

The Impact of Poor Communication on Church Administration and Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Communication is the life-wire of any meaningful relationship. Without communication, organizations, individuals, and members may find administration difficult. Upon this background, the writer identifies the problem of poor communication in church administration with adverse effects on the members and the entire Church. The research employed a descriptive method to validate the challenge of poor communication in church administration. The study, therefore, reveals, among other factors responsible for poor communication, include increasing need for information, message interference, complex information, Multi-Meaning words, and perceptions. The research proffers solutions such as active engagement of listening skills during communication in church administration. The researcher concluded church administrators must ensure that communication is well established, nourished, and sustained to improve relationships between all church members and achieve Church overall goal.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the veritable tools Christian leaders and church administrators use to achieve the Church's overall goal and specific objectives. There is no gain in saying that the entire functions of Christian leaders and church administrators revolve around communication. Hence, communication plays a

prominent role in Christian leadership and church administration. Communication has been viewed from various perspectives, from the entertainment industry, business organizations, religious organizations, and even political institutions. The writer would like to address the communication from a formal organizational point of view.

Communication has been seen as a process of sharing information with other individuals through a thought or an idea conceived by a manager to achieve a particular purpose (Certo 1989, 324). Communication is very common in the field of management. Since Christian leadership is about managing human and material resources in the Church for maximum impact on society, prospective Christian leaders and church administrators must be very sensitive to this fundamental issue.

If communication plays this prominent role in organizations, its devastating effects could be imagined. Hence the need to delve into what may constitute poor communication in the church leadership and administration. The Church as an organized body can also feel the significant impact of communication in her administration and leadership. However, evidence of poor communication in some contemporary challenges reveals that communication needs to be addressed among the stakeholders concerned. Hence, the paper seeks to clarify the concept of communication and church administration; discusses possible factors that may be responsible for poor communication. The article further explains the brunt of poor communication in church administration and finally suggests listening skills as a tool in combating poor communication in church administration and leadership.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Communication

Communication is, without question, the most valuable skill any manager can possess. It is the link between ideas and action, the process that generates profit. Communication has also been seen as a glue that binds people together in meaningful relationships, personal or professional. In an organization, it is the ability to communicate that connects people to others in an organization, an industry, and society (Baron et al. 2008, 285). This statement stresses the vitality of communication, an effective one for healthy and productive organizations, communities, and families. This makes its skillfulness as crucial as the very heart of the enterprise, private or public, functions effectively.

Communication is more than just a way to get ideas across or exchange points of view. It is a process by which people interact with others and seek out information essential to their daily lives, allowing them to control their work circumstances. This implies that communication is relational and can never be without an appropriate relationship between two or more people. Hence, communication can be said to be a process involving the sender and receivers who encode messages transmitted by various media and may be impeded by noise (Baron et al. 2008, 286). It is worth noting from this definition that human beings are not the only beings that communicate. Everything that has life can send and receive a message from another being. Also, inanimate objects like sand, oceans, books, chairs, wood, and iron could communicate to other beings but may not be able to receive feedback. People are the only living organisms known to communicate with signals and signs and through symbols with agreed-upon meanings.

Hence, effective communication stresses the importance of mutual understanding of the meaning intended for a message without bias. Baron Buttruss that if communication is taking a

transfer of meaning, then for everyone who is a party in the communication process, successful communication implies mutual understanding of the sent message (Baron et al. 2008, 286). Communication, therefore, becomes effective as both the sender and the receiver can decode the intended meaning of the message sent with an appropriate response for feedback.

Generally, there are four communication levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and mass/public communication. Within the framework of this paper, the writer will dwell more on interpersonal and organizational because the topic deals with communication among Church which relates with one another within a particular corporate setting which is religious. While intrapersonal communication entails sending messages to various parts of the body, interpersonal deals with communication between people verbally and non-verbally with the hope of transferring meaning from one person to another. On the other hand, organizational communication takes place in an organization where messages are sent through various layers of authority using various channels to discuss topics of interest with the group members. The last level, mass or public, entails sending messages from one person or source to many people simultaneously through television, the internet, or print media (Baron et al. 2008, 287).

Church Administration

Many scholars have described the administration based on their understanding, their context, and most importantly, their practical exposure to its practices in the Church and other organizations. Ayodele (1998, 1) opines that administration is a pervasive action since it is a systematic ordering of affairs and calculated uses of resources to make things happen. From this definition, the author identified three keywords that are critical to administration: order (structure organization), calculating (planned program), and making wanted things happen which has to do with the achievement of the objectives. Also, the administration has been seen as a process that efficiently

completes activities with and through people (Zubairu 2020, 112 quoting Ayodele 1998, 1). Thus, administration can be regarded as an umbrella under which management and leadership are shielded. In other words, leadership and management are carried out under an administrator to achieve any organization's overall aims and objective. Adetunji (2010, 3) corroborates this avows that "leadership entails sharing the vision, administration works towards how to do necessary things that would make the vision accomplished while management is targeted towards ensuring things are done in a right manner."

The word church refers to the people of God who become one body by being born again with Christ as the head as seen in various passages such as Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23, 3: 10-21, 5: 23-32; Col.1:18; Heb. 12: 23 (Zubairu 2020, 113 quoting Kunhiyop 2012, 150). In essence, a local church is the fellowships of believers in Jesus who have been saved, baptized, and have agreed to continue to do the will of the master who has called them. It is worth noting that doing the will of God is paramount to believers since that was also important to Jesus as he says, "my food is to do the will of my father who is in heaven." Thus any true and faithful believers must prioritize the will of God. Zubairu (2020, 113) further submits that the Church's primary purpose is evangelizing the world and producing mature, stable, and holy Christians.

The Church, therefore, has been viewed as an organized system in which functions and responsibilities are shared among the informed workers who will fill various departmental positions created as necessities for moving the Church forward (Adeniji 2008, 1). Some scholars submit that Church is a local assembly. For example, Mills, quoted by Oladeji (2007, 3), opines that a church is a local congregation of baptized believers in Christ who voluntarily band themselves together to carry out the work of Christ. Bolaji, quoted by Nihinlola (2020, 26), equally submits that so many names are used to portray the Church in the Bible, among which are: "the body of Christ,

the bride of Christ, the flock of God, the vineyard of God, the garden of God, etc." For the reviewer, the word church goes beyond the local congregation because it has to do with the coming together of the saved and baptized believers from all walks of life.

Therefore, Church administration involves providing spiritual organization leadership to a church system; it involves every congregation member as the Pastor takes the lead (Zubairu 2020, 114). According to Charles Tidwell (1985, 27), Church Administration is the "leadership which equips the church to be the church and to do the work of the church." Ishola (2019, 132) loudly maintains that the role of Pastor as chief administrator officer of the Church should not be ceded for anything. From these submissions, the church administration can be said to be means of equipping believers who make up the Church for maximum participation in the great commission, which is the hallmark goal of the Church.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POOR COMMUNICATION

Certo (1989, 327) categorized factors that are often times responsible for poor communication in an organization into two. Namely: Macro and Micro communication barriers.

Macro communication barriers hinder successful communication in general communication as these factors relate primarily to the communication environment and the larger world (Pancrizio & Pancrizio 1981). These include the following:

- The increasing need for information. The consistent changes in society make the need for information more and more important, which tends to overload the communication networks and eventually resorts to distorted communication. Minimizing the effect of this barrier requires that Christian leaders and church administrators take steps to ensure that church members

are not overloaded with information. Still, they must ensure that only the information critical to the performance of their jobs are transmitted to them.

- The need for increasing complex information. The invention of new technological tools makes most people face difficult communication situations in their everyday lives. Church organizations are not excluded. When church administrator makes an effort to emphasize simplicity in communication, the effect of this barrier would be lessened. In addition, the Church or Church staff members must be given adequate training to deal with the more technical areas.
- Multi-language usage in the organization. The Church or organization with international figures who communicate in foreign languages is another factor responsible for poor communication. Hence, Christian leaders or church administrator who deals with foreign members needs to be familiar not only with their languages but also with their culture. Certo (1989, 327) opines that knowledge of a foreign language may be of little value if individuals don't know which words, phrases, and actions are culturally acceptable.

Micro Communication barriers, on the other hand, hinder successful communication in a specific communication situation as they relate directly to communication variables such as the message, the source, and the destination (Burton 1977, 4-6). These include:

- The source's view of the destination. The source in any communication situation tends to view the destination in a specific way and influence the messages by this view. For instance, an individual may take a different approach to communicating with the informed and uninformed learners. This also happens in the Church as Pastor diversifies his message because of the nature and

characteristics of the audience in mind. When the audience perceives the attitudes of the source negatively, communication may be affected. Hence, church leaders and administrators should keep an open mind about the people they communicate with and should be careful not to imply any negative attitudes through their communication behaviour (Certo 1989, 327).

- Message interference. According to Burton (1977, 4-7), stimuli that compete with the communication messages for the destination's attention are referred to as message interference. This is also called "noise." A scenario of message interference is a manager talking to his secretary while the secretary is trying to correct a typing mistake. In this case, converting a typing mistake is message interference because it competes with the manager's communication message for the secretary's attention. This factor can be minimized when church administrators and Christian leaders ensure they communicate when they have total attention to the individuals with whom they wish to share information. In other words, they must ensure that the attention of the person they communicate with is monopolized.
- The destination view of the source. There is a confident attitude that the destinations can also put up towards the source, which would affect successful communication. For example, if a destination believes that the source has little expertise in the area that the source is communicating, the destination may filter out much of the source messages and only slightly consider the part of the messages received. In a typical church setting, when a music pastor attempts to address theological and exegetical matters, this may affect communication because some of his positions may be considered faulty. Hence, church administrator or Christian leader who desires successful communication must ensure that they feel the message's worth independently of their attitudes

towards the source. Valuable ideas may be lost if personal feelings are allowed to influence the message they receive.

- Perception. This is an individual's interpretation of a message. Different individuals can interpret the message in different ways. Two factors that may be responsible for the differences in the performance of the message, according to Certo (1989, 328), are the level of destination's education and the destination's level of experience and exposure. In minimizing the effect of this factor, managers of God's resources should try to send a message with precise meanings. Therefore, ambiguous words which magnify negative perception should be jettisoned.
- Multi-meaning words. Many words in English, Yoruba, and other languages have several meanings; thus, a destination may have difficulty deciding which meaning should be attached to the words of a message. It is very costly for Christian leaders or church administrator to assume that the terms sent means the same thing to different people. Therefore, when sending a message, the sender should clearly define certain words with multi-meaning to have a common understanding and interpretation. In another way, they should ensure that they use the words in the same way they see their destination use them.
- Use of non-consensus signs and symbols. From the researcher's perspective, on many occasions, leaders in the organization, out of urgency, use symbols that their subordinates are not at home with, eventually resorting to poor communication because the receiver will either not respond or respond negatively. For instance, a church secretary who uses some symbols to document meeting minutes which is not clear to the church pastor. Christian leaders and church administrators should ensure that

only agreed symbols and signs are used in nonverbal communication with church members or staff.

When these discussed poor communication factors are given careful attention by Christian leaders and church administrators who are managers of God's resources, the interpersonal communication in pastoral leadership between members and church pastors, pastors, and church staff would yield positive results.

Rush (1983, 121) in agreement with Certo submits that issues such as turning people out and hearing what one wants to hear, allowing personal emotions to distort the information, lack of trust in the other persons' motive, noise or other distraction, etc. are capable of creating poor communication in any organization.

In addition to some of the suggested ways of minimizing the effect of both macro and micro communication barriers, Certo avers that managers can increase their communication effectiveness by following the "ten commandments of good communication," which are:

- Seek to clarify your ideas before communicating.
- Examine the true purpose of communication.
- Consider the total physical and human setting whenever communicating.
- Consult with others, when appropriate, in planning communication
- Be mindful when you are speaking of the overtone as well as the basic content of the message.
- Take the opportunity, when it arises, to convey something of help or value to the receiver.
- Follow up communication.
- Communicate for tomorrow as well as for today

- Be sure actions support communications.
- Seek only not to be understood, but to understand others by being a good listener.

Rush (1983, 121) also opines that communication barriers can be minimized when people communicate face-to-face whenever possible, use direct and simple words, solicit feedback from the receiver, give full attention to the speaker, never interrupt the speaker, and encourage freedom of expression.

From the researcher's perspective, another factor that can help minimize poor communication in pastoral leadership to church staff is that members should not attack the personality but should respond to the information; also, members should not preempt the information before its delivery.

THE BRUNT OF POOR COMMUNICATION ON CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

Poor communication in an organization has a devastating effect on the people and the program. Some of the effects of poor communication on an organization are explained thus.

It creates conflict. There must be two opposing views for conflict to occur. Conflict has been defined by many scholars, ranging from Rush Myron, Adetunji Oluwaponmile, Motty Bauta and others. Rush (1983, 202) opines that conflict is an open and hostile opposition resulting from differing viewpoints. Joyce Hocker and William Wilmot in the words of Adetunji (2010 123) hold that "conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependence parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals." This definition implies that for conflict to happen, there must be two opposing views, as noted by Rush. Furthermore, Motty (2016, 6) asserts that conflict is a disagreement where people involve a sense of threat to their needs, interests, or concerns. Thus, for conflict to occur, at least two parties must view issues from different perspectives

without interest in understanding from the opposing angle. Armstrong (1993, 74) asserts that much of church conflict can be avoided when members agree to play their positions, of which clear communication is one.

It creates wrong assumptions from team members. Where members of pastoral teams fail to examine the true purpose of each communication, poor communication can be said to be inevitable. There is a need to always ask the question of the need whenever communication is to take place, whether it is to obtain information, initiate action, or change another person's attitude. Certo opines that organization members must identify the most important goal and then adapt their language, tone, and total approach to serving that specific objective (1989, 330). From certo's submission, the implication of discovering the purpose of communication first is to help the parties select appropriate means of responding to any message received and in an appropriate manner. Hence, avoiding, wrong assumptions. In other words, the purpose of communication would help members to select the methods and style of communication appropriately. Therefore, if one cannot pinpoint the reason for communicating certain information to the targeted audience, there is no need to speak (Baron et al 2010, 310).

It will bring about ineffectiveness. Since the understanding of the information being circulated in the organization would facilitate the effectiveness of organizational processes, poor communication would drag and drain the system of its point. Hence, church leaders and administrators must ensure that they communicate clearly and concisely with proper consideration of the context, culture, and time of sending information.

It brings about inefficiency. Poor communication cannot but affect productivity, whether in goods or services. Where church leaders and administrators do not embrace open communication with healthy relationships, members and staff's

productivity may be low. Poor communication would not allow members of the Church to clearly understand what is expected from them and therefore carry out tasks as they deem fit.

It breeds poor relationships. The relationship is very central to communication. The relationship between members of an organization determines how communication would be maximized to a larger extent. Ideally, in a healthy environment, organization members often use the mixed medium of communication. In fact, informal communication has been seen to facilitate good relationships. However, poor communication may give rise to unhealthy competition that can damage the relationship between church members and staff.

None communicated Mission, vision, or statements. Where there is poor communication, the Church may not be clear with regard to her mission and vision statement. Until now, some local churches do not have vision and mission statements. Some churches that have are not doing well in communicating with the entire church members and members of church staff. Cousins (1989, 28) has submitted that one of the jobs for church leaders is the development of the philosophy of ministry. This involves communication with the church council, church staff, and Church in the conference, of which good communication plays paramount role.

The decision-making process will be affected negatively. One of the critical functions of church administrators and leaders is decision-making. Vawter (1985, 25) opines that the decision-making process should include asking certain questions like, who this decision might affect, and should their advice be asked before the final decision is made. What will be the impact when they hear the decision? And what kind of resentment will be able to be lived with if this decision is made? Is it worth the price? This information must be considered and communicated to the appropriate quarter. Otherwise, there would be a communication gap that results from poor communication.

ENGAGING LISTENING SKILLS IN COMBATING POOR COMMUNICATION IN THE CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

One of the critical tools to effective communication is listening skills, that are essential for all parties involved in communication processes. It is tough to give correct interpretations to any information that one is not clearly understood. Listening can be said to be primary to communication because it starts and ends the communication process. For example, the sender communicates to the receiver, and the first expectation from the receiver is to listen for understanding through any medium used. Also, the receiver replies through a feedback channel with the intention that the sender will listen and decode the feedback correctly. Hence, the place of listening in communication cannot be over emphasis.

In the account of a Management training system survey of thousands of employees in an effort to determine the causes of poor communication, Rush (1983, 122) reported thus:

The survey result indicated that poor listening ability causes most misunderstandings. Studies reveal that the average person spends approximately 70 percent of his waking day in verbal communication, 45 percent of which is spent listening. In addition, research indicates that unless people have had specific training in listening, their efficiency in this skill is only 25 percent. (Hence), Much of the difficulty in listening is caused by the fact that the mind can listen faster than a person can talk. It is estimated that the average person can listen at the rate of 400 to 600 words a minute, while most people can speak at only 200 to 300 words per minute. As a result, during conversations, the mind tends to occupy itself with other things half of the time. This wandering of the mind causes the listener to miss a great deal of the ideas and feelings being presented.

Based on the above report, the importance of listening in communication among pastors and church staff is critical to effective church staff management. The Pastor as a leader must develop both speaking and listening skills. This also goes for members of church staff who should seek every avenue to acquire listening skills that will make them productive maximally. In the opinion of the researcher in agreement with various scholars' submissions above, listening skills must be a concern for everybody who desires effective communication in any organization. Most importantly, in a religious setting like Church, listening and speaking skills should be developed by the members of an organization.

Rush (1983, 123-125) suggests various means by which listening skills can be improved upon. The improvement is necessary because everybody has an inherent capacity to listen, which needs to be enhanced. These suggestions include the following:

Don't be afraid to ask questions for clarification. One of the common listeners' weaknesses is the failure to ask questions. While some listeners may assume they will be embarrassed when they ask questions; thinking others would discover they were not listening initially, others may not ask questions simply because they are not even listening in the first place. Thus, church staff members should not be afraid to ask questions from pastors or any members who may be communicating one thing or the other to them.

Don't start formulating your response while the speaker is still talking. Many become poor communicators because they always think of what to say even when the speaker has yet to conclude the information being passed across. This act would only breed a lack of concentration and meaningful contribution to the information. It may equally cause misunderstanding.

Avoid premature or false assumptions about what the speaker is going to say. Whenever a person assumes the

information to be passed across, the only thing he would hear no matter what the speaker may be saying is what he has already process in his mind. Thus, it is very wrong for a listener to say, "I know what you are going to say" or "I know what you are thinking." Anybody known for this statement is a poor listener. Hence, church staff must not preempt the Pastor during the communication process. The solution is to give rapt attention when communication occurs during meetings or through other processes.

Avoid interrupting the speaker. Any good listener would never interrupt the speaker. This is supported by the letter of Solomon, Ecclesiastes 3:7 which says, "there is a time to be silent and a time to speak." "A time to be silent is when the speaker is allowed to share his ideas and emotion (Rush 1983, 124)". Rush further notes possible things that may likely happen when a speaker is interrupted.

- The flow and development of the speaker's complete message is disrupted, making it difficult to understand the details of what is being said.
- The speaker has difficulty listening to your statements because he his still thinking about his own.
- The listener has demonstrated he feels what he has to say is more important than the speaker's thought.
- The listener has demonstrated he has made assumptions concerning the rest of the speaker's comments.

Therefore, Pastor as a leader and the entire workforce in the local Church must be deliberate at acquiring the skill of rapt listening when communicating for effective management of God's resources

Work at minimizing the "filtering effect" of prejudices. This has to do with certain beliefs about a particular individual in the organization. There are cultural prejudice, marital status prejudice, and language prejudice. Hence, everyone should be aware of their prejudice towards another in the organization and ensure that proper clarifications are made when such an individual is communicating. Church staff may be comprised of the widow and people from different backgrounds. When these factors are filtered when such people are communicating information, communication would improve.

Listen for the ideas and feelings behind the words being spoken. Words are a means of conveying ideas and feelings. Rush reports that studies have shown that in some situations, as little as 7 percent of the complete message is communicated in words. This makes the remaining 93 percent transmitted through tone of voice or some non-verbal action or expression, as seen in the diagram below. Therefore, for listening to occur, the listener has the responsibility to take note of the speaker's tone of voice and other nonverbal actions. In the case of church staff management, attention must be given to individual staff's emotions when communication occurs to fully grasp the total information being passed across.

CONCLUSION

Communication is a life that validates the healthiness of people's relationships in a formal or informal organizational setting. When this is lost or not properly engaged, its devastating effect can better be imagined than experienced. Hence, church administrators and leaders must ensure that communication is well-established, nourished, and sustained. This would not only help them to achieve their purpose of existence promptly, but it would also improve the relationship between all members of the Church. Thus, poor communication and its effects should be a thing of concern for church leaders.

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