

FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY OF OPERATIVE EMPLOYEES: A CASE OF PLASTIC PARTS MANUFACTURER

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ABSTRACT: *The purposes of this research were to study the level of communication competency and factors affecting communication competency of operative employees at a plastic parts manufacturer. The sample was 180 operative employees. Simple random sampling method was used to collect data. The questionnaire was used as research instrument. Statistics used for data analysis included percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used for hypothesis testing. The research findings were: 1) The communication competency of operative employees was at high level. 2) Performance evaluation, compensation, and training could affect communication competency of operative employees at statistical significance level of .01. Participation in decision-making could affect communication competency of operative employees at statistical significance level of .05. All independent variables could explain the variation in communication competency of operative employees at 82.6%*

Keywords: *Training, compensation, leadership, participation, decision-making, performance evaluation, competency, communication*

Introduction

Currently, the plastic parts manufacturing industry in Thailand has the continuous expansion rate and the newly emerging plastic parts manufacturers are at higher rate. Therefore, the parts manufacturer is very necessary to create competitive advantage, so that profitability can be generated in today's competitive environment. An important factor that will affect the competitiveness is to ensure customer satisfy the plastic parts products. Therefore, plastic parts manufacturer must ensure customer feel confident with the quality, service, price, product development and delivery.

According to J.E. Boxter (1975), the larger any organization becomes, the more difficult it becomes for people within it to communicate effectively with each other. These difficulties arise not only from the physical dispersion, the large numbers of people involved, and the trend towards compartmentalization, but also from complex personal factors. For this research, the researchers studied the case of a plastic parts manufacturer, a large manufacturing company in the industry, that faces the difficulty to communicate across the company. This company is a subsidiary of Saha-Union Group Co., Ltd., registered capital of baht 250 million. The quality assurance systems, including ISO14001, IATF16949 and QS9000, are focused on the one stop service including mold manufacturing process, plastic parts manufacturing process, assembly process, and painting process. To this regard, the researcher is interested in studying the

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factors that affect the communication competency of the operative employees in order to have the useful information for communication improvement. This leads to the creation of customer satisfaction and the results of this study could be beneficial for other organization that are interested in the further improvement of communication competency within the organization.

Research objectives

1. To study the communication competency level of operative employees in plastic parts manufacturer
2. To study the factors affecting the employees ' communication competency in plastic parts manufacturer

Hypothesis

Training, compensation, leadership, decision-making participation, performance evaluation could affect the communication competency of operative employees.

Methodology

Research Framework

In this study, the researchers collect data from operative employees at a plastic parts manufacturing company. According to Brian H. Spitzberg (1988) defined communication competence as the ability to interact well with others. He explains, the term 'well' refers to accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness. Gustav Friedrich (1994) suggests that communication competence is a situational ability to set realistic and appropriate goals and to maximize their achievement by using knowledge of self, other, context, and communication theory to generate adaptive communication performance.

From previous concept of communication and inter-organization communication, the researchers propose the research framework by using communication competency as dependent variable and organizational factors as independent variables as shown in Fig. 1.

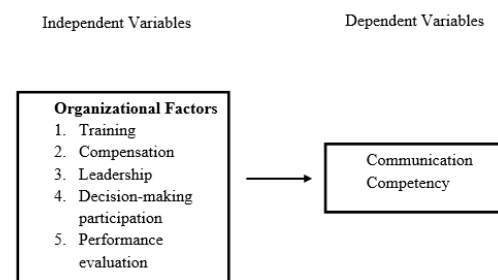


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Population and Sample

Population is 329 operative employees of a plastic part manufacturer. The sample size was determined based on Yamane formula at 95 percent confidence, which is 180 operative employees.

Variables

1. Independent variables are training, compensation, leadership, decision-making participation, and performance evaluation
2. Dependent variable is communication competency

Timing

The researcher collected data by distributing questionnaires to operative employees in November 2018. Simple random sampling method was used in this research.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire was used as the research instrument. There are four sections in the questionnaire. The first section is about personal factors of the respondents (6 questions). The second section is about the

organizational factors (25 Likert scale questions). The third section is about communication competency of operative employees (13 Likert scale questions), and the last section is the opened-end question for opinion and recommendation. Reliability and validity were tested before data collection.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed by using statistical program. Statistics include percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied for hypothesis testing at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance. The level of organizational factors and communication competency were determined by the following criteria:

Mean	Level of organizational factors/ Communication competency
4.501-5.000	Highest
3.501-4.500	High
2.501-3.500	Moderate
1.501-2.500	Low
1.000-1.500	Lowest

Results

Personal Factors	f	%
1. Gender		
Male	42	23.3
Female	138	76.7
Total	180	100.0
2. Marital status		
Single	86	47.8
Married	78	43.3
Divorced/Separated	16	8.9
Total	180	100.0
3. Age		

Below 25 years old	35	19.6
26 – 30 years old	54	30.2
31 – 35 years old	33	18.4
36 – 40 years old	27	15.1
41 – 45 years old	16	8.9
Over 45 years old	14	7.8
Total	179	100.0

Table 1 (Cont.)

Personal Factors	f	%
4. Education		
Junior high school or below	53	29.6
Senior high school	82	45.8
Diploma	23	12.8
Bachelor	18	10.1
Higher than bachelor	2	1.1
Total	179	100.0
5. Working experience		
Below 3 years	67	37.4
3 – 6 years	46	25.7
6 – 9 years	23	12.8
Over 9 years	43	24.0
Total	179	100.0
6. Monthly income		
Below 10,000 THB	56	31.3
10,001 THB – 15,000 THB	94	52.5
15,001 THB – 20,000 THB	22	12.3
Over 20,000 THB	7	3.9
Total	179	100.0

Table 1 Frequency (f) and Percentage of Personal Factors

From table 1, it found that majority of operative employees were female who had single status and 26 – 30 years old. They graduated at junior high school level and had working experience less than 3

years. They had 10,001-15,000 THB monthly income.

Factor	\bar{X}	S.D.
Training	3.482	0.992
Compensation	3.099	1.132
Leadership	3.492	0.974
Decision-making Participation	3.433	1.043
Performance evaluation	3.407	1.073
Overall	3.383	1.043

Table II Mean (\bar{x}) Standard Deviation (S.D) of Organizational Factors

From table 2, it founds that organization factor is at moderate level. Leadership had the highest mean, followed by training, decision-making participation, performance evaluation, and compensation. All organizational factors are at moderate level.

Communication Competency	\bar{X}	S.D.
Presentation	3.505	0.930
Motivation effort	3.467	1.016
Art of motivation	3.497	0.971
Indirect influence on motivation	3.478	0.999
Complex strategies for motivation	3.483	0.987
Overall	3.486	0.981

Table III Mean (\bar{x}) Standard Deviation (S.D) of communication competency

From table 3, it founds that operative employees had communication competency at moderate level. They had high level of presentation dimension. For

other dimension of competency, operative employees had moderate level.

Factors	b_i	p-value
Constant	0.584	0.000**
Training	0.183	0.004**
Compensation	0.195	0.000**
Leadership	0.076	0.315
Decision-making participation	0.135	0.042*
Performance evaluation	0.274	0.000**
R = 0.909 ; $R^2 = 0.826$; F = 165.579 ; p-value = 0.000**		

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

Table 4 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Factors Affecting Communication Competency

From table 4, it found that F equal 165.579 and p-value less than 0.01, therefore there is at least one factor could influence the communication competency. The results indicated that performance evaluation, compensation, and training could affect the communication competency at statistically significant level of 0.01. In addition, decision-making participation could affect the communication competency at statistically significant level of 0.05, while leadership had no influence on communication competency. All independent variables could explain the variation of communication competency at 82.6 percent.

Conclusion

From the results, operative employees had the communication competency at moderate level. When considered each dimension, it found that operative employees had high level of

presentation skill. In addition, performance evaluation is the most influencing factor for communication competency as the company determine communication as the performance indicator.

Recommendation

Suggestions for this research

The company should implement the performance management system by developing clear indicators. These performance indicators should be link with other human resource management practices such as compensation, training and development. Therefore, the company could improve the employee communication capabilities. In addition, the company should encourage employees to participate in decision-making. In addition, creating engagement in decision is also another factor that helps to enhance the communication performance of employees. Suggestion for future research.

For future research, the research should incorporate technological factors such as information technology as the causal variables in order to understand how to communication competency could be improved by the utilization of technological innovation.

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