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IMPACT OF ORGANIZATION TECHNOLOGICAL
CHANGE ON ORGANIZATIONAL
COMMUNICATION CLIMATE
IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION

BY

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requirements for the Degree of Master of Human
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ABSTRACT

Technology implementations, such as computer and Internet, have been a popular subject of study in recent years. Any technological change in any type of organization gives certain impact towards its members. In educational institutions, for example, universities, introduction of a new technology will affect students' awareness, perception, attitude, adoption, and satisfaction which are regarded as main dimensions of communication climate. This study was conducted to investigate the impact of the latest technological implementation in IIUM, the Free Wireless Connection (FWC), towards the students' communication climate. The study was based on the assumption that the usage of FWC will positively influence the communication climate and its dimensions. The data was collected from 300 undergraduate students from the kulliyah of IRKHS to test four main hypotheses. The findings showed that there were no significant differences on the students' FWC usage based on their gender, nationality, and academic division. The FWC implementation dominantly creates higher awareness among students compared to their perception, attitude, adoption, and satisfaction. There were no significant differences on student's communication climate regardless their gender, nationality, and academic division due to the FWC implementation. And lastly, students' FWC usage positively influences their overall communication climate. It would appear that the FWC usage can predict students' communication climate, where higher FWC usage leads to higher level of communication climate.

ملخص البحث

التطبيقات التكنولوجية، مثل الكمبيوتر والإنترنت، أصبحت ظاهرة شائعة تخضع للدراسة في السنوات الأخيرة. أي تغير تكنولوجي في أي مؤسسة له تأثير معين اتجاه أعضائها. ففي المؤسسات التعليمية، على سبيل المثال الجامعات، إدخال تكنولوجيا جديدة قد يؤثر على وعي الطلاب، تصوراتهم، مواقفهم، اعتمادهم و شعورهم بالارتياح حيث تعتبر أهم أبعاد المناخ الاتصالي. وقد أجريت هذه الدراسة للتحقق من الآثار المترتبة على تنفيذ أحدث التقنيات وهي الاتصال اللاسلكي الحر (FWC) في الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية في ماليزيا تجاه مناخ الطلاب الاتصالي. و قد استندت الدراسة إلى افتراض أن استخدام FWC له تأثيرا إيجابيا على مناخ الاتصالات وأبعادها. وقد تم جمع البيانات من 300 طالب وطالبة جامعية من كلية الوحي والعلوم الانسانية لاختبار الفرضيات الأربع الرئيسية. أظهرت النتائج أنه لا توجد اختلافات كبيرة لاستخدام الطلاب FWC على أساس النوع أو الجنسية، والتقسيم الأكاديمي و تنفيذ FWC وإنما تغلب على خلق الوعي لدى الطلاب بنسب أعلى بالمقارنة مع تصورهم، مواقفهم، تبنيتهم، وشعورهم بمسوى الارتياح. لم تكن هناك اختلافات كبيرة على مناخ الطالب الاتصالي بغض النظر عن النوع أو الجنسية، والقسم الأكاديمي الواجب لتنفيذ هذه التقنية FWC. وأخيرا، استخدام الطلاب ل FWC يؤثر إيجابيا على المناخ الاتصالي العام. ويبدو أن استخدام FWC يمكن أن يتنبأ بالمناخ الاتصالي للطلاب، حيث يؤدي ارتفاع استخدام FWC إلى ارتفاع مستوى مناخات الاتصال.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

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Supervisor

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Knowledge and Human Sciences

DECLARATION PAGE

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the results of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that is has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for my other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

Ayub Ifandy Imran

Signature.....

Date.....

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**IMPACT OF ORGANIZATION TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE ON
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CLIMATE IN HIGHER
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This dissertation is dedicated to my mother,

Hj. Nemmi

for her love, patience, and sacrifice.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of new technology implementation on communication climate in the context of educational institution. Many researchers in the past argued that any major change in an organization will trigger certain changes among people who are closely involved with the organization. Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin (2001) stated that technological improvement, as one type of organizational change, will bring changes to both internal and external forces in the organization. As for the internal forces, Wojtecki and Peters (2000) argued that occurrence of technological change will bring certain influences on people's internal communication, for instance, concerns and opinions. On the other hand, external forces refer to people tangible reactions towards the change.

Technological change has become the mode of operation in the 20th century business community. Managers and employees are naturally expected to adapt to the ever changing norms of technology. The goal of an organization adopting a technological innovation is to improve work process which is argued to improve work performance. Similar technology innovation is commonly happening in educational institution where staff, lecturers, and students face significant technological changes from time to time. Weick (1990) refers to innovation as something that lends itself to be misunderstood or misinterpreted by people. He stated that people's perception and interpretation on an innovation vary on individual basis. Weick stressed that people's perception and interpretation needs to be considered as contributing factors to their

attitude towards an innovation. How an individual perceives the introduction of the technology is critical to whether the individual will eventually adopt the innovation. Taking these views as consideration, this study set to investigate how technological implementation of the Free Wireless Connection (FWC) in International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) influences students' communication climate dimensions which consist of awareness, perception, attitude, adoption, and satisfaction.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the early introduction of communication climate, Pace (1983) defined the term as a composite of human behaviours, perceptions of events, responses of the employees, expectations, interpersonal conflicts, and opportunities for growth in the organization. Since then, many studies (Allehaibi, 2001; Ashforth, 1985; Bill, 2003; Kunnanatt, 2006) have been held and generally indicated that communication climate consists largely of people's perceptions and attitudes. By investigating communication climate during organizational change, many of these researchers added awareness, adoption, and satisfaction as other main dimensions of communication climate. Therefore, this study adopts these five communication climate dimensions in order to investigate the impact of organization technological change.

Technological innovation is one type of major change in an organization. The implementation of new technology in an organization can be in the form of installation, improvement, modification or replacement of current available technology equipment. This implementation will affect the organization's work system, effectiveness, productivity as well as the comfort of the organizational members. According to Rogers' (1995) diffusion of innovations theory, the degree of

technological change can be viewed through its innovation, communication channels, over time, and social system involved in the process. Rogers stressed that organizational change and its management are the key concepts to a successful technological implementation and its process of introduction.

Organizational change is basically the result of beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes surrounding processes and work being transformed (Conrad, 1990). Van Wagoner (2004) viewed organizational change in a similar interpretation, specifically identifying change in community colleges as a perception by the organization's member that something is different in the college's structure, state, or processes. Anderson and Ackerman-Anderson (2001) viewed organizational change in a multi-tiered manner, suggesting that there are three types of organizational change: developmental, transitional, and transformational change.

There is a vast amount of research (Al-Saif, 2005; Lin, 1998; Rosenberg & Holden, 1998; Vuorinen, 2009) that has been done on change in organizations, how to lead and manage it, and its impact on people surrounding the changing environment. Current research have attempted to explore organizational change, by explaining the factors of successful change and its resistance, employee involvement and their commitment to change, and the role of leadership in the time of change (Vuorinen, 2009). Some of them were specifically addressed to organizational change within the context of community colleges and the student service industry.

Some scholars (Almobarraz, 2007; Hack, 1993; Reed, 2001; Wojtecki & Peters, 2000) argued that in the context of higher learning institution, new technology would bring about some changes to work process, performance, and communication behaviour, among academic staff, administrators, and students. Led by these views,

this study decided to investigate the latest technology implementation in IIUM in order to see its impact on students' communication climate.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years, IIUM has implemented a number of both major and minor technological changes in the campus in order to provide the staff, lecturers, and students a better workplace. Many of the changes are focused on computerized technologies which include the installation of the latest Windows and protection software, providing more PCs in computer labs, improving the quality of Internet connection, and recently, introducing university's own wireless network.

However, some of these implementations have raised questions regarding their effectiveness, necessity, and their impact. For example, the implementation of monthly payment wireless network in 2003 had faced several problems and delays. Students have raised issues such as poor signal reception and connection interruption. The implementation regarded to be unsuccessful when many registered students opted not to use the technology. Some of the mahallah (residential college) offices reported that many students tried to cancel their registration saying that it is not worth paying for the network with such quality.

Five years later, July 2008, IIUM formally introduced a Free Wireless Connection (FWC) network that promised to be in better quality and cost free. The new technological implementation plan triggers both positive and negative reactions among students. Registration technical problem, program installation failure, and slow connection speed were the common complaints during the early stage of the implementation. On the other hand, positive notes were also given by the students who appreciate the university's efforts to ease students' access to the Internet.

Following the background and current interest towards the FWC, this study decided to investigate how the FWC adoption affect students' awareness, perception, attitude, adoption, and satisfaction towards the technology.

Mintzberg and Westley (1992) believed that a change should not be explained with one particular approach or philosophy. Instead, change in organizations can be depicted as a system of moving cycles. They added that organizational change is not only a phenomenon that comes from the recognition of differences in an organization's state and behaviours, but it is also an event that follows definite patterns and phases. Wheatley (2006) theorized that change does not need to come from new sources, but rather from the organization itself. She added that the impact of organizational change will exist only when positive relationships are fostered. These arguments stress the importance of looking at organizational change from the individuals' point of view.

As Bridges (1987) proposed, when dealing with change, organizations must not neglect the psychological needs of its employees. He stated that change is situational, producing the reduction in the work force, the shift in the strategy, and the switch in relationships. He added that organizational change involves psychological reorientation process that people go through when they are coming to terms with change. Bridges argued that organizational change that is imposed without attending to the needs of employees is problematic, citing successful employee transition as key to organizational change being embraced.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study explores the impact of the FWC implementation on communication climate and its dimensions. Specifically, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are the patterns of students' Internet and FWC usage?

RQ2: What is the level of each dimension of communication climate due to the implementation of the FWC?

RQ3: What are the differences on the level of communication climate dimensions based on gender, nationality, and academic division?

RQ4: What is the relationship between the FWC and the communication climate dimensions?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to find out the impact of technological change on communication climate in higher learning institution. By choosing to investigate the latest implementation of new Free Wireless Connection (FWC) in IIUM, this study specifically aims to fulfil these objectives:

Objective 1: To find out students' Internet and FWC usage patterns,

Objective 2: To find out the level of each dimensions of communication climate due to the implementation of the FWC,

Objective 3: To find out differences on the level of communication climate dimensions based on gender, nationality, and academic division,

Objective 4: To analyze the relationship between the FWC and the communication climate dimensions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Theoretically, this study aims to provide another reflection of diffusion of innovations theory by exploring how organizational change works in the context of educational institution by investigating the impact of technological change on communication climate. It is to give another view on how communication climate in a higher learning institution are affected by the implementation of a new technology.

During the process of change, individuals have the tendency to be in an uncertainty state which eventually would lead them to behave awkwardly, feel discomfort, and unsecured (Kearns, 2004). Therefore, it is important to consider users' perspective on change before any decision is made to implement a change. Vuorinen (2009) stated that change is derived from an organization members' acknowledgement that something is different within the organization. He argued that the success of implementing any change is depending on how the members react to the change and how they commit themselves to facilitate the process of adopting the change. Cunningham (2006) added that an effective method of increasing individuals' commitment to change is to allow them to participate and assess the value of the process. These views stressed the importance of involving individuals in a process of change as the main key to success.

In the context of educational institution, Van Wagoner (2004: 53) noted that "the more they are involved in change, the better equipped they are to put change into context and view change in a positive manner." He believed that being inclusive with as many people as possible during the process of change will decrease resistance, but also increase support for change. Therefore, by focusing on the students' point of view, this study investigate the impact of the organization technological change on

their communication climate dimensions, namely, awareness, perception, attitude, adoption, and satisfaction.

The implication of this research may give contribution to educational institutions to help to understand students' concern and opinion towards organizational change planned by the institution. In this case, by knowing students' awareness, perception, attitude, adoption, and satisfaction, the institution may come out with a better plan before introducing any technological implementation. It may also help the institution to achieve better acceptance and avoid unnecessary resistance to the change.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides description of the main concepts used in the study, namely, organizational communication climate and organization technological change. It also discusses the theoretical framework which is diffusion of innovations theory underpinning the research and review of previous studies on the relationship between organizational communication climate and organization technological change. Finally, the chapter presents hypotheses of the study.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

This section elaborates the concept of organizational communication climate, starting by its understanding, importance, dimensions, and factors affecting communication climate.

Understanding Organizational Communication Climate

Gratz and Salem (1981: 6) defined organizational communication climate “as the atmosphere in an organization in which accepted communication behaviour is performed.” They believed that individual style determines organizational communication climate because individuals within the organization interrelate and react towards the workings of the organization.

Meanwhile, Pace (1983: 68) defined organizational communication climate “as a composite of human behaviours, perceptions of events, responses of the employees,

expectations, interpersonal conflicts, and opportunities for growth in the organization.” He further elaborated that the overall climate of an organization is consisting of perceptions by organizational members towards dimensions of organizational life, which includes information flow and some practices involving communication. He added that communication climate in an organization is a composite of evaluations and reactions to certain activities that take place in an organization. In addition, Poole (1985: 79) interpreted “communication climate as the linkage between the organizational situation and members’ cognitions, feelings, and behaviours.”

In later development of the concept, Goldhaber (1990) suggested that organizational communication climate consists of perceptions of organization members about how they can act or behave, and about what seems to be responsible for the way others act or behave. This suggests that the organizational members’ way of sensing, feeling or perceiving certain aspects of the organization influence how they can behave in the organization.

In addition, Hack (1993) said a good organizational communication climate is characterized by open exchange of information, accessibility to co-workers, confirming and cooperative interactions and an overall culture of sharing knowledge. Hack’s idea was supported by Hoof and Ridder (2004) who reported that the key factors in communication climate include horizontal information flow, openness, vertical information flow, and reliability of information.

Generally, the scholars agreed that communication climate is mainly consisting of human behaviour and perception about their surroundings. With regards to the definitions and explanations given by these scholars, this study in particular adopted the definition given by Pace (1983: 68) who defined organizational communication

climate as a composite of human behaviours, perceptions of events, responses of the employees, expectations, interpersonal conflicts, and opportunities for growth in the organization. Pace's definition is chosen because of its relevance to the context of this study and its suitability to reflect the intended meaning of communication climate in this study.

Importance of Organizational Communication Climate

Some researchers have identified the importance of communication climate in an organization. Redding (1973) argued that communication climate determines the effectiveness of an organization. Gratz and Salem (1981) stressed that human response, as one of the attributes of communication climate, influences the overall human institutions within the organization. Wojtecki and Peters (2000) believed that the climate of an organization is more crucial than communication skills or techniques in creating an effective organization. Additionally, the whole set of communication activities holding a great role in determining the form of an organizational climate (Haakonsson et al., 2008).

On the other hand, Passmore and Woodman (1990) viewed communication climate as a relatively enduring characteristic of an organization which distinguishes it from other organizations. They stressed the importance of communication climate which (a) embodies members' collective perceptions about their organization with respect to dimensions such as, autonomy, trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation and fairness; (b) produced by member interaction; (c) serves as a basis for interpreting the situation; (d) reflects the prevalent norms and attitudes of the organization's culture; and (e) acts as a source of influence for shaping behaviour.

In general, these scholars agreed on the importance of communication climate for an organization by highlighting its influence on the organization's effectiveness, human institutions, and characteristic of the organization itself.

Research Development on Organizational Communication Climate

Early studies on organizational communication climate were conducted at Harvard by Litwin and Stringer (1968). The focus of these studies was laid on human communication behavior within an organization. According to Field & Ableson (1982), although many studies were conducted, attempts to define the construct have often proved to be problematic. They stated that scholars are having different view on a collective definition of the term. Despite the fact that organizational communication climate is a distinctly identifiable element in any organization, Moran and Volkwein (1992) argued that guidelines on the key elements or components of the climate are yet to gain universal acceptance among researchers in the field.

Pareek (2003) who did extensive research in organizational climate for over two decades posits that organizational communication climate can be discussed in terms of "organizational processes" going on within a firm and the "motives" that are created among members of the organization as a result of the perception of these processes. With these concepts, he designed a set of instruments for measuring organizational climate that are in popular use among researchers in the field. These instruments are focused on the work processes used by the organization and the motives of the employees to adopt these processes.

On the other hand, Karahanna, Straub, and Chervany (1998) posited that behavioural beliefs and fundamental attitude developed by users towards a technology innovation would be richer and more complex than those fundamental attitudes of

potential adopters. However, their empirical results indicated exactly the opposite: individuals who had not yet adopted the new technology appeared to base their attitudes on more complex belief sets than those who had adopted the technology. In other words, potential adopters had several more distinct beliefs about the new technology than did individuals who had already adopted the technology.

In general, the development of communication climate research has gone through stages where the scholars tried to form a collective understanding of the term before agreeing upon the components of the concept. The researchers also tried to explain the concept further by conducting their study with different point of view, for instance, from the employees' point of view.

Dimensions of Organizational Communication Climate

Among all the dimensions of communication climate ever been used by previous researchers in organizational communication climate research, this study adapts five common dimensions which are considered relevant to this study. The dimensions are: awareness (Almobarraz, 2007; Reed, 2001; Wojtecki & Peters, 2000) perception (Hack, 1993; Pace, 1983; Wojtecki & Peters, 2000), attitude (Hack 1993), adoption and satisfaction (Reed, 2001; Schneider & Bartlett, 1970).

Awareness

Awareness as the first dimension of communication climate defined by Wojtecki and Peters (2000: 2) "as the process of realizing, knowing, and understanding changes as a constant reality in today's workplace, causing substantial psychological stress within a workforce." They believed that the Information Technology (IT) explosion brings