7 Internal Communication in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security

Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security (MHAISS) exists to fulfil a critical mandate. The mandate of the Ministry is to manage and administer the national population register, facilitate lawful migrations as well as to receive and be able to protect refugees and asylum seeker (MHAI, 2017). As a means of fulfilling this mandate, MHAISS established a national presence across the country by having sixty (60) offices. These offices comprise of thirteen (13) Regional Offices, Twenty six (26) Sub-Regional Offices and Twenty one (21) hospital-based offices (MHAI Annual Report, 2017).

The vision of MHAISS is to develop the country's national register and manage it in a manner that is going to be considered to be the best globally (MHAI, 2017). Furthermore, based on the Ministry's 2017 Annual Report, MHAISS exists in order to manage the national population register and facilitate legal migration in Namibia. In order to execute its mission and vision, MHAISS is organised into two major sections, and these sections include the Department of Civil Registration and the Department of Immigration Control and citizenship (MHAI, 2017). Furthermore, MHAISS is having two Directorates, which are the Directorate of Administration and Directorate of Refugees (MHAI, 2017).

On the one hand, the Civil Registration Department is responsible for the management of the National Population Register, which contains records of vital events such as birth, adoptions, marriages and deaths, and for issuing the relevant certificates as well as the national identity

documents. The issuance of major national documents including birth and death certificates are de-centralised to 58 regional offices across the country (MHAI, 2017), while the production of ID cards and amendment of birth, marriage and death records are centralised at the Head office in three divisions (MHAI, 2017). Contrarily, the Department of Immigration Control and Citizenship has a core mandate of facilitating lawful migration (MHAI, 2017). This is done through the issuance of visas, permits and citizenships to tourists and those who seek to work in the country, as well as the issuance of Namibian passports.

Contradictorily, the Administration Directorate of MHAISS provides administrative support services through coordination, financial management, human resources, legal, information technology and general support services; in terms of the applicable legislation (MHAI, 2017). On the other hand, the Directorate of Refugee Administration in the Ministry has the objective of providing international protection and support services to asylum seekers and refugees in Namibia (MHAI, 2017). Furthermore, the Directorate of Refugee also coordinates and facilitates the repatriations, integration and rehabilitation of Refugees.

MHAISS's core values are indicated in Table 2.1. Through these values, it is clear that MHAISS values teamwork, effective communication and coordination. The values summarised in Table 2.1 are critical for the fulfilment of the mission, and the vision statements and other strategic intends of the Ministry.

Table 2.1: Core Values of Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security

Core value	Description of the value
1. Commitment	We demonstrate commitment towards service delivery through our actions and decisions that we make.

2. Synergy	We work as a team, we value effective communication, and all our effort is coordinated towards achieving our Vision.
3. Ethics	In all our leadings, we are guided and principled through our Punctuality, Customer Focus, Professionalism and Transparency.
4. Efficiency	We strive to achieve more with limited resources while maximizing outputs.

Source: MHAI (2017).

On the 1st of May 2014, the Ministry launched a Turnaround Strategy, aimed at drastically improving the operations of the Ministry (MHAI, 2017). From the outset, it is emphasised that the overall goal of the strategy was to address the concerns of the public and improve the way customers receive and experience the services from the Ministry. This was also formulated in an attempt to deal with inaccurate information that was being circulated to MHAISS's external publics. Furthermore, the goal of the turnaround strategy was also to deal with customer dissatisfaction, which was believed to be stemming from a combination of inaccurate information, and absence of customer-oriented staff, specifically at the counters (MHAI, 2017).

The Ministry is committed to its core values, and this is shown through the way it discharges its organisational activities. With over 80% of children in Namibia born in health facilities (Dalling & Balagopal 2012), the MHAISS has adopted an innovative and logical-approach to making birth registration (BR) more accessible to parents by providing such platforms and facilities in various hospitals across the country. This unique approach to accelerating BR complements the existing stand-alone registration system at the MHAISS offices, and the mobile campaigns conducted reached children and families in hard-to-reach areas. This commitment is further shown through the administering of the registration system that caters for birth, marriages and deaths in the country. Furthermore, MHAISS has demonstrated

tremendous results over the past years in scaling up registration service (Dalling & Balagopal 2012), with 21 fully functional registration facilities in hospitals registering children at birth, and 13 regional offices and 26 sub-regional offices registering births. Between 2008-2011, MHAISS has seen more than a doubling of registration rate (56%) and a significant increase in early registration rate (Dalling & Balagopal 2012).

Regarding synergy, the department of Home Affairs and Immigration currently has a total staff complement of 1027 country wide. There is excellent coordination regarding the department's decentralised population services, immigration services and support services that include IT and fingerprinting (MHAI Operational Framework, 2012). According to the Namibia CRVS System Strategic Plan of 2015-2020, there is a need to coordinate structures with strong leadership: coordinating structures need to be established to execute the strategies with clear roles and responsibilities and a monitoring and evaluation system. These structures need strong leadership and sponsorship. However, there is a perceived shortage of staff and skills in the MHAISS, especially in remote areas of the country. The Namibia CRVS Strategic Plan (2015) notes that there are inadequate and unclear processes, unstandardised registration forms and process which often does work to be less understood, suggesting that the synergy core value, is not followed correctly.

The core value of ethics is reported in previous studies that focused on MHAISS as poor (Nikodemus, 2013). Previous research argues that that corruption of all kinds is found at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security (Nikodemus, 2013: 81). The forms of corruption reported in past research include bribery, embezzlement, extortion, straddling, fraud and tester chicanery, suggesting that the Ministry does not seem to uphold this value.

This suggests that both internal and external communication strategies require interrogation. It remains relatively unclear in terms of how effective internal communication within the ministry

is, and research that evaluates this is mostly limited. The current study seeks to fill this gap by examining the effectiveness of internal communication, which emanates from the synergy core value, as presented in Table 2.1.

In order to respond to the myriad of challenges the Ministry was facing, a consultant that was hired to develop the turnaround strategy (MHAI Customer Survey and Tracking Tool, 2014). Other key issues that were unearthed during the development of the Turnaround Strategy were concerned with several complaints regarding the key staff, poor interaction with officials, long document process time, poor access to information and official knowledge of requirements processes is inconsistent, and thus creating confusion (MHAI Customer Survey and Tracking Tool, 2014). These issues showed that, at some point, the Ministry's core values that are summarised in Table 2.1 were not being upheld. However, several challenges such as the long lead time required to process public documents such as passports and IDs have substantially being improved, and thus, the core value of efficiency and commitment towards quality service are now being upheld.

The Turnaround Strategy recommended that officials must be trained on critical aspects that include customer care as a viable means of establishing a customer interaction procedure that empowers officials to provide excellent customer service (MHAI Customer Survey and Tracking Tool, 2014). This was deemed crucial if the Ministry's core values of commitment and ethics were to be upheld, given that, before the Turnaround Strategy formulation, these core values were not being observed. Furthermore, it was also recommended to set up a call centre and train officials on aspects such as conflict management technique (MHAI Customer Survey and Tracking Tool, 2014), which are also aspects of internal communication. The update of the MHAISS website with application forms was also recommended as a way of improving access to information by the Ministry's clients. These efforts, and the determination

of whether they have been effective or not, have not been investigated in the context of the Ministry.

It is essential to highlight that communication in the Ministry is manned from a top-down approach (Men & Stacks, 2014), which follows a two-way communication approach (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). Under this approach, the Executive Director, who is the administrative leader of the Ministry, meets every Monday with Directors only to discuss crucial and strategic issues (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). There are Directorate/Departmental meetings that are always convened between Tuesday to Friday, with the Executive Director. Furthermore, as part of its organisational structure, the Ministry has a Public Relations Officer who acts as the spokesperson of the Ministry to both its internal and external stakeholders.

Meetings are the primary communication means in the Ministry, and it allows staff members to interact with one another and share valuable insights. Direct communication with employees at front Offices is usually addressed by a change messenger/champion (for instance the Minister/Executive Director/ Director, /Deputy Director) with the potential for two-way engagement. Equally, employees are engaged through productive meetings on a Directorate/ Departmental/ Sectional level in order to encourage participation and buy-in for the change programme. Thus, to achieve this, weekly morning consultation meetings with the Executive Director are conducted, at the same time a two-way communication allows managers and supervisors to ask questions and voice concerns and opinions they get from employees. Additionally, Directorates/ Departments have created WhatsApp groups that are official communication tools with the aim and purpose of engaging with other staffs to easily communicate on pertinent issues faced by the department/directorate. This cross-platform app allows the Ministry to communicate to its employees safely and securely, and it is an excellent tool if the staff uses it responsibly.

In addition to meetings, the ministry also communicates using newsletters. The Ministry communicate to both its external and internal stakeholders through an e-newsletter that is made available via various social media platforms every quarter. Through the e-newsletter, the Ministry address the main developments regarding the execution of projects, programmes and activities. Thus, the e-newsletter is a communication medium that always highlights the Ministry's achievements and progress in critical areas as well as the Ministry's contributions to other arms of government.

Communication is also done using annual reports. The annual report is published and made available during the last quarter of every financial year and is accessible on the Ministry's website, social media platforms as well as in hard copies. Through the annual report, the Ministry communicates with its publics regarding the main problems, achievements and challenges encountered by the Ministry in executing projects, programmes and activities.

MHAISS manage three social media platforms (Ministry of Information and Communication Technology [MICT], 2017) that is, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. These social media pages are managed in order to provide permissible access to government information to the public by using cheaper means of communication through the use of technology. The platforms are updated and monitored daily as well as responding promptly to queries and complaints by an authorised representative (employee working for the Ministry, in the case of the MHAISS, the person who moderates and manages these pages is the Public Relations Officer). Communication on social media platforms takes into consideration the rules and guidelines of the Social Media Use Policy of the government of the Republic of Namibia when participating in these services at any time.

Furthermore, communication at MHAISS is also done through its website. MHAISS's website enhances professionalism and effectiveness in information sharing as it is always updated. The

web-master is tasked to maintain and upload information onto the site, while the general upkeep such as constant updates and feeding relevant information to the site remains with the Public Relations Officer. Information for an update from all units is communicated to the Public Relations Section via Intranet for an update.

In order to enhance public service delivery, the Ministry engages with the public through suggestion boxes. A focal person in all 14 regions clear the boxes on a monthly bases and forward the content to the Public Relations Office. Thereafter, a report is compiled and disseminated to relevant Departments/ Directorates/ Divisions for their intervention and feedback. The counters are provided with a questionnaire for the public to rate the specific services. Feedback can be directed to the clients directly or through alternative modes of communication methods. Though these methods of internal communication have been recommended, their effectiveness is yet to be established, and this forms the basis of this current study.

2.8 Theoretical framework

Neil and Jiang (2017, p. 851) define stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives". The same term has been defined as, people who have a "contract, expressed or implied, between them and the firm," and who may experience harm or benefit as a "result of the firm's actions or inactions" (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 85). These characteristics in these two definitions are applicable employees. There has been a growing concern regarding the top priority that has been accorded to external communication by marketing managers and executives of organisations (Smith, Drumwright & Gentile, 2010). Additionally, the stakeholder engagement

in business organisations is largely "unidirectional and sales-focused" than being about the development of relationships (Smith, 2013, p.509).

On the one hand, Gronroos (1997) argues that the objective for developing relationships and maintaining them is generally based on the profit orientation. Contrastingly, stakeholders are also believed to have some kind of intrinsic value (Sayil, Donmaz, Simsek & Akyol, 2016). Consequently, organisations, public or private, have duties to others, regardless of the potential benefits (Smith, 2013). Based on this view, employees are regarded as the customers of the organisation from an internal perspective and channels of delivery of the services for the customers (Verčič, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2012) or as brand ambassadors to the organisations they work for (Kim & Rhee, 2011). Consequently, employees are the organisation's most valuable asset in terms of internal communication.

There is a need to ensure that employees are not overlooked as critical stakeholders in companies and organisations (Neill & Jiang, 2017). This is because the degree of employee engagement is generally tied up to the outcomes of the business, including profitability and customer satisfaction (Gallup, 2013). According to Saks (2006, p. 601), engagement in organisations is concerned with "discretionary effort exhibited by employees". This implies that when correctly done, it will result in employees willing to go beyond their minimal efforts, sometimes in order to secure and keep their current jobs (Neill & Jiang, 2017).

The costs of poor employee relations are emanating from poor employee relations which are costly in most cases (Neill & Jiang, 2017). These costs including loss of revenue, absenteeism from work, labour grievances, interruptions of production and service delivery, and employees underperforming (Gallup, 2013). Welch (2011) notes that, on the one hand, internal communication when it is deemed to be effective it will be in a position to predict the commitment and engagement of employees of the organisation in question. However, when

internal communication is terrible, it may be an element that could result in disengagement (Welch, 2011).

The stakeholder's theory forms the foundation upon which this current study is based. This is because internal communication is "the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within the organisation" (Welch, 2007) and employees of MHAISS are part of this. In order to examine the effectiveness of internal communication, there is a need to ensure that employees are not treated as part of the single organisations (Welch, 2007), but as stakeholders. The stakeholder model, which was early advanced through the works of Freeman (1984) shows relationships among various groups of actors in and around the organisation (Welch, 2007, 2012), emphasising the influence of internal stakeholders such as employees, management and financiers (Fassin, 2008; van der Meer, Verhoeven, Beentjees & Vliegenthart, 2017).

In order to be successful, organisations need to identify all the crucial stakeholders in the communication process (Alpaslan, Green & Mitroff, 2009). Furthermore, it has been acknowledged in the literature that internal communication plays a critical role in organisations, especially in their interactions with other stakeholders (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011; Johansen, Aggerholm, & Frandsen, 2012; van der Meer *et al.,* 2017). Given the importance of internal stakeholders in the communication process (van deer Meer *et al.,* 2017), this study considers the stakeholder's theory appropriate in examining the effectiveness of internal communication within the context of MHAI. Additionally, research shows that employees as internal stakeholders are "not only receivers of information, but also senders" van deer Meer *et al.,* 2017), suggesting that employees are essential stakeholders (Frandsen &

Johansen, 2011) that can be examined to determine if communication is effective. Therefore, stakeholder's theory was thus considered appropriate for the current study.

2.9 Chapter summary

The focus of this chapter was to review the related information regarding the strategic role of communication in organisations. There is a dearth of research concerning the investigation of internal communication, including government Ministries regardless of the critical benefits that emanate from it.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Methodology forms the operational framework within which facts are placed to see their meaning in the research context. Zikmund and Babin (2013) observe that a research methodology's objective is to provide a body of knowledge and skills needed to facilitate decision-making through data collection, organisation and evaluation of data that ultimately help formulate possible solutions to specific issues under investigation. The aim of this study was to assess the role of internal communication at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia. This chapter outlines the research process by describing the research design that was adopted. It provides details regarding the methodology used by explaining the study population, sampling method and selection of research participants, the data collection procedure, and the process through which data was analysed. The chapter also discusses the aspects of validity and reliability of data in the qualitative research process. It discusses the way through which the study ensured that these elements are met in the current study. Like other previous chapters, the summary of the chapter is provided at the end.

3.2 Research methodology

Malhotra (2010) argues that methodology is determined by the nature of the research questions a study seeks to answer. Consequently, the research format used in an investigation is regarded as a tool that researchers use to answer the research question. The aim of this study was to assess the role of internal communication at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia. The following research objectives guided this current study:

- To examine the challenges that are currently being faced by the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration in implementing the internal communication strategy

- To analyse how internal communication affects service delivery within the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration

- To assess the influence of the DHAI's internal communication strategy on employee morale

- To examine the extent to which the existing internal communication practices are aligned with the department's strategy.

3.3 Research design

To achieve the study's objectives, the current project was placed within a case study research design. According to Creswell (2013), "a case study can be regarded as an exploration or in-depth analysis of single or multiple cases over time". A mono-case research design was employed to collect data for the study to understand the role of internal communication and the challenges faced in the empirical context of Department of Home Affairs and Immigration (DHAI). (Saunders *et al.,* 2016; Yin, 2009). It enabled the researcher to describe the key aspects of internal communication, its challenges, and its effectiveness on service delivery, and how it influences the participants' morale. Based on the views of Creswell (2005), the design was employed to describe the activities of a group of employees working at DHAI instead of identifying the shared pattern of behaviour as what would have happened if an ethnographic design were employed. Therefore, in the current study, the design was employed to describe the case being studied.

A case study is particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 1998). The case study design that was used in this study is particularistic, as the researcher was concerned with focusing on a specific issue in order to understand the topic's general problem. Using the case study research design, the researcher managed to get an in-depth understanding of the role that internal communication plays at DHAI (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, it provided the researcher with an opportunity to understand the complexity of internal communication challenges with a government department. The researcher opted for this approach as the case study allowed the effective assessment of internal communication at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia.

3.4 Research philosophy

Research projects generally are different based on how they are conducted due to the research philosophy that informs the study. Wahynui (2010, p. 69) defines a research philosophy as "a belief about the way that the data of a particular phenomenon under investigation should be gathered, analysed and used". Therefore, the research philosophy is critical for ensuring that the researcher will be able to chose methods and processes through which sufficient knowledge for the research can be acquired.

Researchers use a variety of methodologies to identify, analyse, and understand various social phenomena within a social science context, which can typically be separated into quantitative and qualitative research approaches (Tuli, 2010:98; Jennings, 2001:20). Specific philosophies guide these methodologies (Jennings, 2001:20). Because the study followed a qualitative methodology, the study also employed an interpretivist philosophy.

The interpretivist philosophy was created as a response to the positivist's objectivism (Tuli, 2010:98; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006:1; Jennings, 2001:38). It claims that reality can only be completely comprehended if interaction with social phenomena takes place in their natural context and subjectively perceived, implying that social phenomena cannot be quantified or evaluated like physical objects (Tuli, 2010; Zikmund & Babin, 2013). Therefore, reality using the interpretivist philosophy is constructed and interpreted subjectively and only becomes meaningful through social and experiential situations (Malhotra, 2010; Zikmund & Babin, 2013).

This philosophy therefore contends that multiple realities can exist as a result of multiple perspectives of reality and the world in which it functions (Jennings, 2001:39). Qualitative research methodology is therefore considered to be better suited to increase the understanding of why things are the way they are in the social world and why people act in certain ways (Tuli, 2010:98).

3.5 Research approach

To achieve the objectives indicated earlier, the qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate for the study. The methodological approach's choice was because it reinforces a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of meaning and intentions that often define human interactions (Malhotra, 2010; Myers, 2013; Zikmund & Babin, 2013). The qualitative methodology is often described as any research approach that helps researchers generate findings without employing statistical analysis and quantification (Cresswell, 2003; Malhotra,

2010; Zikmund & Babin, 2013). In qualitative research, researchers study phenomena in their natural setting that implies that participants will behave in their typical manner.

Qualitative research is a multifaceted methodology that involves an interpretative and naturalistic approach to the topic being investigated (Malhotra, 2010; Zikmund & Babin, 2013). This aspect of the methodology enabled the researcher to develop a holistic picture concerning assessing the role of internal communication strategy at DHAI.

The qualitative approach was considered suitable for the current study, as the objective was to explore and assess the role that internal communication plays at DHAI. The qualitative research approach aimed to determine people's thoughts and emotions at a level that is considered deeper compared to what quantitative methodology can establish. Consequently, a qualitative methodology was therefore deemed to be the most appropriate approach to assess the role of internal communication in the empirical context of the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration in Windhoek, Namibia (Zikmund & Babin, 2013).

It imperative to note that qualitative research is also descriptive. This aspect allowed the researcher to describe the participants' experiences concerning internal communication at DHAI. This further helped the researcher confront some of the theoretical assumptions made at the beginning of the study. Additionally, the researcher was also able to comprehensively understand the meaning attached to participants' experience and decode the nature of the problem around the internal communication strategy at DHAI (Meyer, 2001; Malhotra, 2010; Zikmund & Babin, 2013). According to Mokhopadhyay and Gupta (2014), qualitative research

is a widely used in investigative studies, and the researcher also found it suitable for this study. Therefore, the researcher found the qualitative approach suitable for assessing internal communication practices at the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration.

Saunders *et al.* (2016) argued that an inductive approach is imperative when developing a deeper understanding of current theoretical perspectives. Since the study aimed to assess the role that internal communication plays at the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration, an inductive approach was considered appropriate for the current research. Meyers (2013) argues that inductive reasoning tends to be more explorative and relevant, especially when a bottom-up approach is employed to understand the data.

3.6 Study population

According to Borg *et al.* (1996, p220), population refers to the bigger cluster researchers desire to study. In this study, the target population was the 310 employees working at the Head Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Windhoek. These employees are also referred to as critical stakeholders in the internal communication processes literature.

3.7 Sampling strategies and sample size

According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), sampling is crucial to every study, and it refers to taking any portion of a population as a representation of the target population. As a result, it provides an alternative to a census where the researcher cannot study the whole population (Malhotra, 2010). The aspect of not being able to conduct the study using every member of the population

is caused by limited budgets and the duration through which the study is to be completed (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). Thus, in such circumstances, sampling makes research more manageable (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). The data collected is used to make inferences about the entire population or a group of the sample, and the aspect of representativeness is important (Creswell, 2013).

There are two major types of sampling strategies or techniques that are available to research, and these include probability and non-probability sampling (Reid & Bojanic, 2010). Probability sampling is when the chances of being included in the sample are calculated for each study population member (Reid & Bojanic, 2010; Zikmund & Babin, 2013). Consequently, in a probability sample, each member of the study population has an equal chance of being included (Malhotra, 2010; Zikmund & Babin, 2013). The probability sampling techniques are employed when the researcher has some knowledge of the problem (Reid & Bojanic, 2010; Malhotra, 2010). On the other hand, non-probability sampling is when sample selection is based on judgement and the chances that a member of the study population cannot be calculated (Kothari, 2004; Malhotra, 2010).

The circumstances through which researchers can employ non-probability sampling is when the research is exploratory, chances of sampling errors are small, and the study population is relatively homogeneous (Zikmund & Babin, 2013). Non-probability sampling is also employed when it is difficult for the researcher to ascertain how many people make up the study population. The current study followed a non-probability sampling method since not all the study population members had an equal chance of participation. A typical convenience and purposive sampling were followed to ensure that participants bring insights into the topic that

formed the current study's focus. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that purposive sampling is a method where participants who fit the typical characteristics of the population are selected and deemed a fair representation of the research project's sampling unit (Zimmerman, Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2011).

Qualitative research studies rely on relatively smaller samples of participants that the research would need to study in-depth (Hill, 2012). A purposive and convenient sample size of 25 participants, 12 males and 13 females in non-supervisory positions at DHAI was used. The study randomly select respondent from the senior management level, middle level management and subordinate staff of each of the six directorates and six divisions in DHAI. There are the Directorate of Visas, Permits, Passports and Citizenship; Directorate of National Population Register, Identification and Production; Directorate of National Civil Registration; Directorate of Immigration and Border Control; Directorate of Administration, as well as the Directorate of Refugee Administration. The divisions are Legal Support Services, Immigration and Border Control for the Regions, Human Resources, Finance, General services, Information Technology, Security and Risk Management, Refugee Programme Management, Refugee Reception and Settlement Area, Visas and Permits, Passport and Citizenship, National Population Identification and Production, and National Population Register. While Procurement, Transport, Public Relations Office, Internal Audit, Industrial Relations, Employee wellness, Creditors, Salaries, Reconciliation, Registry, Maintenance and helpdesk Support are some of the sections.

Creswell (2016) argues that 20 -30 participants' qualitative sample sizes are large enough to establish saturation. Non-supervisory participants were preferred in this study to generate

insights on how internal communication is perceived and how such insights could help people in supervisory and management positions to improve. Employees act as the Ministry's advocates to external surroundings (Rogala & Kaniewska-Seba, 2013) at the same time, they are the front officers with more responsibility of communicating workload challenges-progress towards performance goals, identifies professional development needs and opportunities (Supervisor Roles and responsibilities: Helping People Succeed CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, 2012). Which is believed to be an organizational learning concept that is rooted in a belief that the solution to all problems facing the public service lies in the transformation of the public servants themselves (Ferguson, 2019). Hence, the approach of making use of the bottom-up, people-centered framework to unlock the human potential in the public sector. The research attempts to place non-supervisory staff at the center of analysis and explore the views in which they are embedded as they are seen as the Ministry's advocate agencies.

3.8 Data collection methods

In a qualitative study, the most common method of data collection is face-to-face interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 108) argue that interviews are conversational events that researchers make with the purpose to "obtain a special kind of information" and can be highly structured, semi-structured and unstructured". For this study's objectives, due to the constraints posed by COVID-19, the data for the study was collected using online interviews via Zoom using a semi-structured interview process. During the online semi-structured interview process, "the interviewer commences with a set of interview themes but is prepared to vary the order in which questions are asked and to ask new questions in the context of the research situation" (Saunders *et al.,* 2016, p. 728).

Semi-structured questions in the interview guideline facilitated the process of obtaining specific data regarding internal communication at DHAI. Interview questions were constructed and mapped against the research questions to ensure alignment with the research objectives and consistency with constructs reviewed in the literature (Appendix A). During the interviews, the researcher started with an introduction and explanation of the main constructs to set the interview tone and ensure participants understand the questions' context. Consequently, well-chosen open-ended questions that aligned with the objectives of the study were asked. Semi-structured online interviews allowed for flexibility during data collection. The researcher was able to systematically probe questions that permitted a guided discussion, which also helped produce additional data (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Participants are generally more willing to participate in the interviews when compared to questionnaires since they are not required to write something (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The interviews also helped the researcher feel safe as they ensured no close contact could result in the further spread of coronavirus. During the data collection, the researcher conducted an initial screening to determine the participants' willingness to participate in the interview. This was established using a WhatsApp message, telephone call and emails. Through these platforms, the researcher provided participants with information concerning the research's background and objective. Furthermore, the consent forms were emailed to participants before the study. Upon indicating the willingness to participate, the interview date was confirmed and communicated to the participant using the email platform. Data for the current study were collected over a month between 23 September 2020 and 23 October 2020. The researcher conducted only one interview a day, save for the 23rd of October 2020 where 3 interviews were done. The researcher, before starting the interview, provided adequate information on the participant. Upon getting permission from the participant, interviews were recorded on Zoom to ensure that the discussions are kept for analysis. During the interviews, the researcher also took some handwritten notes (Merriam &

Tsidell, 2016). Most of the interviews that were done in this study lasted an average of 25 to 30 minutes. Twenty-five interviews were conducted until no new data emerged from the data, and saturation was achieved.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted before the final interviews with two participants with similar characteristics (Saunders *et al.,* 2016). The pilot interviews were done in the same way as planned with the actual interviews, with the sample sessions recorded on Zoom and handwritten notes were taken. The pilot test's objective was to assess the questions' effectiveness and identify possible challenges that could require the interview guide to be improved. Based on the pilot, a few questions were rephrased for the easing of understanding and clarity.

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis is the most crucial part of any research. Data analysis summarises collected data. It involves interpreting data gathered through analytical and logical reasoning to determine patterns, relationships or trends (Anastacia, 2017). It is a systematic approach whereby the researcher transforms data and what was collected or observed into findings. Data analysis is the process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided. Preliminary analysis of the information was sought through in-depth online interviews that were done during the fieldwork. However, a large part of the analysis was done after the fieldwork. The qualitative data interpretation involved organising information into units, synthesising, searching for meaningful patterns, and finally, understanding.

The interview recordings were transcribed, and the handwritten notes were transferred into an electronic format. The interview transcripts and related notes were uploaded into the Atlas. ti 8 qualitative data analysis software program (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). As recommended by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), all the transcriptions of the interviews were read to obtain a sense of the "major and minor stories" within the data (p. 194). Themes were identified by means of the number of repetitions of certain words. Coding of data was done to organise sections of text into key themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lindgreen et al., 2006). The data was analysed according to the themes (Given, 2008).

3.11 Trustworthiness

For qualitative research to be rigorous, it has to be transparent, credible, dependable, comparative and reflexive (Given, 2008). Whilst qualitative research may be characterised by methodological differences, demonstrating rigour and trustworthiness is critical (Saunders et al., 2016). A rigorous approach will ensure the validity of the data gathering process and analysis. To increase the sample's external validity, employees at the DHAI were selected (Kaski, Niemi, & Pullins, 2018). Good preparation before each interview aimed to control researcher error and support the trustworthiness of the data gathered. A thorough description of interview interpretations and perceptions contributed to data rigour (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, sufficient time was scheduled for each interview to ensure participants had a clear understanding of the questions and the interviewer was able to verify the meaning of the feedback (Saunders et al., 2016). To ensure the data's trustworthiness derived from interviews, the researcher was cognisant of possible interviewer and response bias and declared it accordingly (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). To limit the probability of interviewer bias, the researcher conducted all the interviews (Lindgreen et al., 2006). In a further attempt to restrict

interviewer bias, the interviewer limited tonal variations and non-verbal behaviour when participants responded to questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The inclusion of all informants' interviews and opinions supported the data's reliability and trustworthiness (Saunders et al., 2016). Researcher bias was limited by the accurate transcription of interviews and a systematic approach towards analysis of the data. Analysis results have been triangulated within the literature review to verify the meaning of the most dominant constructs and themes that surfaced from the data analysis.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Ethical behaviour is important in real life as much as it is important in the field of research, hence honesty and respect for individuals should be observed always (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2011). It is in line with such values that the researcher had ethical considerations for this study. The researcher sought permission and approval from relevant participants prior to research participation. Ethical approval was obtained from the ministry and the university Voluntary 'participants' rights and privacy were respected throughout the research study. Respondents' identities were protected hence the use of number codes instead of names. Collected data is being kept in a password restricted Google drive only accessible to the researcher. The researcher will retain all handwritten notes taken during the interview and audio recordings for five years.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter explored the research methodology, research design, research strategies, and research instruments employed in the study. The study used a qualitative research design, which followed the interpretive approach. This approach enabled the researcher to assess the

role of internal communication in the empirical context of DHAI. The next Chapter, chapter 4, contains the results and analysis of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the results of the study that was conducted in the context of the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration, Windhoek, Namibia. The study's broad aim was to assess the role of internal communication at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia. The study followed a case study, utilising online interviews, which the researcher conducted.

The presentation of data is through themes identified based on code generation. The analysis of the results begins with the description of the sample, moving to the emerging themes from the respondents' narratives. Participants' voices feature prominently in the description of the themes. The themes are discussed under relevant research questions following the flow of questions presented in Chapter 1. The sequence of questions is followed in organising this chapter. The findings are discussed, and to maintain confidentiality, participants are referred to and coded as DHAI 1 etc. The summarised presentation of findings is through the analysis and interpretation of the researcher.

4.2 Participants profile.

A total of 25 participants were involved in this study and were all from Windhoek, Head Office. Table 4.1 below shows the summary of the study participants. Generally, most of the participants indicated that they have been with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security for at least 5 years, with others having worked for the Department of Home

Affairs and Immigration since 1994. These findings show that the study's participants were
experienced and most of them were employed as immigration officers.

Table 4.1: Profile of the participants

Code	Gender	Experience	Responsibility
DHAI 1	Female	6 years, 10 months	Immigration Officer
DHAI 2	Female	11 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 3	Female	6 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 4	Female	6 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 5	Female	8 years	Human Resource Practitioner
DHAI 6	Male	10 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 7	Female	11 years	Information Officer
DHAI 8	Male	6 and a half years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 9	Female	9 years	Administration Officer
DHAI 10	Male	27 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 11	Female	5 years	Administration Officer
DHAI 12	Male	7 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 13	Female	7 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 14	Male	2 years	Immigration Officer

DHAI 15	Female	7 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 16	Female	5 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 17	Male	8 years	Accountant
DHAI 18	Female	10 years	Administration Officer
DHAI 19	Female	5 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 20	Male	7 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 21	Male	10 years	Refugee Administration Officer
DHAI 22	Female	17 years	Information Technology Officer
DHAI 23	Male	7 years	Immigration Officer
DHAI 24	Male	7 years	Administration Officer
DHAI 25	Male	7 years	Accountant

4.3 Dominant methods of communication

Welch (2012) argues that the purpose of internal communication in every organisation is to ensure internal stakeholder are served with relevant information, that could help build sustainable relationships and creating a sense of community within the organisation. Participants DHAI 2, DHAI 3, DHAI 6, and DHAI 13 explained that the most dominant methods of international communication in the Department included newsletters, meetings,

circulars, notice boards and emails. Participant DHAI 2 indicated that internal communication is done using a combination of verbal and documented.

Furthermore, DHAI 3, DHAI 15, DHAI 18 and DHAI 20 mentioned that, in recent times, communication internally had been managed through the dashboard, WhatsApp and emails. Some of the participants mentioned that their departmental heads also use WhatsApp to communicate with their staff. All the participants mentioned that these platforms are used for news, knowledge sharing and other day-to-day operational information in the Department. Strategic information is mostly relayed through the circular and the dashboard. The narratives showed that respondents perceived the communication received through this platform to be primarily work-related. Concerning the use of WhatsApp, most participants agreed that at times it is used for social life in the organisation, and the following quote sums this:

> *"Partial 50:50, sometimes just verbal and then the other 50% is documented, and it causes a lot of confusion because different people understand the message differently. Yeah. Maybe it would help if they broke it down and make it simple. (*Participant DHAI 2).

> *"Noticeboards to what we call it to emails if they are electronic communication. It is now becoming more electronic. Yeah, I believe that it's a huge improvement for the Ministry since we are moving. We are in a world that is moving, vibrating from the old culture to develop the end technology developed in a technology world whereby we are required to be using." (*Participant DHAI 3).

"The dominant means of communication for me was mostly one-on-one session". (Participant DHAI 5).

*"Let us see the most dominating method has been through noticeboards." (*Participant DHAI *6).*

"OK like OK, most of most of the communications it used to be face to face communications taking place through the meetings, especially between the colleagues or between the separate read level and the employees". (Participant DHAI 7).

"For me, it has been internal memos, posters in the elevators, and most recently emails". (Participant DHAI, 16).

The benefit of emails as a means of internal communication was also noted in the study. Participant DHAI 3 stated that "emails are the best method of communication because they provide a trace, which uses useful when there is need to revisit the issue". Furthermore, the analysis of the results also showed that the use of online communication is professional, as stated by participant DHAI 11:

*"It is professional. 98% is professional. It has to do with our jobs here at the Ministry. Technical questions or who can do it or who knows someone that can do it." (*Participant DHAI 11).

The analysis of the results showed that within DHAI, the word social was constructed by participants to the study as a meaning of communication that happens on WhatsApp and Facebook. Some indicated that, for these platforms to be respected, there is a need to continuously emphasise that communication on these platforms should be work-related than

private. Consequently, the interviewees' narratives also showed the need for aligning communication channels with the outcomes that the Ministry expects from them. For instance, several of the participants in the study used the metaphor "knowledge sharing around WhatsApp groups" (DHAI, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 19, 22) to describe the method of communication.

Interviewee DHAI 5 noted that, the intranet should be used in cases where the intention is to provide readily accessible messages to employees and could be easily achieved using the ministry's dashboard. DHAI 2 said that to avoid confusion, face-to-face communication could be used when the intention is to create an in-depth understanding and providing employees with feedback, resulting in much stronger sense of empowerment of the DHAI employees.

The implications of these findings are that the Ministry needs to choose the medium and align it with the expected outcomes. Ewing *et al.* (2019) argue that organisations can use social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, with its employees, especially those that are already on these platforms. Past studies show that these platforms are important in motivating employees in the organisation to share information and could potentially work in creating loyal brand ambassadors (Ewing *et al.,* 2019). Participant DHAI 23 notes:

> *"The biggest mistake is leaping to a solution without considering usage and what the end goal is." (Participant DHAI 23).*

Among the various communication channels used to engage employees at the DHAI as discussed by interviewees, online internal communication platforms appeared as most used by the participants to communicate internally.

4.4 Social media and the internal communication strategy

These findings demonstrate that the Internet and social media are critical platforms for enhancing internal communication. Furthermore, these findings also support earlier claims by other researchers that argue that (Araújo & Miranda, 2020). Investing in a more vibrant infrastructure for social media communication within DHAI is critical because it facilitates internal communication, especially now with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that encourages social distancing. This aspect was emphasised by participant DHAI 10. Furthermore, the analysis of the study showed that it is important because it helps the Department overcome some challenges in terms of barriers and space. This was summarised by several participants who stated that:

"Internal and intranet are currently used by the ministry, whereby people are been sent messages using emails, boards or SMS or WhatsApp groups or you name them all those channels" (Participant DHAI 2).

*"Yeah, I believe that it is a huge improvement for the Ministry since we are moving. We are in a world that is moving, vibrating from the old culture to develop the end technology developed in a technology world whereby we are required to be using." (*Participant DHAI 3).

*We have Facebook page yes WhatsApp. (*Participant DHAI 7)

"To advance themselves when it comes to the latest, we need to improve on internal communication with regards to technology" (Participant DHAI 10).

"Each division is there WhatsApp groups where they will share information on. They are appropriate to use WhatsApp groups". (Participant DHAI 19)

The analysis of the narratives of the interviewees suggested that social media training was not only identified as imperative for enhancing the internal communication strategy, and employee engagement. This view has been previously argued for in prior studies (Carim & Warwick, 2013; Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017). This was mentioned by the following participants:

*"PR is needed in social media communication" (*Participant DHAI 10)

"There is need for appropriate use of social media channels". (Participant DHAI 19)

Therefore, it is important for DHAI to ensure that there are clear policies for its employees to follow, especially with concerns to what is posted, who posts, and several other online expectations. Based on the quotes above, it shows that training on social media usage, as part of the broader ministry's internal communication is required. This training is critical in supporting open internal communication, and ensure the protection of employees, especially from offensive content. The training also helps overcome ministerial management's concerns around employees, perhaps posting inappropriate content.

The benefits of social media and other online communication platforms were identified in previous studies (Dreher, 2014; Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch (2017), the interviewees also highlighted that there is a need for employees at the DHAI to be educated and trained about internal social media communication. This was stated by the following participants:

"There is need for workshop or training courses for new media in the ministry". (Participant DHAI 3).

"If social is done right, so employees understand the connection to their jobs, it can build community and engagement and promote knowledge sharing and efficiency." (Participant DHAI 6).

"I think you do need social media guidelines more so than a policy that you can teach people. Once people feel confident and comfortable posting, they will." (Participant DHAI 11).

"Adoption of internal social media is a learning curve for some employees here; therefore, they need training on how to use certain social media platforms, their benefits for employees and the organization, as well as how to share internal social content externally" (Participant DHAI 14).

"We need to revamp our social media guidelines in the ministry just to make them much simpler and more straightforward, because I think a lot of times like what gets in the way is people just not knowing. Are they allowed to share? Will they get in trouble?" (Participant DHAI 16)

The use of social media as part of the internal communication strategy is found in this study as critical in information sharing, especially in this time of the pandemic. This finding is consistent with past communication research that notes that social media plays a crucial role in information sharing (Ewing, Men & O'Neil, 2019). Therefore, the use of social media as part

of the internal communication strategy by the DHAI implies that it is critical in facilitating collaboration, which is important in achieving long-term organisational goals, which could also help the DHAI to enhance employee engagement (Verčič et al., 2012), and relationships among employees. This was reiterated by participant DHAI 10 above.

4.5 Challenges of implementing internal communication strategy.

The thematic analysis performed on the data yielded challenges of internal communication within the DHAI. Data gathered for this study indicate that internal communication within the Department is generally slow, which is sometimes due to a slow system. Participant DHAI 19 noted that when the participant was still stationed at the border, most of the communication would reach them a day before or after the due date, and in such situations, communication would not have served its purpose. Participants DHAI 2, DHAI 5, DHAI 21 and DHAI 25 also noted that internal communication, even with online platforms, is slowed, and this was attributed to an old ICT infrastructure. The following quote summarises these views:

"Since we joined administrators, communication online has been slow." (DHAI 2).
Participant DHAI 1 also noted that what slowed communication between employees and their supervisors was lack of coordination and a strategic approach to internal communication. This situation seemed to have deteriorated over several years due to a lack of a coherent internal communications approach. This view is summarised by participant DHAI 1 as follows:

"OK, is this lack of communication between the supervisors and us. Now what will be done, and if we do not communicate to the supervisors or about how do I synchronise what we want to be done or what changes need to be done." (Participant DHAI 1).

Further analysis of the results not only lamented the lack of efforts made on both sides, that is, supervisors and employees, to improve the situation, but also mentioned the constraints and challenges involved:

> *"Regardless of the dashboard and many meetings that we normally have, it is difficult a relationship because what you do not have is a regular fertile dialogue across as you would wish, and COVID-19 made things more difficult. And it's always easier to say than it is to do because for dialogue to happen and to be creative, there's got to be a willingness to engage at both ends, and there is not always. I think both sides can stand some criticism, and I think the simple truth is that it requires time, energy, and human resources to make it happen."* (Participant DHAI 14).

The importance of communicating has already been established and suggested in past studies (Chapleo, 2015), but these findings, especially these challenges, provide a more in-depth perspective in terms of what the current internal communication strategy at DHAI needs to do to be more effective. Understanding these challenges is critical in ensuring zero ambiguity in the information that is communicated to employees. Though communications have normally been done online, these challenges imply that relational communication is critical for the success of the Internal communication strategy at DHAI.

Given that communication in the ministry is also done through social media channels, its use also presents several challenges to DHAI, and this is consistent with previous studies (Buettner, 2015; Ewing *et al.,* 2019; Opgenhaffen & Claeys, 2017). While the above section has presented positive views about the use of social media for internal communication, some participants

discussed challenges with its use that affects the internal communication and even image of DHAI. One of the challenges of using social media as part of the DHAI's internal communication strategy was the differences in ages among its employees, as some are millennials, while others are baby boomers, who may not be so engaged in using social media for communication. To support this, earlier research notes that, most of the employees in organisations, especially frontline workers and blue-collar ones do not have access to computers and internet and they cannot be easily reached through social media communications (Men & Bowen, 2017).

Some interviewees also discussed concerns and risks related to employee posting inappropriate, confidential, or negative comments on internal social media.

> *As the ministry, when we ran out of passports, we had meetings and we discussed we are not supposed to disclose this to public. However, some people communicated it and became viral. To discuss it outside, you know some things are best kept internal, so it is also a matter of keeping it under the radar when it.* (Participant DHAI 2).
>
> *"People can share things they shouldn't share…, like confidential documents or people disclosing the salary of someone."* (Participant DHAI 13).
>
> *"The biggest risk from reputation management standpoint is that they will create a conversation…that could be negative to our brand."* (Participant DHAI 14).
>
> *"There's a sense of loss of control. Concern that messages would be undermined by the employees."* (Participant DHAI 21)
>
> *"I think if you boil it all down, it's control. Social media gives employees a sense of control…(but) we (the ministry) can't control it."* (Participant DHAI 25)

Past studies have also identified internal communication as a key success factor for successful organisations (Chapleo, 2015; Liu, 2015). This current study revealed in more depth the complexities of internal communications, as the study observed that employees have been accumulating many negative perceptions over the years due to a lack of consistent internal communications strategy. This could have been necessitated through the practice of supervisors or management limiting themselves writing circular letters and neglected the relational aspect of internal communication. The relational aspect of internal communication is critical for building and maintaining positive relationships with internal audiences (Ramjaun, 2020).

4.6 Strategic role of internal communication

To be strategic, "internal communication should be driven by an overall goal of strategic management" (Hume & Leornard, 2014, p. 297). In all the narratives, the participants in the study did recognise to some degree the role of internal communication in achieving strategic goals of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security. For instance, several participants in the study noted the following and supported the idea that internal communication plays a strategic role at DHAI:

> *"It does, and internal communication is critical for the ease of workflow, and it helps people realise their functions. Therefore, internal communication is a strategic aspect of service delivery in the ministry".* (Participant DHAI 2).

> *Internal communication plays a strategic role, yes. If the ministry is to reach out to get its objectives strategic objectives, then internal communication is important for that.* (Participant DHAI 3).

"I would say yes because you do not meet all the staff members every day." (Participant DHAI 4).

"It does because you cannot have everybody together at the same time and hence why you can probably have a manager from each Department representing that Department". (Participant DHAI 10)

Despite the positive aspects of the current internal communication strategy within DHAI, the analysis of some narratives from the participants showed that there is limited strategic role of the internal communication processes. Participant DHAI 13 notes that "*sometimes internal communication within the ministry is not strategic because there are times our supervisors are not considered part of senior management, and in that case, internal communication does not play a strategic role*". This finding appears to be consistent with past studies that argued that if the communicator is not part of the senior management of the organisation, then internal communication will not fulfil the strategic role in an organisation (Hume, & Leonard, 2014; Steyn, 2007). This view was further supported by the narratives of other participants listed as follows:

*"Uh, when you are communicating information within it leaves with other employees to feel less important in the ministry or in the workplace". (*Participant DHAI 11)

"I believe if a senior is well equipped and know what they are doing, I believe they are also able to pass it on to their union and then they contribute and all they meet the objectives or or the strategic objective or but that is not the case. (Participant DHAI 13)

"In most cases, our internal communication function is not closely involved with the strategy or implementation processes". (Participant DHAI 17).

*"For me, in order for the internal communication strategy to be strategic, it was supposed to be inclusive, especially in its formulation". (*Participant DHAI 21)

A further analysis of these narratives shows that the development of the internal communication strategy did not follow the participative approach, which is often crucial in enhancing employee engagement and increase the quality-of-service delivery. These aspects were echoed by participant DHAI 2, who stated that*because you cannot have everybody together at the same time, and hence why you can probably have a manager from each Department representing that Department. Yeah. And then conveying the message. It makes the workflow makes it easier because. If you must call everybody, then it helps the work. But if it is one person we keep. Flowing and does not affect the service delivery".* This was amplified by Participants DHAI 11 who stated that *"Uh, when you are communicating information within it leaves with other employees to feel less important in the ministry or in the workplace"* and DHAI 21 who also highlighted that "f*or me, in order for the internal communication strategy to be strategic, it was supposed to be inclusive, especially in its formulation".*

The quotes from participant DHAI 2, DHAI 4, DHAI 11 and DHAI 21 imply that the development of the Internal Communication strategy did not provide room for feedback and input from different levels of the Ministry, especially the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration. However, in all the narratives provided by the study participants, there was more participation in internal communication strategy implementation. In such cases, most

participants noted that it was necessary to improve the internal communication levels of the Ministry to develop the strategic consciousness, which is critical in leading to a well understood strategic internal communication.

4.7 Service delivery and internal communication

For the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration to deliver services to the public, it demands coordination and regular internal communication among interacting employees. However, the analysis of the narratives shows mixed results on the role of communication in enhancing service delivery. On the one hand, some participants perceive that internal communication is critical in enhancing service delivery. Participant DHAI 2 notes that internal communication is critical for service delivery in the Ministry *"as it helps both employees and supervisors to ensure service delivery"*. This view was supported by the following narratives:

> *"Yes, it creates awareness, improve service delivery, improve staff morale, efficiency and timely in terms of decision making. It enables us to be involved in the work, reduces frustration, encourages us to be productive and reduces conflict."* (Participant DHAI 8).

> *"Internal communication promotes better understanding of the task to be accomplished".* (Participant DHAI 13).

Further analysis of the results showed that internal communication is important for ensuring that service delivery is satisfactory and is a tool that can be used to build respect, loyalty, and trust, as was noted by participant DHAI 8 above. The study's findings also established a link between internal communication and employee engagement, as was identified in prior studies (*see* Verčič, 2021). This is summed up through the views of participant DHAI 9 to the study

who stated that *"yes, it generates commitment and cooperation when information is available."* On the other hand, several participants voice out that internal communication does very little to enhance service delivery at DHAI and this is summarised using the following quotes:

"The current internal communication doesn't have any impact on the service delivery of the ministry". (Participant DHAI 15)

"*Has there been ever have there been effective in service delivery?"* (Participant DHAI 16).

"*When? Service delivery at Home Office?.* (Participant DHAI 24)

Based on the views of participant DHAI 23, it can be argued that there is a connection between internal communication and employee engagement. This implies that, with improved internal communication, engagement is likely to be increased because employees will become emotionally attached to other employees, which helps them understand what is generally expected of them. Also, through employee engagement that comes through with effective and strategic internal communication, employees can have all the information they could require for the job and are often presented with opportunities to develop and improve. The findings of this current study are thus consistent with previous studies that measured the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement (Tkalac Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017; Welch, 2011). Consequently, employee engagement is critical for DHAI based on the study's findings, and when DHAI can foster employee engagement, it means its internal communication improves.

4.8 Employee morale

Past studies have identified several benefits of internal communication that are strategic to the organisation, including enhancing employee commitment (Dolphin, 2005; Hume & Leonard, 2014; Meyer & De Wet, 2007), improved employee morale (Asif & Sargeant, 2000; Hume & Leornard, 2014; Yates, 2006). For the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security, strategic internal communication has the additional theoretical benefit of helping the Ministry, specifically the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration, navigate its complex environment to achieve a single strategic intent.

Employees spend most of their time at work, and employees must receive satisfaction from the work they do. If this is achieved, it means aspects of absenteeism, loss of motivation, and other negative attributes. Results on the aspects of internal communication and employee morale show that when communicated, team members are willing to help one another, thus increasing other employees' morale. For instance, participant DHAI 2 mentioned that:

> *"because someone has communicated that they stay 60 kilometres away from work, she's allowed to go a bit early because she communicated and it's understandable."* (Participant DHAI 2).

The analysis of the results also indicated that the strategic communication at DHAI, which is largely becoming online, presents employees with unplanned change events, which makes their morale decrease. This is worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic that has resulted in them receiving email communications from clients of the Ministry. Thus, participant DHAI 3 was

critical of the role that strategic internal communication plays on employee morale and provided a mixed view:

> *"And it has been ineffective. Judging from as I say, judging from the old way we used to do things, it has changed or improved."* (Participant DHAI 3).

However, participant DHAI 4 expressed that the internal communication system is clogged, and this is affecting their work. This complaint is summed up as follows:

> *"Emails are full, or we do not have time to check their emails because we are working on other things."* (Participant DHAI 4).

4.9 Alignment of internal communication with strategy

Generally, most participants tend to agree that communication among themselves is essential for effective performance within DHAI. Participants DHAI 15, DHAI 2, DHAI 23, and DHAI 25 argue that the current internal communication strategy at DHAI is somehow aligned with the Ministry's strategy and mandate. Furthermore, the analysis of their narratives shows that with reliable communication channels, DHAI can collect and disseminate strategic information that helps them in carrying out their duties. However, when such channels fail, it also means essential tasks could be delayed, omitted, or done wrongly. Participant DHAI 11 also noted that:

> "Y*es, internal communication plays a strategic role in ensuring that the ministry is delivering on its mission and vision. Yeah, it does well, and it is well aligned to the mandate and strategy.*" (Participant DHAI 11).

Apart from just being aligned, the study also found that internal communication has improved greatly over the years. Participant DHAI 2 notes that:

"Yes, it is very much aligned. It had improved over the years because when we started, it was terrible. I was based at the border and would always be the last to get information." (Participant DHAI 2).

The study's findings showed that strategic alignment of internal communication is critical for enhanced decision making for ministry management and supervisors. Given that internal communication plays a pivotal role in an organisation's success, aligning the internal communication to what the Ministry does should be of critical importance.

4.10 Summary of the chapter

The identified major internal communication channels employed by DHAI. These channels include newsletters, noticeboards, face to face meetings, emails, and the dashboard. Most of the participants have worked at DHAI long enough to understand the dynamics of the internal communication aspects. In terms of specific themes, mixed results were obtained, though overall, participants appreciated the role internal communication plays in service delivery, employee engagement, and employee morale. They also indicated that the current internal communication, though with weaknesses, aligns with the Ministry's strategy and mandate.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Internal communication is the science of "managing interdependence and building mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its employees" (Men & Bowen, 2017, p. 12). There has been an increased focus on investigating internal communication in organisations (Verčič, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2012, p. 223). This interest has been generated by its role in the organisational success (Tkalac Verčič, 2019).

The main goal of this study was to assess the role of internal communication at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia. To achieve this main objective, the study also pursued secondary objectives to examine the challenges currently being faced by the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration in implementing the internal communication strategy. Furthermore, the study also analysed how internal communication affects service delivery within the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration. Additionally, the study also assessed the influence that DHAI's internal communication strategy has on employee morale.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the study's conclusions and provide recommendations on internal communication at the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration. It also provides suggestions for further research on aspects of internal communication in government departments.

5.2 Summary of findings

The summary of findings of this study are discussed based on the study's objectives. The objectives of the study were formulated for the researcher to unpack and solve the research problem. Specific objectives and their summary of findings are grounded on the results discussed in Chapter 4 of the study. Therefore, the following summary of findings are presented concerning this study:

- **To examine challenges faced by the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration**

The study identified several internal communication challenges that could be affecting the implementation of the Ministry's internal communication strategy. These challenges are context-related and structural, including general communication being slow, lack of communication with supervisors and the general lack of desire to improve internal communication. Strategic internal communication has a role to play in ensuring these challenges faced by DHAI are overcome. This needs to be done by raising strategic consciousness so that employees at DHAI can interpret the Ministry's strategic intent within their area of work.

Based on the analysis of the narratives that participants provided, this study concludes that there is a poor understanding of the role of internal communication within the DHAI. This is consistent with previous studies where it has been argued that several employees, even in contemporary organisations, often cite that communication within their organisations remains an area that requires continuous improvement (Jaupi & Llaci, 2015). Most participants even emphasised the need to ensure this and other expectations of internal communication are

addressed. This is critical because it allows DHAI to build understanding in terms of the role of internal communication within the organisation.

- **To analyse how internal communication affects service delivery within the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration**

Internal communication was found to be a critical antecedent of effective service delivery within the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration. Based on the findings, this study concluded that DHAI must ensure that employees are aware that they are the ambassadors of the Ministry, and there is a need for them to portray themselves as friendly, professional, and helpful to the public. Given that the DHAI deals with people daily, the study concludes that employees must be motivated through DHAI internal communication strategy to enhance open and honest dialogue with all stakeholders.

- **To assess the influence that DHAI's internal communication strategy has on employee morale.**

The data analysed through this study shows that there are some elements of internal communication fulfilling strategic roles. However, this study concluded that a deeper analysis of the data would imply that the internal communication strategy at DHAI does very little to fulfil the aspect of being strategic. There is some evidence that internal communication does function more strategically, though with minimal effect. The analysis of the results shows that DHAI's internal communication fulfils primarily roles that fall within tactical and supervisory and do not go beyond that. This conclusion is consistent with other past studies conducted in the private sector (Hume & Leornard, 2014; Steyn, 2007). Since the data collected were not

from senior management, this could explain the inability of internal communication to fulfil its strategic role.

The reasons that could be attributed to this non-strategic focus of internal communication at DHAI could be the general lack of knowledge and understanding of its strategic role, limited time, and limited investment of resources in the function by DHAI. These results have been concluded as critical in limiting the strategic focus of internal communication (Anheier, 2005; Burnett, 2007; Grimshaw & Mike, 2008; Lewis, 2007).

The implication of internal communication not functioning strategically at DHAI is that there is a high potential for lack of strategic alignment within the Department. As has been suggested by the literature, the study also concluded that internal communication plays a strategic role in enhancing employee morale and engagement. These aspects were consistent with previous studies' conclusions (Dolphin, 2005, Meyer & De Wet, 2007; Yates, 2006).

5.3 Recommendations of the study

Based on the above summary of findings, this study makes several recommendations. Firstly, DHAI would benefit as an organisation if their internal communication functioned more strategically, given their important role as a government ministry. To achieve this, internal communication activities at DHAI must be strategically aligned with the ministry's mandate and key operational goals. This is critical in that it has the potential to build commitment and enhance the morale of employees within DHAI.

Secondly, the study recommends that employees must be encouraged to learn how to implement the DHAI's strategic intent of the internal communication strategy within their area of work. This is critical in enhancing the effective implementation of the internal communication strategy. Doing so will ensure that there is coordinated effort of the whole organisation and could be helpful in limiting conflicts as the organisation will be pulling in one direction. Thirdly, the internal communication infrastructure needs to be considered so that actions and words of supervisors and the organisation's values are reflected in all channels. Furthermore, there is need for striking balance between online and offline internal communications, as there could be considerable number of employees that could be offline and may missed online communications.

Lastly, DHAI could provide training and support for communicators to strengthen their skills. This recommendation is generally important in that through the provision of communication tools, employees and the wider organisation could be able to improve their communication culture, and this has positive implications on employee engagement and morale.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The study assessed the effectiveness of the strategic role of internal communication in achieving staff morale and the alignment of goals and mandate within the Ministry of Home Affair, Immigration, Safety and Security. However, this study only focused on a single ministry, and this implies that the study's results cannot be generalised beyond the context of MHAISS.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

Based on the reviewed literature in Chapter 2, there is limited literature that has focused on internal communication in government ministries and Department in developing countries such as Namibia. Firstly, as the research was limited to Department of Home Affairs and Immigration, future research is needed to investigate the strategic role of internal communication in other government departments and ministries to generalise results. Secondly, future studies can also conduct comparative research between government departments and private sector companies, to generate much more deeper insights. Lastly, the current study used a qualitative research approach, and future studies are recommended to employ quantitative methodologies to generate insights about the cause and effect between internal communication and service delivery, internal communication, and employee engagement.

5.6 Conclusions

This study assessed the strategic role of internal communication in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security in Namibia. Results of the study offers good insights and an understanding of the internal communication processes, especially in the Department of Home Affairs and Immigration. Furthermore, the results also offer a good starting point for improving the internal communication practice within DHAI.

The study also concludes that based on the findings, internal communication in the DHAI does not fulfill the criteria for being strategic as identified in literature. Instead, internal communication at DHAI fulfils primarily operational and tactical roles of communication. There is some evidence that shows internal communication in DHAI does provide a strategic

role, but a closer analysis of the evidence implies that it is more on the theoretical criteria than on the strategic one.

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Research Instrument

Interview guide

The purpose of this study is to assess the strategic role of internal communication of the Ministry of Home affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security. Based on this, I would like to ask you a few questions, taking approximately 25-30 minutes and I guarantee you that this information is for academic purposes and there will be no disclosure of names.

1. How long have you been working for the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration?
2. In your years of working at MHAI, how do you explain your experience regarding the nature of internal communication? What have been the dominant methods of communicating, since you joined the ministry?
3. In your view, do you think that internal communication plays a strategic role in ensuring the ministry delivers it mandate? If yes, why? If not, why?
4. In your view, how has been the morale of employees at the ministry of Home Affairs? Has it been well and why? Has it been badly, and why?
5. Do you think internal communication has been enhancing the morale and engagement of employees at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration? If yes, why? If not why?
6. The way internal communication has been practices at the Ministry of Home Affairs, do you think it has been effect in terms of improving employee morale? If yes, why? If not, why?
7. Based on your experience working at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, do you think the current internal communication strategy is aligned to the ministry's strategy and mandate? Please explain.
8. Has the implementation of the internal communication strategy been as the organisation expected?
9. Has there been some challenges? If yes, kindly indicate three challenges that are currently being faced with the implementation of the internal communication strategy?
10. Any other thoughts regarding the internal communication processes at MHAI and employee morale.